

2

Empowering L2-Literacy Learners

Preview

This chapter will examine the research on key topics pertaining to L2-literacy instruction for a transnational world. These topics include EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts; transnational identity development; the necessity of addressing home language and local literacies or funds of knowledge; and multiliteracies. The theoretical work relevant to these topics will serve as the groundwork for the research on literacy instruction described in Chapters 3 and 4.

Activity 2.1 Strategies for Use during Reading

Practice some of the strategies that you will want your students to apply during the process of reading:

1 Envision the contents and continuously revise that vision

Envisioning involves contextualizing. 'Making a movie in your mind as you read' is a powerful means of supporting understanding, whether it is a narrative movie while reading fiction or a documentary based upon nonfiction. While reading this text, envision classrooms where students are actively reading and writing.

2 Note key terms

Heightened awareness of key terms helps readers focus on and remember terminology and supports understanding of the author's message.

3 Ask questions

Formulating questions before reading gives readers heightened purpose for reading. Asking questions while reading helps readers monitor comprehension. Take particular note of any content that surprises you, is new to you, or differs from your previous experiences or views. Even if you are already an expert on the topic, almost any informative text will contain factual material or perspectives that you were unable to predict. Finding the answers to your questions will help you stay actively focused. Questions that go unanswered may be points of confusion that you might discuss with others and/or inquire into.

4 Make connections

Actively seek to connect what you read to your background knowledge, previous understandings, and life experiences. Full understanding requires that readers establish many cognitive connections to other texts (text-to-text), personal experience (text-to-self), and to life itself (text-to-world).

5 Vary the speed of your reading

Skilled readers vary their speed as they read. Initial scanning for general content and the way it is organized as indicated by subheadings and key words should go quite rapidly. Reading portions of the text for which you have significant background knowledge and language should allow you to move fluently. Reading portions for which there is little background knowledge, solving unknown words, and noting specific details require slow, close reading. Rereading to clarify confusions at the word or text level may be very time consuming.

6 Map important points as you encounter them

Use phrases, connecting lines, various colors, sketches and/or symbols to note, reorganize, make connections, and respond to material as you read it. **Concept mapping** during reading can help L2 readers remember important points and actively make connections (Novak & Gowin, 1984; Lee, 1999). Even though you may already be quite familiar with the topic and able to get by with just highlighting points you find significant and/or jotting notes in the margins, we want you to experience using this technique, because it is a particularly supportive technique for students who find reading challenging.

Second-language Literacy Learners and their Learning Contexts

Effective instructors must be aware that the EFL or ESL contexts in which L2 learning takes place directly impact the type of literacy activity that takes place, as well as the depth and breadth of the second-language literacy learning. However, differences must be approached with caution, as literacy learning needs among students do not strictly align with contextual distinctions. Nor do the instructional techniques that best serve L2-literacy learners necessarily vary with learning contexts.

EFL Language and Literacy Learning Contexts

The learning situation for EFLs in contexts where English is not dominant is quite similar across the world, despite wide variations in the specific resources available for classroom instruction. The environment beyond

the classroom in many locales offers few opportunities for immersion in L2-literacy. However, EFL students often have strong first-language literacy strategies and metacognitive understandings that are continuously developed in cognitively compelling L1 school experiences. These first-language literacy skills are available for transferring to and supporting the development of L2-literacy (Cummins, 1979, 1981b, 2003; Kenner & Kress, 2003), although they are only rarely fully recognized, valued, or utilized in the course of EFL literacy instruction.

There are numerous studies (Ellis, 1984; Myles et al., 1999; Schmidt, 2001) that describe EFL language classrooms where rote language, grammar, vocabulary, and genre-structure instruction shape the curriculum. Teaching is often focused specifically on learning the ways that L1 and L2 forms and functions differ. Communicative competence beyond an emphasis on the mastery of linguistic skills is not frequently enacted (Silva, 1991; Hu, 2002, 2005). Second languages are positioned as objects of study. From the perspective of most EFL students, English or any other second language is subject matter that stands by itself like math or geography. Connections are not evident. In settings such as China, a large portion of instructional time is spent on word- or phrase-level tasks (Hu, 2002, 2005). Reading and writing appear as language exercises, especially at elementary or early secondary level. There is often little or nothing to read but textbooks with a language-learning focus, and writing is done primarily to practice using vocabulary words and grammar skills. The usual goal of classroom activities and exercises is to use specific language features according to fixed rules of correctness rather than for comprehension or interaction with texts or other speakers. Students are given little opportunity to use their developing language skills in interesting, interactive ways that may reflect their home languages.

When English is used as a *lingua franca*, it is usually used far away from the sociocultural norms experienced by native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2011). Yet the hegemony associated with the dominance of English creates a situation in which students are expected not only to imitate English native speakers, but also assimilate to worldviews associated with English dominance (Heller, 1995). Social contexts influence the adoption of identities and—in too many cases—prevailing educational traditions, school resources, and policy mandates make it seem impossible for educators to focus on anything but this goal of emulating native speakers and writers. However, as Alan Davies (2011) explains, ‘The sense of self ... is closely related with the power that being a native speaker gives. Such power is hard to attain

in any additional acquired language' (p.25). In other words, the goal of **native-like proficiency** is not only disempowering, but also unattainable for many. Once L2 learners feel powerless or invisible in their formal learning environment, they may see themselves as 'second-class speakers' who chase the ideal of resembling native speakers, yet 'can never be an "ideal speaker-hearer" in the same way that the monolingual supposedly can' (Grosjean, 1989, p.5). The privilege of being heard seems unattainable. Therefore the goal native-like proficiency actually constitutes a **native fallacy** that not only separates L2 readers and writers from their L1-literacy traditions, but may also drive them to believe that mastering a new language requires making a clean break from one language to another and surrendering their identities to the **linguistic ideologies** associated with the second language.

Yet, a student's home language is an integral part of that student's social, emotional, and cognitive makeup (Fillmore, 1991). L2 learners routinely cross not only the boundaries between reading, writing, speaking, and listening, but also those borders that exist between languages. They rely upon home language and understandings while becoming L2 literate (Homza, 1995) and often spontaneously explore and/or incorporate their home language and local literacies during L2-literacy activity. Those instructed in a second language often try out literacy activity in their home language (Reyes, 2001). Becoming bilingual/biliterate is not a matter of adopting sociocultural norms in the course of emulating a native speaker or writer. There is research evidence that bilinguals are not possessors of two separate language systems, but are instead **multicompetent** individuals who have made connections between their first language and new learning and have meshed two language codes into a new system (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2006; Grosjean, 1989; Hall et al., 2006).

Bilinguals form a **hybrid language system** based upon the fluidity of codes embedded in an ever-changing social milieu (Cook, 2002) and, as will be discussed later in this chapter, such fluidity is desirable in the 21st-century world. Instruction-focused, cross-language fluidity requires that EFL learners read authentic, well-written materials beyond textbooks and write for authentic communication. Overcoming a lack of authentic, cognitively compelling L2 resources requires providing numerous opportunities for interacting while engaging in meaningful reading and writing activity (Freeman & Freeman, 1998; Hudelson, 1989; Krashen, 2004; Samway, 2006).

ESL Language and Literacy Learning Contexts

Students who study in an English-dominant environment, and whose home language is not English are often referred to as 'English language learners' (ELLs). They learn to read and write in a second language under better conditions than many students in EFL contexts. They are surrounded by native speakers, live in or near literacy-rich, English-speaking environments, and have access to a variety of written materials. In some ways, this immersion can and does make it easier for them to master English. However, there is evidence that immigrant students often struggle as they are forced to learn and immediately use their second language to function while they are learning content knowledge (Lightbown, 2014; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Walqui, 2006). Educational background, age of arrival, home/community environment, school program, state policy, teacher quality, and available resources all impact their learning (Fix & Passel, 2003; Genesee et al., 2005) and academic success on standardized tests has long been observed to correlate with family, educational, and financial background (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladston-Billings, 2006). While some ELLs have had appropriate, cognitively demanding education in their home countries, many newcomers don't possess strong L1-literacy skills or age-appropriate content knowledge and are particularly vulnerable to academic difficulties. And of those students suffering the consequences of interrupted formal education, those studying at the secondary level face the greatest challenges and a large number drop out of school. A recent example in the USA is students from Somalia and Ethiopia, who have had their formal education interrupted and suffer from trauma caused by war or famine and whose first opportunity to learn to read and write is in a foreign, English-dominant school environment.

In places such as the United States there may or may not be adequate support for those who are under-schooled upon arrival. The situation varies considerably from classroom to classroom, school to school, district to district, or state to state. The quality of L2-literacy instruction depends on the policies in force, the nature of the training that their teachers have received and the resources available, as well as the particular mixture of their home languages and parental educational levels. Classrooms may or may not have books of different levels, in varied genres, on a variety of topics, in both home and second languages, up-to-date, accessible technology, or teachers who are able to tap students' existing sociocultural knowledge.

Also, access to the English world often remains difficult. Because they have access to a second-language environment in the form of libraries, TV,

movies, signs, packaging, etc., L2 learners may be able to develop social language more easily than the EFL learners. However, many ELLs are confined to their own ethnic L1 communities and study in classrooms with other ELLs in schools where 30% or more of the student population are also ELLs (Fix & Passel, 2003). Whether at home or at school, they may have limited opportunities to communicate with English speakers and to practice either social or academic language.

In addition to adjusting to a new culture and struggling to meet grade-level requirements, many ELLs also confront financial need as well as discrimination and prejudice as members of non-dominant language and ethnic groups. The idealization of native speakers looms even larger in English-dominant settings and relegates L2 immigrants to a position of ‘permanent otherness’ (Leung et al., 2011).

Local Literacies

According to Lin et al. (2011) ‘any relevant pedagogical knowledge has to be locally produced and negotiated in different sociocultural contexts’ (p.107). L2-literacy begins when students are able to connect what is known, through their local literacies, to new literacy learning. To the degree that immigrant ELLs or marginalized EFL students are experiencing the immediate difficulties of poverty, discrimination, and/or persecution, school may serve to present them with constant reminders of their otherness.

Marginalized students may have limited opportunities to experience a full range of literacy activity. Even if their parents were broadly literate in their country of origin, the children of new immigrants may not see adults reading and writing for their own learning or pleasure and impoverished students may have parents who are not literate in any language. Often, the adults in their lives can only engage with practical literacy activity and their children have to do the same to assist their families’ survival in the new world. They may come to see literacy only in terms of struggling to meet those practical goals. For example, in Spotlight Study 2.1, Sarroub et al. (2007) studied the literacy practices of a **multilingual** Kurdish boy, Hayder, and found that survival was his primary focus outside of school.

Spotlight Study 2.1

Loukia Sarroub and her colleagues (2007) studied the literacy practices of a 17-year-old multilingual Yezidi Kurdish refugee, Hayder. They were interested in why Hayder perceived himself to be failing both in and out of school when

his ESL teacher perceived him to be a 'smart young man' who was making steady progress in reading despite sporadic attendance, economic difficulties. The researchers 'shadowed' him, coded his literacy practices, and videotaped his reading instruction. They found that Hayder was alert and quick to pick up language and literacy that pertained to his interests and job concerns. He read willingly for specific purposes outside of school, but he appeared groggy in school and seemed unable to answer questions about his home culture/religious affiliation. 'His many responsibilities—having to drive his brothers to school, earn money, repair his car, take care of his parents' needs, pay bills, and get along with people who provoked him to fight—all made him into a less than perfect student' (p. 678). He made most academic progress with the teacher who made an effort to inquire into his problems and provided him with materials on car repair that he saw as useful because they supported his concerns outside of school. ■

Hayder was focused on getting a job and getting his car fixed so that he could get to the job and pay bills. He saw literacy in terms of functioning. Marginalized students like Hayder may be more responsive to literacy activities that target or incorporate their immediate needs or that help them connect with others who are or have been experiencing similar difficulties than they are to a focus on the cultural trappings of the English-dominant world or even of their homelands. The term the **funds of knowledge** was coined to acknowledge the important difference between what is often called 'culture' and local literacies.

Our concept of funds of knowledge ... contrasts with the more general term "culture," or with the concept of a "culture-sensitive curriculum," and the latter's reliance on folkloric displays, such as storytelling, arts, crafts, and dance performance. Although the term "funds of knowledge" is not meant to replace the anthropological concept of culture, it is more precise for our purposes because of its emphasis on strategic knowledge and related activities essential in household functioning, development, and well-being. It is specific funds of knowledge pertaining to the social, economic, and productive activities of people in a local region, not "culture" in its broader anthropological sense, that we seek to incorporate strategically into classrooms.

(Moll et al., 1992, p. 139)

The goal of supporting students as they attempt to integrate household knowledge with academic knowledge makes sense in terms of supporting meaningful connection making. However, asking teachers to research funds of knowledge by examining each student's home literacies in order to develop curricular matches is asking them to do a huge amount of research. As Moll

(1991) pointed out, bridging the various social functions of language and literacy is a complex political endeavor. For it not only implies a great deal of research into individual funds of knowledge, it implies questioning the dominance of schooled literacy.

The systematic devaluation of student home language and local funds of knowledge in L2 learning contexts around the world has been documented. Cummins (2000) pointed out that, ‘This devaluation of linguistic, cultural, and academic identity reflected the pattern of coercive relations of power that characterized intergroup relations in the broader society’ (p.246). According to Blommaert (1999), linguistic ideologies are reproduced through the social use of language. Formal L2 classrooms often exclude:

- students’ home languages and local literacies
- students’ community and past and current living experiences
- students’ voices, views and opinions
- people that resemble the students.

This is true even in Asia and Africa where the students’ home language is the majority language. When students learn to read and write in English, they are often treated as beginning readers, writers, and thinkers without reference to any well-developed L1-literacy strategies, and their worldviews—or their views of the English-speaking world—are not considered. L2 learners rarely read or see positive images of themselves in their English textbooks. They are rarely given much opportunity to write to express themselves about local events or issues pertaining to social justice that may concern them. This exclusion erects an invisible wall between them, the school, and society, which silences them as learners and keeps them on the margins of society (Leung et al., 2011).

Excerpts from three studies quoted in Cummins (2000) illustrate how L2 learners around the world have experienced devaluation:

Antti Jalava vividly describes the ‘internal suicide’ that he committed as a result of the rejection of his Finnish identity that he experienced in Swedish schools:

When the idea had eaten itself deeply enough into my soul that it was despicable to be a Finn, I began to feel ashamed of my origins ... To survive, I had to change my stripes. Thus: to hell with Finland and the Finn ... A Swede was what I had to become, and that meant I could not continue to be a Finn. Everything I had held dear and self-evident had to be destroyed ... My mother tongue was worthless—this I realized at last; on the contrary it made me the butt of abuse and ridicule. So

down with the Finnish language! I spat on myself, gradually committed internal suicide. (1988: 164)

Gloria Morgan, a Caribbean-origin educator in Britain, similarly highlights the ambivalence that bicultural pupils often develop in relation to both their cultural backgrounds:

I suggest that children of African-Caribbean heritage in Britain are caught up between two cultures, one of which they see devalued and the other with which they do not fully identify but which it is seen superior by the society. Just coping with being black and watching and listening as society devalues us can be stressful and contributes to low self-esteem, poor motivation, depression and even anti-social behaviour. (1996: 39)

Despite Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, exclusionary practices that devalue students' identities are still common in schools. This is illustrated in a case study of one ten-year-old African Canadian male student (James, 1994). Although Darren was a leader on the playground and in recreational activities, in the classroom he was seen as 'emotionally flat.' He participated minimally in class activities and justified this on the grounds that they were boring. James describes the instructional context as follows:

Every teacher in Darren's school is white, as is the principal, the secretary, the lunchroom supervisors, and even the man who puts on the "Scholastic Book Fair" presentations ... The curriculum materials to be found in Darren's classroom are textbooks that have been used since the 1960s and 70s. One of these, a reading comprehension book, presents "Canadian history" as a collision of white Europeans with "primitive native tribes" who do such things as "dance ceremoniously." ... If the image of blacks that Darren constantly encounters in classes are ones that present them as low achievers, "primitive", and "slum dwellers", and there are no discussions about these images, then this will operate to silence. His experience is not acknowledged or validated; he is invisible; and moreover, he is powerless in challenging the teacher. No wonder then that Darren, like many other black students ... finds his classes "boring" and refuses to ask questions which would help him with classroom tasks. (1994: 26-27)

(Cummins, 2000, pp. 51-2)

These vignettes are representative of the feeling of dissonance that is created for students, obliging them to navigate between two different 'fixed' worlds,

perhaps without achieving full participation or success in either. Formal attempts to remedy this may involve crafting content to honor students' cultural homelands. As Classroom Snapshot 2.1 demonstrates, this can be effective, but mismatches with their own funds of knowledge about homelands, assumptions made by intolerant peers, or homesickness can make students painfully aware of the differences between their two worlds.

Classroom Snapshot 2.1

Upon realizing the amount of prejudice students faced from outsiders, the rush to conform to US norms, and the divisions within her high school ESL class, Ortmeier (2000) developed 'Project Homeland' in an attempt to establish community and a sense of cultural identity among her students. In the course of that project, her students were required to use library books and references as well as the internet to research their homelands, create a set of questions and interview their parents about their homelands, use the writing process, with advice from their peers, to develop a written report and accompanying visually expressive posters about their homeland, and finally practice reading their papers aloud in order to make oral presentations accompanied by their posters, foods, music, and artifacts to an authentic audience of the mainstream school community. Ortmeier noted that her students not only demonstrated their academic abilities while learning about their own and other cultures, they were able to break down previously held stereotypes, and were validated and grew in their confidence regarding the cultural contributions of their homelands. ■

Ortmeier described a supportive situation. However, language and literacy learning are not grounded in broad or seemingly fixed cultural trappings. Such units may be well intentioned and may work well to build bridges between two nationalized worlds, or they may leave marginalized students feeling that school is disconnected from real life, their actual cultural experiences, immediate needs, or current interests.

Blake (2001) on the other hand, worked in a summer camp with a group of ESL migrant students who, like Hayder, were focused on the life struggles that accompany poverty. Noting that the adolescent ELLs she worked with had been silenced regarding their experiences with poverty as immigrants, she stated they 'had learned what they had to say and write didn't count. They were constantly being censored or being told their "writing was no good."' She used writing samples and dialogue to illustrate that when students were encouraged to ground their texts in local literacies, the students became more willing to express themselves by writing about such things as the realities of working in the fields and family responsibilities. She emphasized

that by validating local literacies, ‘we are not only contesting the sanctioned place of literacy transforming – we are also transforming it as we privilege other voices and grant agency to the less powerful’ (p. 440).

Students are in the process of being and becoming and need to feel empowered to deal flexibly with the present as well as with the past. Just as honoring student’s cultural pasts can be supportive, recognizing and honoring their current life circumstances is supportive, perhaps transformative. Both approaches work to build bridges and neither implies the exclusion of the other; however, both can imply a fixedness that’s misleading. 21st-century students, regardless of their previous sociocultural associations or their current circumstances, need to begin where they are and with what they know. Yet, they ultimately need to be prepared to communicate effectively and flexibly in multiple ways so that they can meet the complex, unforeseeable communicative demands that the future of a rapidly changing transnational world may present.

Transnational Identity Development for a Glocalized World

Many learners find themselves constantly struggling to cope with conflicting worlds: this has become a common experience in the 21st century where national and cultural boundaries have become blurred and there is a continuous mixing and remixing of ideas. Social ideas grounded in traditions that were once uniquely local may now be recognized, honored, preserved, or interwoven, blurred, challenged or hidden in global transactions in ways that were previously unimaginable. The social settings in which communication now takes place both physically and electronically have changed so drastically that the Japanese business community has coined a new term, **glocalization**, to describe the fact that many aspects of the local and the global now exist side by side. People from various parts of the world need to communicate unambiguously with one another. Yet schools often fail to capitalize on the transnational expertise sitting in their classrooms because the transnational experiences of students may remain hidden. Pamela Sanchez (2007) emphasized this in her study of three young Latinas who reported that their schools, teachers, and schoolmates knew little of their transnational lives.

Spotlight Study 2.2

In a participatory ethnographic study of three second-generation Latinas residing in California while keeping close ties with Mexico, Pamela Sanchez (2007) found

evidence that the experiences of these high-school students shaped them as transnational citizens. Sanchez based her study on her observations during three years as a participant observer in both California and Mexico, on both formal and informal interviews, and on artifacts such as home videos and photographs, as well as the teens' own academic papers and presentations on their lives as transnationals and images that the Latinas created.

She found that within one day, those students could be riding on subway while working on a laptop to finish a school assignment and then 'be immersed in such quotidian practices as lighting up a dried corn cob to fuel the hot water boiler at their Grandma's rural house in Mexico' (p. 504). She noted that all three of the young women acquired local community knowledge and cultural flexibility that was not only important for their participation in rural and semi-rural living, but also crucial for developing their consciousness as privileged and gendered members of an industrialized nation. For example, in addition to expressing a respect for the funds of knowledge required to live in rural Mexico and a sense of empathy through personal engagement, one of the teens recognized the gendered nature and social disparities associated with a subsistence life when she stated:

I had to write a college essay about, "Write about an experience that happened in your life," so I wrote about visiting Mexico and how it's a privilege to live in the U.S. Girls can go to eighth grade in the ranch, and after that, they have to go to Guadalajara and it costs money, and the people in the ranch don't have money at all. I realize it's very hard for the girls because after eighth grade they just stay home and they like just take care of the family ... (p. 506)

Sanchez concluded by calling for educators to 'listen closely' to their transnational immigrant students and to recognize the global understandings and experiences they have rather than overlooking their potential as the best possible teachers about globalization and transnational citizenship. ■

Worldwide, an increasing number of people are 'bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political, and cultural interests that require their presence in both' (Porter, 1997, p. 35); others routinely visit their countries of origin or maintain close communication with those who remain there. They do not make an abrupt break with their heritage or home country in order to live in their adopted space, but, 'forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Basch et al., 1994, p. 8). In so doing, they develop identities that incorporate additive elements from both their home cultures and their adopted ones (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and as they experience multiple communities, they begin to employ a 'dual frame of reference' (Louie, 2006). For example, Yi (2010) studied the online activity

of a Korean-American high school student, Sunny, as she constructed a **dual** (Suárez-Orozco & Quin-Hillard, 2004) or **hyphenated** (Portes & Zhou, 1994) **identity**. Sunny stated:

It was such a privilege status to be [bilingual, bicultural and biliterate] although it was really hard to adjust to both cultures with the same amount of balancing it out. Because in Korea, I was too Americanized, and in America, I was too conservative ... I think I just made my own category of who I am. That kinda helped me with my self-identity ... I was confused with a sense of who I am. Am I American? Or am I Korean? I just realized that hey, I'm not either. I'm just me. It's just better for me because it's not the country that really bounds me down. I can be anyone I want to be. So, after I realized that I'm very grateful for this position because I can communicate with both cultures, both people, and both languages with the same amount ... I love to strive for both languages. I have ties in Korea, and I have ties in America. I don't really want to lose any.

(Yi, 2010, p. 313)

By engaging in various online contexts in two languages, Sunny negotiated a dual sense of self and of the world that linked her simultaneously with more than one national culture and more than one perspective (Yi, 2010, p.317). Her online involvement appears to have provided her with the necessary space to negotiate varying perspectives; her ability to negotiate also positions her to readily adopt a transnational identity.

Like the Latinas in the Sanchez (2007) study, there are individuals and even entire communities who seem to move fluidly, as transnationals, between multiple ways of thinking and doing without regard to national or socioculturally determined boundaries. They develop the ability to negotiate multiple perspectives. Just as bilinguals construct new, fluid, hybrid language systems, transnationals construct new, fluid, hybrid identities. Fluidity is essential because, as the nexus of membership in multiple communities, a 21st-century transnational identity is constantly being created and negotiated (Yi, 2010).

According to Suárez-Orozco (2004), transnational adolescents are at an advantage because their tactical transnational competencies enable them to comfortably operate within multiple linguistic and cultural codes. Indeed, studies on the relationship between identity construction and academic outcomes have suggested that students who forge transnational identities are more successful academically (Cummins & Early, 2011; Ogbu & Simons,

1998). As such, transnational identities can be seen as ‘most adaptive in this era of globalism and multiculturalism’ (Suárez-Orozco, 2004, p. 117).

While transnationalism may be ideal, access to the opportunity to develop such a stance is usually tied to material wealth. A number of scholars (Bourdieu, 1977; Cummins, 2000; Norton, 1997; Weedon, 2004; West, 1992) argue that identity, including one’s view of one’s ‘right to speak’ or ‘the power to impose reception’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648), is tied to the desire to be materially enabled. Those who have material resources have access to power and privilege, but those who are unable to access resources have no right to speak or power to impose reception regardless of their ability to mirror native speakers (Canagarajah, 1999). Consequently, the value one places on language, literacy, and learning is dependent upon shifting social and economic circumstances and relationships, and resistance is not uncommon (Norton, 1997). As a result, the goals of L2-literacy instruction must include enabling L2 students to develop the flexible communicative competence necessary to empower them to exert their right to be fully recognized, to express themselves in ways that do not involve subordination and to develop flexible transnational identities. As Rampton (1995) suggests, language education should be seen as ‘a social activity in which efforts are made to manage community, change, and the relationship between social groups’ (p. 100).

Toward Empowerment via a Linguaging-as-thinking Stance

The term **linguaging** implies an act: ‘doing language.’ People with this view see language as something that is not fixed, but can be and is changed in the course of being and becoming. For example, to Merrill Swain (2006), linguaging should mean ‘to mediate problem-solutions whether the problem is about which word to use, or how best to structure a sentence so that it means what you want it to mean, or how to explain the results of an experiment, or how to make sense of the action of another ...’ (p. 96). Ofelia Garcia (2009) defined linguaging as ‘social practices that are performed by our meaning-making selves’ (p. 32). Garcia’s emphasis on the word ‘performed’ also implies that the action itself may not be of a fixed nature. Pennycook (2004) also advocates a ‘performative view of language,’ which questions established views of fixedness of identity.

Linguaging-as-thinking goes beyond ‘doing language’ and/or ‘doing social practices’ to tie linguaging to active thinking. Again, linguaging-

as-thinking means doing language, literacy, and learning while being and becoming. It implies that languaging pushes or extends thinking while thinking pushes or extends languaging and questions any notion of the fixed or nonnegotiable nature of language, social practices, identity formation or thinking. This contrasts with the utilitarian view of language learning. Education worldwide tends to focus on certainty rather than preparing students to negotiate the uncertainty associated with a complex, ever-changing, transnational communicative environment or fluid social practices. Grounding curriculum in students' home language and funds of knowledge is not easy, particularly when firstly, the dominant culture is seen as desirable; secondly, numerous home languages, literacies, and cultures are represented in a classroom; and thirdly, standardized textbooks, predetermined curriculum sequences, and standardized tests dominate as part of a regulatory system in which language is seen as a fixed code.

While all of this may seem beyond the scope of L2-literacy instruction, it actually speaks to the heart of it. When students are actively engaged in authentic reading, writing, and thinking-while-being-and-becoming, rather than simply memorizing, copying, or seeking correct answers or forms, L2 learners are enabled to approach literacy tasks with their funds of knowledge intact. They are not asked to attempt to think, read, and write by using their second language in fixed ways in order to mimic the thinking of native speakers; they are asked to express their evolving thoughts. They learn to use L2-literacy for social purposes, to serve ever-changing communicative needs and to adopt whatever language, social practice or identity fits the current situation. A languaging-as-thinking classroom leads to empowerment by helping L2 learners understand that reading and writing are authentic social activities that can be done mindfully, not simply contrived school-based means to test-driven ends and irrevocably tied to the social practices or ways of thinking of native speakers.

Again, the implementation of an empowering pedagogy must remain in local hands if empowerment is to be realized (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 1994; Lin, 1999; Pennycook, 2000). It rejects wholesale assimilation into dominant cultures and rejects the dismissal of the need to negotiate multiple perspectives by a focus on utilitarian use of language. While it is grounded in local funds of knowledge and life experiences, it leads beyond them to become academic in nature and may involve yet-to-be invented complex activity. As Spotlight Study 2.3 illustrates, such empowerment is supported by classroom where students are intentionally cognitively challenged or encouraged to problem-solve together and allowed a degree of voice and choice.

Spotlight Study 2.3

Kris Gutierrez (1992) conducted a two-year study of the social contexts of writing process instruction for Latino elementary students in five second- and third-grade classrooms comprised of students who began the year at the same level. She observed that in 'recitation classrooms' teacher-centered thinking prevailed:

- T:** OK, What did I just say? Now, here's what you're going to do. Caesar? Caesar, are you listening to me? Put your pencil down. There should be no writing until I tell you, until I tell you what you can write. Now, why shouldn't you write until I tell you? Anybody? So, you, just in case, you might write down the wrong thing. Listen to me now. We're going to do some brainstorming. Does anyone ... What's the first thing you have to do when you brainstorm?
- Sonia:** Write down a word.
- T:** No, I said the first thing. Andrea?
- Andrea:** Write your name on the page.
- T:** No, Listen carefully to me. What's the first thing you do when you begin brainstorming? (p. 252).

The teacher 'restricted students' participation' as well as their opportunities to incorporate own ideas. In contrast, Gutierrez recorded the following instances of collaborative problem-solving in 'responsive collaborative classrooms,' when the students did most of talking.

- Mundo:** ... Hey, Francisco, do you think I should write about one of the English explorers who came over to the U.S.?
- Fran:** Nah, dude, everyone knows about those guys. Can you make it more exciting? You know, like the story Miss M read to us. That was really awesome.
- Mundo:** Oh, yeah. Maybe I can think of something like that. Maybe I can write it so it's really exciting, like a real-life explorer story. Yeah. [He starts to write.]
... Another instance ...
- Roberto:** I'm writing the best story ever. They're gonna make a movie from this one. Number one bestseller.
- Fran:** It has to be true. Miss M says it has to be true and it has to be in the books.
- Roberto:** I didn't forget. It's true. I'm just making it kinda better. I told Miss M. She said it was a doc ... [to the teacher] What do you call it?
- T:** Call what?
- Roberto:** My story, my report, cuz you said I had some fiction. You know like you said they do on TV?
- T:** Oh, a docudrama. I said yours was more like a docudrama cuz it was based on some facts.

Roberto: Yeah. I'm writing a d-o-c-u-d-r-a-m-a.

T: Just remember our agreement. You have to be able to tell me and the class which parts are made up ... Did you figure out how you were going to let us know which parts are fiction? (pp. 257–58).

Gutierrez found that the students in the responsive collaborative classrooms demonstrated more sophisticated oral language and more elaborate texts, although their written texts were not as sophisticated as their oral language. ■

Teacher-to-student talk in the first classroom was centered on the use of closed-ended questions that were directed toward looking for specific single-word answers. Her quiz-like approach required the students to anticipate (guess) the exact fragment of isolated knowledge that she had in mind. This questioning did not provide the students with problems to solve or to talk about, nor did it elicit complex language from the students. Gutierrez indicated that the teacher-to-student talk in the second classroom was goal-directed: it aimed to introduce new information, provide expert knowledge or elaborated discourse, clarify misconceptions, or maintain discussions and probe student thinking (p. 256). Such teacher talk worked to create a more rigorous atmosphere in that it left space for the students to become engaged in critical thinking and problem solving as they questioned one another, probed each other's ideas, and offered insights and solutions regarding the task at hand. The students in that classroom felt empowered to make authorial decisions, and to help one another do the same.

The teacher in the second classroom designed an environment where student-to-student talk was as prevalent as the teacher-to-student talk. Such teachers work to empower students by keeping voice and choice in the forefront as they plan, conduct, and reflect upon interactions in cognitively challenging environments. Matoush, Fu & Miller (2014) also documented this type of multidirectional conversational give-and-take between Chinese students and a US teacher. They described creating a transnational learning environment in China in the form of a short-term **digital-story writing** workshop. That teacher was able to honor his students' ways of thinking as they went about the tasks of writing, illustrating, scoring, and narrating stories on topics they chose. At the same time, he was able to learn from the students as they inquired into and then applied their own thinking to the task, in so doing developing the flexibility associated with transnational communication. Digital story writing required that the students discuss varying perspectives, and work together to solve complex representational problems in ways that afforded him windows into the development of their

thinking. By collaborating with and supporting his students as they explored an array of possibilities for expressing their ideas using a combination of words, sounds, music, movements, and illustrations he was able to situate his Chinese EFL students as voiced communicative partners who were empowered through languaging rather than as subordinate receivers of information from a native English-speaking authority. The complex, multimodal nature of the activities enabled these students to explore ways to become flexibly empowered as language learners and EFL writers.

Multiliteracies and the Power of Languaging-as-thinking

21st-century communication is embedded in increasing array of multimodal meaning-making platforms, resembling the digital stories described above. The verbal and the verbal-textual is accompanied and often overshadowed by the visual, the audio, the spatial, the gestural, and movement as well as by the placement of or emphasis on each of those elements. Again, the New London Group (1996) coined the term multiliteracies to describe this situation and suggested that, due to the realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness, exploration of them is vital to 21st-century social engagement. Although they emphasized negotiation across languages, they called for a **pedagogy of multiliteracies** that differs from a traditional, language-based pedagogy by focusing on negotiating multiple linguistic, cultural, and representational forms. Because multiliteracies require us to use strategies and techniques to adapt to the rapidly changing landscape of 21st-century communication, instruction must utilize and extend students' technological and multimedia and multimodal savvy in the course of preparation for communication using 21st-century platforms (Leu et al., 2004). The New London Group (1996) and later Stein (2000) also argued that multimodal pedagogies are invaluable for promoting equity as linguistic pluralism is situated in the multiliteracies associated with electronic environments (LoBianco, 2000).

L2 learning has long been supported by visuals and other multimodal representations of language. Nonverbal material supports verbal understanding. Response to and the creation of multimodal material often enables L2 learners who are striving to make connections between nonverbal cues and a new language, at least at beginning levels. When a pedagogy of multiliteracies is in place, L2 learners find that they can express ideas through the generation of charts and graphs; visual, musical, dramatic or physical art forms; technologically-based mixed media; and by using multiple languages which is more effective than using written language or

L2-based discussion alone. For example, Christian Chun (2009) reported on a class of high school ELLs as they critically read *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Speigleman, 1986), a **graphic novel** about the Holocaust which won the Pulitzer prize. Chun emphasized the cognitively compelling nature of that experience based in multiliteracies. She found that as they were guided to critically evaluate the complex visual metaphors in *Maus*, students were able to understand historical concepts in sophisticated, age-appropriate ways. This enabled them to gain entry into a 'social network that transcends ethnic and linguistic divides' (p. 152). L2 students were able to participate in complex, cognitively compelling intellectual activity that would have remained out of reach had they been restricted to a genre that was language-based only. Classroom Snapshot 2.2 describes an immigration unit based upon the writing of graphic novels that focused upon both the written and the graphic construction of meaning. The effect was similar.

Classroom Snapshot 2.2

Robin Danzak (2011) recorded the experiences of 32 middle school ELLs who were given the opportunity to research their families' immigration narratives and then depict their personal immigration experiences in the context of graphic or comic-book-style stories in a collaborative graphic classroom that included a structured writing-and-drawing environment, read-alouds, **journal writing**, and process-writing instruction. The teacher began by flooding the classroom with graphic novels and comic books and focused discussions on not only the genre and content of the material, but the style and effect of presentation and illustrations. Students were asked to keep journals filled with pictures, and illustrations related to their heritage and to reflect upon and develop vocabulary based upon the graphic materials while beginning to caption or write dialogue for comics and/or to create illustrations to go with written text. Yang's (2006) graphic novel, *American Born Chinese* was read aloud. Groups of students then developed interview questions, parents were interviewed, and family photographs were collected and scanned. Family stories and reflections about personal immigration experiences were written, revised, and shared. Students were then invited to use word processors and comic-book software to create multimodal final products that were exhibited at an event attended by parents, school personnel, and community members. Danzak concluded that the development of graphic stories enabled the students to use and critically appreciate multiple modes of expression as they came to understand literacy as a multiplicity of discourses. She noted that a focus on students' immigration experiences necessarily involves a defining/redefining identity shift, allowing students social opportunities to share overlapping experiences in the course of expressing group and individual affinities. ■

Danzak's study demonstrates how a focus on the visual modes of communication celebrated student's nonverbal, multimodal strengths—rather than relegating them to merely compensate undeveloped L2 verbal-textual skills—and encouraged interaction.

Graphic novels are simply one of a number of platforms for accomplishing this. 21st-century-minded teachers, focused on the development of multiliteracies, have engaged L2 learners in creating animated **bilingual books**, online book chats, illustrated electronic dictionaries or **word walls**, blogs, videos, pen-pal-like electronic exchanges, classroom websites and much more. There are numerous activities that can be used with L2 learners that enable them to develop multiliteracies as they apply creative and critical thinking in cognitively compelling ways. Further, in the course of reading and writing of **multimodal texts**, L2 learners can connect with people all over the world and build their literate lives and identities as transnational citizens, as they learn to make flexible use of 21st-century tools for their own social purposes.

However, the idea that effective instruction must differ from traditional, language-based instruction in favor of a focus that goes beyond language to include nonverbal tools for meaning-making raises some red flags among language educators who see their job as focused on language, not on 21st-century communication. Anticipating this difficulty, the New London Group (1996) pointed out that language is still necessary to the discussion of other modes of representation and emphasized that pedagogy of multiliteracies supplements, rather than supplants language-based literacy pedagogy.

This is also supported by Marjorie Siegel's (1995) research into **transmediation** or the movement among **sign systems** or different forms of representation or 'the translation of content from one sign system to another' (Suhor, 1984, p. 250). Siegel posited that transmediation goes beyond the display of received meanings to the invention of new connections and meanings. The total experience of two or more modes of representation extends beyond a simple sum of single contributions. Modes of representation play off one another to produce new, more complex meanings. As Royce (2007) stated:

Teachers need to be able to address the fact that the two modes co-occur, that they project their meaning in concert, and that these combined meanings often realize a visual-verbal synergy which provides in many ways a richer and fuller expression of meaning than would be extant if a single mode were used. Allied to this is the fact that students will come to their classes with their own culturally situated understandings of

multimodality; this dimension can and should be drawn upon as a rich source of detail that can be used for comparison and contrast of English multimodal texts

(Royce, 2007, pp. 376–77)

Transmediation is enriching in and of itself. When one moves an idea or concept from one sign system, media platform, or language to another, ‘the invention of new connections and meanings’ (Siegel, 1995, p. 456) is necessary. The transmediation of a term, concept, or a complex idea promotes the development of multiple perspectives as the original is seen in a slightly different way. This thinking echoes the idea of *linguaging-as-thinking* in the form of **translanguaging** (Garcia, 2009). Translanguaging is a form of transmediation that is routinely a part of bilingual learning, for bilingual individuals must constantly create increasingly complex, hybrid texts. Jennifer McCormick (2011) explained that ‘the link that conveys content in the second sign system must be invented. Thus, students cannot rely on prescribed answers when they translate meaning into a new system. Translation forces them to confront ambiguity’ (p. 581). However, Siegel (1995) warned, ‘crossing the gap between different sign systems is ... a generative process, one that makes sign functioning visible ...’ yet, its ‘potential as a learning experience can easily be subverted by closing down the ambiguity that crossing sign systems engenders before students have a chance to explore it’ (p. 473). Put slightly differently, any expectation of fixed or narrowed outcomes works against the broadened and deepened learning that can result from transmediation. Effective instruction for the 21st century must embrace that complexity and uncertainty rather than attempt to minimize it.

Also, while L2 students may be able to draw upon nonverbal modes to support and extend their understanding of second language texts, doing so may compound confusion. Previously unexplored, culture-bound assumptions may come to light as complexity is increased. For example, at the simplest level, while Westerners associate the color black with death, Chinese use the white for similar purposes. Students who are unaware of such customs may not be supported when viewing illustrations of death rituals and may be unequipped to make use of illustrations to support textual understandings unless guided to compare and contrast multimodal messages. While this is a fairly straightforward example, other, more subtle, more complex confusions may arise that cannot be anticipated.

If for no other reason than this, language and literacy learning premised on the idea that one can function in a second language in the 21st century

by simply emulating native-speakers is flawed. Such a stance fails to recognize the deep and lasting influence of home languages and cultures and the potential for confusion in an environment where multiliteracies abound. The multiple, diverse connections that can occur when students are 'doing' language and literacy and are thinking-while-being-and-becoming are unavoidable. Attaining communicative competence implies becoming empowered to negotiate the complexity of any 21st-century communicative environment. The goal must be to increase the likelihood of maximizing L2 learners' investment and agency in the communicative processes they will encounter as time goes on (McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce, 1995).

Summary

In this chapter we have emphasized the importance of adopting a languaging-as-thinking stance for the sake of L2 identity formation, investment in literacy learning, and empowerment. With this framework, this chapter has explored L2-literacy instructional settings for both EFL students and ELLs and has stressed that languaging-as-thinking enables L2 language development and investment in the communicative process through voice and choice during meaningful reading and writing activity. Such instruction activates, attends to, and builds upon home language and local literacies, while L2 learners construct meanings across languages, sociocultural boundaries, and complex multiliteracies as they develop transnational identities for use in the 21st-century, globalized world.

Activity 2.2 Strategies for Use after Reading

Practice some of the strategies that you will want your students to apply after reading:

Take a few moments to think about languaging-as-thinking, identity formation, and empowerment through literacy events. As a skilled reader, you may not find the following activities necessary for you, but doing them will allow you to experience after-reading activities that will strengthen a languaging-as-thinking response to reading among your students.

1 Review the map you made while reading

Alternatively, brainstorm a list of ideas that you gained from reading and then write a simple summary of the important points. The chapter's title and subheadings may be used as an outline. However, following one's own mapped reorganization of the material is a powerful way to support both understanding and recall because it is based upon personal connections.

2 Discuss your response to the contents

Discuss your response to languaging-as-thinking, identity formation, and empowerment through the transmediation of multimodal multiliteracies with someone, and then write your response. If you envisioned the content prior to reading, and then continuously revised that vision during the course of reading, you should have a starting point from which to compose a response. Discussing how the contents fit with what you previously knew or understood will provide you with another perspective that you may accept or not. Finally, illustrate your discussion, if doing so more fully expresses your response. Discussion followed by response (writing and illustrating) helps readers formulate and articulate their own positions with regard to the contents.

3 Design an application of the contents

Design an application of languaging-as-thinking, identity formation, and empowerment through performative literacy events that utilizes both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. Compose and share something (a poem, lyrics and a tune, a skit, a fictional scene or story, a website, a blog, a lesson to teach, or anything else) that expresses your interpretation of the contents. Interpretative work that utilizes various modes of expression not only supports and extends understanding, it also contributes to the development of 21st-century skills.

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