CULTURALLY RELEVANT LITERACY PRACTICES: A CASE OF A BRAZILIAN EMERGENT BILINGUAL

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the case of Anita, a Brazilian emergent bilingual, studying and living in the United States. It highlights the critical issue of culturally relevant literacy learning in and out-of-school, focusing in Anita’s, her parent’s and teachers’ perspectives on literacy and culturally relevant literacy practices, asking: What are the practices and resources considered culturally relevant for supporting second language literacy learning of the Brazilian emergent bilingual participating in this study? This study investigates the different perspectives on literacy and literacy practices for different participants. It examines how participants’ notions of culturally relevant literacy practices shape their practices and affect the participating child experiences with literacy in different contexts (e.g., classroom to classroom and home vs. school).

I framed this study based on sociocultural views of learning and teaching (Freire, 1972; Street, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). The analysis of the data shows that participants conceptualized literacy, and culturally relevant literacy practices, from mainly two perspectives: “Inside-out,” that is, from children’s social worlds and needs; and “Outside-In,” emerging from “outside ” features from the institution and its demands. Based on these perspectives parents and teachers facilitate literacy practices and determine which literacy practices are relevant. Discrepancies between these practices produced certain tensions for the child and for the family.

In this case, I suggest ways in which researchers, administrators, policymakers, and teachers might begin to think of “culturally relevant” literacy practices. I highlight the importance of understanding the children’s social worlds and their “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). I discuss the necessity of being aware of individuals’ conceptualization of literacy and, thus, relevance because the concepts individuals hold about literacy and relevance undergird the ways they experience and facilitate literacy, and most importantly, the ways they socialize children into practices they judge relevant. I argue that the “Inside-out” concept of literacy can be a starting point for critical understating of culturally relevant literacy practices for children from different cultural backgrounds. The “Inside-out” way of conceptualizing culturally relevant literacy could be a common ground between what schools see as relevant to teach and what and how parents see as relevant for their children to learn.
DEDICATÓRIA

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PREFACE

As a child growing up on the outside edge of a small town in São Paulo state, in Brazil, my experience of public schooling was centered around the so-called “banking approach” to education. My teachers relied on memorization, repetition, and answering questions to educate me and my classmates. I was not aware of their methods at the time. In fact, I enjoyed school and learning to such an extent that I would come home and want to share what I learned with my family members. At home, I did not grow up in what many people would consider the most “ideal” literacy environment. I did not have literature books at home and reading bedtime stories was not part of my family culture. My grandfather, with whom I spent most of my time, could not read or write. However, I had a great experience with words at home, and my grandfather’s lack of experience with the written word did not mean a lack of experience in the world (Freire, 1972). His inability to comprehend the written code did not stop him from managing his life and daily affairs effectively. He also supported me in advancing my education. Indeed, my childhood experiences became my motivation to pursue my educational goals and to investigate distinctive cases of literacy practices in order to share with others.

These experiences have allowed me to bring to my research the perspective of someone who has not only experienced different forms of literacy, but also who sees literacy practices through a different lens that influences the way I view students as literacy learners. I do not support the “one size fits all” approach; rather, I look at each student individually and take into consideration their unique circumstances. I see each child as fully capable of learning and being a successful learner even when their learning differs from their peers and the standards imposed by schools.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Although a variety of studies exist that describe the many forms of culturally relevant literacy practices for young children in and out of schools (e.g., Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Purcell-Gates, 1996), there are still cultural groups that deserve more attention. The Brazilian population is one of them. Estimates presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brazil (Itamaraty) have shown that there are approximately 1,280,000 Brazilians living in the United States and the three largest populations of Brazilians are within the consulate jurisdiction of New (350,000), Boston (350,000), and Miami (300,000). And as Davis (2005) noted, the number of Brazilian immigrants living in the United States is still increasing. Not much research has focused on this population.

To date, most study related to culturally relevant literacy practices has focused its attention on the investigation of what culturally relevant literacy practices might look like in the classroom (e.g., Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995), in the homes (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1996) and in the communities (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll et al., 1992) of culturally diverse population. Studies have also explored the connection or mismatch between in-school and out-of-school literacy practices (e.g., Schultz & Hull, 2002; Volk & De Acosta, 2001). In addition, researchers have also called for a transformation of not only instruction and pedagogy, but also of the individuals involved in the process of providing a more culturally relevant schooling for children (Nieto, 2010b).

While these studies are fundamental to understanding culturally relevant practices in different communities, we have not explored extensively what type of transformation might take place in the lives of individuals involved in that processes. Additionally, not many studies have considered how individuals come to conceptualize the notions of “relevance,” that is, the broader ideological views individuals use to approach literacy and, based on that, how they define what is “relevant” or not. Nor have scholars considered how these notions of relevance reflect on the way these individuals facilitate literacy practices, and by doing so, how these practices might affect and transform children’s experiences with literacy and most importantly, how they socialize children into concepts of “relevant practices.”

Through this dissertation, I explore these components. I offer detailed insights into the case of Anita, a Brazilian emergent bilingual studying in the United States. I portray her experiences with literacy in and out of school. I also examine Anita’s parents’ and teachers’ perspectives on literacy practices, the way they experience literacy, and what that means for her literacy experiences in a second language.
I use the term emergent bilinguals to refer to the students who are not native speakers of English and are learning English as a second language. To more accurately define the term employed in this study, I use Reyes and Azuara’s (2008) definition that says that emergent bilinguals are “young children … who speak a native language other than English and are in the dynamic process of developing bilingual and biliterate competencies with the support of their communities” (p. 374). Other terms such as English Language Learners, English Learners, Limited English Proficient, and Second Language Learners are also often used to refer to these students. However, in order to avoid those terms, that might carry negative connotations such as Limited English Proficient students or to avoid negative perceptions of children with culture and language backgrounds other than English, I will use the term emergent bilingual throughout this study. However, other terms were maintained when the participants used them.

I framed this study around the complexity of in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. I problematize the teachers’ notions of literacy and on “relevance” in literacy practices. Who decides what is culturally appropriate or relevant? (Harris, 1991). What does it mean for different participants? How do notions of culturally relevant transfer between different contexts (e.g., classroom to classroom, home, and school)? How are literacy practices that some consider “relevant” perceived by others?

To get insights into these complex issues and to uncover what culturally relevant literacy practices meant for the participants of this study, I designed a qualitative case study. I looked at four culturally diverse elementary classrooms (the third-grade mainstream and ESL classrooms as well as their fourth grade counterparts) and at the out-of-school experiences of a Brazilian emergent bilingual child.

My research goals were 1) to understand the types of literacy practices the Brazilian child engaged in, 2) what these practices meant for the participants in this study, and 3) how culturally and relevant literacy practices figured into the participants’ everyday life events. Another goal was to understand the perspectives that parents and teachers held regarding literacy practices and the development of the participant. Specifically, I was interested in looking at how these perspectives intersected to shape the emergent bilinguals’ experiences with literacy, in ways individuals believed to be “relevant.”

For that, I closely investigated the different perspectives on appropriate resources used to enhance and promote literacy learning at home and school. By appropriate, I mean practices considered to be culturally and linguistically relevant in particular contexts for a particular individual. The term “resources” refers to the tools students bring to school (e.g., literature, popular culture, media, games, and other types of literacy used by students outside of school) from their home culture, that is, she shared learned values, beliefs and attitudes that shape one’s perceptions and behavior in his or her culture (Rogoff, 2003).
The theoretical frame and analysis of this qualitative case were informed by a sociocultural view of learning (Freire, 1972; Street, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). By examining cultural relevant issues through a sociocultural perspective, this study recognizes that learners socially construct their own meanings through social interaction with their peers and people around them, including those who have the power to dictate and regulate the type of experiences children have with literacy.

I also share Freire’s (1972) views, which highlight the importance of knowing that each learner has his or her unique ways of participating in the world. Therefore, “Educators need to know what happens in the world of the children with whom they work” (Freire, 2005, p. 130) in order to provide a pedagogy that comes from the students and is not designed for them (Freire, 1972). Additionally, I also take the stance that, similar to culture, which is always changing (Rosaldo, 1989), resources or ideas of what is “relevant,” mainly for young children, also change according to their participation in certain types of social cultural practices and contexts. Additionally, I use Street’s (2000) autonomous and ideological models of literacy to argue that notions of culturally relevant practice seemed to be situated within the social and cultural world of the participants as well as to show that meanings of literacy and, thus, “relevance” not only vary across social contexts, but are also shaped by many individuals based on the notions they hold of literacy.

The primary research question that guided my understanding of the proposed phenomenon is the following: What are the literacy practices and resources considered culturally relevant, in and out of school, for supporting second language literacy learning of the Brazilian emergent bilingual participating in this study? To support the understanding of my primary question, I also investigate a subset of questions:

1) What type of literacy practices is the participating child, Anita, experiencing in the school environment?
   a) What are the teachers’ perspectives on literacy development and instruction of emergent bilingual children? How do the teachers’ perspectives interplay with their classroom practices to shape the educational experiences of their students?
   b) What are the ways and the resources teachers use to support and promote aspects of L2 literacy in their classroom?
   c) How were teachers socializing students into practices they believed to be relevant?

2) What types of literacy practices is the focal child experiencing in the out-of-school environment?
   a) What are the parents’ perspectives on their child’s literacy? How do the parents’ perspectives interplay to shape their child’s educational experiences?
   b) What are the ways and the resources, if any, that the parents use to support and promote aspects of L1 and L2 literacy out of school?
c) How were parents socializing their child into practices they believed to be relevant?

3) **Across in and out of school contexts, how do culturally relevant practices and resources figure into the everyday practices of the participants?**

I explore these questions and suggest ways in which researchers, administrators, policymakers, and teachers might begin to think of “culturally relevant” literacy practices. I also highlight the importance of understanding the children’s social worlds and their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992). I argue that it is essential to take into consideration individuals’ conceptualization of literacy and, thus, “relevance” mainly because the concepts individuals hold about literacy and on “relevance” undergird the ways they experience and facilitate literacy, and most importantly, the ways they socialize children into practices they judge to be relevant. I argue that the “Inside-out” concept of literacy—that is viewing literacy from the standpoint of the child’s interests and resources—can be a starting point for a critical understanding of culturally relevant literacy practices for children, mainly the ones from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

It is important to note that this study is not about teaching individuals what are scripted “relevant” practices for all the Brazilian children enrolled in elementary schools in the US, but rather it is about learning from the participants what is relevant for them. It is about understanding literacy as it is practiced in a family whose culture and language are different and portraying literacy practices in the reality of home, neighborhood, life, and classroom of a Brazilian child in order to reveal the complexity of promoting culturally relevant education for culturally diverse children.

**Significance of the Study**

The information in this research study has the potential to theoretically contribute to the fields of literacy, bilingual education, and culturally relevant education. Its significance for these fields is essentially the following. First, the study will add to the literature on emergent bilingual children’s experience with literacy and to contribute to the professional discussion concerning the range of literacy practices and how these practices are being enacted in different homes, societies, and educational sites (Dyson, 1997, 2003; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). Also, not many researchers have focused on the Brazilian populations living in the United States. Most of the existing research studies regarding literacy practices of emergent bilinguals have focused on other cultural and linguistic communities such as Spanish speakers (See Jiménez, 2003). A broader view of literacy that includes its many forms in different diverse communities is still needed. Most importantly, this study extends the conversation about culturally relevant schooling by examining what culturally relevant means for different participants and how these notions are understood by participants in different contexts. Thus, it yields a different way of looking at culturally relevant literacy practices, as well as offers implications for the teaching of literacy to emergent bilinguals, for the learners, teacher, parents, and policymakers.
Outline of the Chapters

In chapter two, I present the theoretical lens that undergirds this study. This chapter consists of seven sections. First, I present an overview of theories about language development. Then, I introduce the sociocultural approach to language learning and literacy, followed by a discussion of the definition of literacy. Next, I review the literature on out-of-school and in-school literacy practices and discuss the Freirean perspectives on language and literacy and explore the intersection of culture and language. I also address studies on culturally relevant literacy instruction.

In chapter three, I present the methodology used for investigating culturally relevant practice in the school and out-of-school settings. I present the sites where this research took place, the participants, the data collection, and the data analysis procedures for my study. I finish this chapter by presenting my identity as a researcher and as well as the roles I took during this research study.

In chapter four, I explain how this dissertation study is organized and provide an overview of the research findings. I start by discussing two big concepts that participants seemed to hold when approaching literacy, notions of “relevance,” and, thus, culturally relevant practices. I also comment on the general findings related to literacy, activities, and resources that appeared to be “relevant” from the perspective of the participating child. Then, I turn to the school settings to present the experiences and challenges of the focal child when she first entered her school in the United States.

In chapter five, I turn to the literacy practices in the classroom and I explain how they take place within what I call “the “Outside-in” concept—that is, approaching literacy from the standpoint of the institution. Here, I offer details of how teachers use, for the most part, the “Outside-in” approach to deliver literacy practices they consider necessary and “relevant” for their students. Additionally, I analyze the resources and materials (e.g., native language, artifacts, media, texts, popular culture), if any, used by teachers in their instruction. In this chapter, I also consider how each teacher mediated instruction and socialized children into practices they believed to be important for the emergent bilinguals.

In chapter six, I focus on the practices that took place in the out-of-school contexts of the family home, neighborhood, and at the after-school program (The Youngsters’ Club). I illustrate how, in those spaces, literacy practices occurred within the “Inside-out” concept. I offer details of how participants engaged in practices they considered “relevant” for the young children and how they mediated literacy practices. Throughout this chapter, I analyze the resources and materials (e.g., artifacts, media, texts, popular culture) used by these individuals when mediating literacy practices as well as the features they emphasized during literacy practices. By doing so, I also investigate the ways these participants are socializing children into practices they believe to be fundamental for the participating child and how the participating child started altering from “Inside-out” to “Outside-in” concepts. I also explore how the concept embraced by the school (“Outside-in”) started taking over the approach embraced by parents.
 (“Inside-out” concept). I explore the critiques, concerns, and tension experiences that arose from those experiences.

Finally, in chapter seven, I draw conclusions for this study. I address key findings and argue that the “Inside-out” approach can be a way of examining culturally relevant practices. It can be a starting point for the critical understanding of culturally relevant literacy practices as well as a way to learn about the unique resources that emergent bilinguals have available. Then, I highlight the central elements that individuals used for the conceptualization of literacy: their ideological notions of “relevance,” and thus culturally relevant literacy practices, the ways these individuals facilitated practices, and the ways they seemed to socialize children into “notions of relevance.” Next, I argue that the positions these different individuals took (“Inside-out” concept or “Outside-in” concept), in one way or another, not only socialized children into different practices, but also socialized them into concepts of “relevance” and that is worth our consideration. I end this chapter by discussing the importance of this research study for the field, for teachers, parents, and policymakers. I also offer educational implications and ideas for future research.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework that undergirds this study. The literature reviewed here is part of my ongoing reflection to better understand language and literacy, and culturally relevant literacy practices in and out of school. This chapter consists of seven sections. First, I present an overview of theories about language acquisition and language development. Then, I introduce the sociocultural approach to language learning and literacy, followed by a discussion on the definition of literacy. Next, I review the literature on out-of-school and in-school literacy practices and discuss Freire’s perspectives to language and literacy and explore the intersection of culture and language. I also address studies related to culturally relevant literacy instruction.

My study draws on the literature that views language learning as embedded in individuals’ historical activity and influenced by social, cultural, economic, and political structures at their time. I take into account the cultural and linguistic aspects that are unique to particular individuals in their cultural communities in particular contexts (Vygotsky, 1978); in this case, in the home and school of the Brazilian emergent bilingual. I also look at literacy as a combination of multidimensional components, including but no limited to, participants’ histories, values, and their dialog with the world (Freire, 1972). I also embrace theories that consider that literacy should be understood as critical literacy (Freire, 1972) and that view literacy (and, thus, overall education) as a participatory and political action. That is, in this project I considered studies that view children as actively participating in the pedagogical and instructional decisions and curriculum (Freire, 1972; Nieto, 2003, 2010a). I will discuss this framework in more detail in the sections that follow. Since this study addresses language learning and emergent bilinguals, I start the next section with a brief discussion on language issues and on how different theories contributed to our understanding of language development.

Overview on Language Development

Language as a social means. Vygotsky (1978) believed that language development initially began due to the necessity of children to communicate with others in their settings, and only through communication, language became organized in children's minds. He believed that,

“Language arises initially as a means of communication between the child and the people in his environment. Only subsequently, upon conversion to inner speech, does it come to organize child's thought, that is, become an internal mental function” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 89).

As the passage above illustrates, Vygotsky placed language development within the context it is used, that is, he considered the social, cultural, and historical settings where language was learned. Vygotsky
focused on studying the cognitive and social aspects of language development and its socially constructed aspects. However, language development has not always been viewed through this social lens.

Language learning was seen as a result of conditioning and behavior. Before Vygotsky, during the 1950s, a common view behind language acquisition was rooted in behaviorism. For example, Skinner’s (1953) theory of language development considered that human beings learned a language by conditioning and behavior. He believed he could shape a child into anything. However, the theory of the linguist Chomsky came to contradict this view in the sixties and seventies.

Language was theorized as an innate capacity. According to Chomsky (1972), the capacity of acquiring a language was innate and all humans were born with an inherited capacity for language. In his study, Chomsky showed that humans had a disposition to perceive language and to construct internalized systems which were universal and followed universal linguistic rules. Chomsky’s theories, in the sixties, had a great impact on how people understood the development of language. His ideas of the innate system of learning languages not only brought to the field a different way of understanding and looking at language acquisition, but also changed the understanding of language development, pedagogy, and research in his time. An example of this influence is the work of Lindfors (1987), who shared Chomsky’s view on language learning. In her scholarship, Lindfors discussed the important components in language knowledge that led individuals to become linguistically competent and, thus gain linguistic performance. Lindfors explained that if individuals had the knowledge of grammar rules of a language, they were able to use these rules to think, understand, or communicate an idea.

Similarly interested in the development of grammar knowledge and its meanings, Brown and Bellugi (2001) studied children’s innate tendency to use language rules. These researchers noticed that some of the grammar mistakes children made did not come from adult’s models (e.g., expansion of talk), but rather were created by the children themselves. Brown and Bellugi observed that children were able to understand and construct sentences they had never heard before and argued that the adults’ models or imitation could not be the only reason for language development. For this reason, they concluded that all children developed their own hypotheses about their language rules and based on the input they received, the children tested those hypotheses by trying them out. Besides being consistent with Chomsky’s (1972) theory, Brown and Bellugi’s ideas on children’s language development helped us to understand the stages of grammatical constructions and the meanings they convey.

Even though these studies were extremely important to help us understand how language works in individuals’ minds, language could not be explained just in terms of linguistic competence and cognition. As Chomsky (1972) and Lindfors (1987) observed, acquiring a language also involved much more than knowing the grammar (linguistic competence). It also required linguistic performance.
Hymes (1972) explained that when using language it was necessary for an individual to know how to express ideas in different situations, for different audiences and purposes, and in different social communities. According to Lessow-Hurley (2009), that means that when using language, individuals need to know and process the many features that a language entails. That includes the knowledge of phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics of a certain language. Individuals also need to learn the rules of interaction within the society and community in which they live (See Halliday, 1975). Hence, other researchers such as Clark (2003) argued that even if a child was born with the language device as Chomsky (1972) hypothesized, his theory just explained the syntactic structure of the language. Everything else still needed to be learned. This implies that not only cognition, but also the interaction and the social components are crucial for language development.

**Language development requires social interaction.** Many researchers investigating the significance of language development viewed language as being constructed throughout interaction. For example, Halliday (1975) found that interaction was an important component of language development. Halliday found that during interaction, children would initially understand the function of a language and, through its use, they would understand the form itself. For instance, when a child said, “my” referring to a doll, she had an idea of the function of the language (communicating, “That is my doll!”). In this case, the child probably did not have the clear idea of the form yet, but that would follow function. As Halliday argued, through interaction experiences children learn “how to mean,” ways of speaking and acting in conversation, and they learn what is appropriate for certain situations, and convey many other intentions during conversation. Other researchers like Krashen (1982) also noticed that when interacting with children, an adult provides not only words to be learned, but also experiences. According to Krashen, adults offer colloquial words, comprehensible language input, and many other contextual clues and information that carry the meaning of these words which are also specific within that context of the conversation.

**Language learning draws from both cognitive and social knowledge.** Therefore, these researchers, including Hymes (1972) noticed that just knowing about the language and interacting with others was not enough to develop linguistic knowledge and become proficient in a language. Hymes noticed that to be able to use this knowledge appropriately in different social situations, individuals needed to develop linguistic and social knowledge. Therefore, he made the distinction these two knowledge systems: linguistic competence and communicative competence. For him, linguistic competences dealt with sentence construction and the understanding of grammatical structure of sentences. Hymes believed that communicative competence included this, but also had to do with the capacity that people had to organize and understand the rules for specific situations and deal with producing and understanding sentences that were appropriate and accepted for particular situations. The
author also argued that these two competences were necessary for both monolinguals and second-language learners. In addition, since language learning takes place through interaction, and interaction is specific and situated in certain contexts, language should be studied in relation to its social context. Hymes argued, “to understand language in its social context requires understanding the meanings that social context and uses of languages have for their participants” (p.28). This understanding is important in order to make us aware of the different practices and contexts in which languages are used and learned and to help us understand the “ways with words” (Heath, 1982,1983) that participants are engaged in during interaction, as well as how language(s) evolve in communities and societies, or change depending on their context, time, and social interaction.

The views on language learning and teaching shift toward a more communicative approach. Hymes’ (1972) theory of communicative competence expanded the ways individuals looked at approaches to language teaching and language development, including second language learners. His theory became widely recognized and affected instruction directly. It shifted the focus and the goals of second language instruction, which emphasized linguistic/grammatical competence to more interactive and communicative approaches. With these theories about language development and pedagogy, aspects of language presumed to be universal were put into question, and approaches that took into consideration the social context and social aspects of language became more popular among researchers and practitioners.

Vygotsky’s (1978) ideas on social interaction shaping individuals, their language, and, thus, their culture are an example of that popularity. For Vygotsky, the ways people used symbols and cultural tools for thinking were unique and specific for them and their situation. Vygotsky also noticed that everyday forms of activity and social relationships were internalized as a mental activity. He explained that “every function in the child’s cultural development appeared twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)” (p. 57). Therefore he argued that social learning precedes development.

Vygotsky (1978) also explained that learning happened through interaction with a more “competent” individual through what he called the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). He described the ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). In other words, ZPD is what children can accomplish with the help of an adult (or more knowledgeable person), things that they could not accomplish without guidance. Vygotsky’s socio-constructivist ideas developed and promoted new ways of viewing language development, language learning, and approaches to literacy. It also expanded and influenced research in many fields. Classroom studies and researchers started incorporating the role of
other individuals and their culture, and started using a sociocultural framework to understand language and literacy development and learning.

**The Sociocultural Approach to Language Learning and Literacy**

Socio-cultural approaches to literacy argue that literacy is inherently plural (literacies) and that writing, reading, and languages are always embedded in and inextricable from Discourses (social practices, cultures, and subcultures, or whatever analogous term is used). Writing, reading, and language are not private psychic possessions of decontextualized heads, nor are they generalized skills isolable from specific contents and contexts (Gee, 1991, p.33).

The sociocultural perspective to language (and, thus literacy) emphasizes the social nature of learning. That is, it takes into consideration the importance and influence of culture, social context and social interaction in shaping students’ experiences with language and literacy (e.g., Gee, 1991; Hymes, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). The sociocultural perspective focuses on understanding the process of learning within groups of individuals in specific social contexts (Rogoff, 2003). The context, therefore, is essential for understanding the multiple ways language and literacy are used, understood, and performed in different communities and societies, and how these communities vary in the purpose of language use and literacy (Street, 2001). For example, in order to become competent members of certain social groups, participants in different contexts might develop different ways of interacting with language. Additionally, as Halliday (1975) explained, in social groups, individuals are socialized through language, and to use language in certain ways and within the cultural rules of a certain community. The processes of learning these cultural rules are linked to different cultural practices influenced by an individual’s specific social contexts (Rogoff, 2003). Also, as Schieffelin (1985) reminded us, “every society has its own ideology about language, including when it begins and how children acquire it” (p. 531). For example, in some communities, since birth, infants develop language acquiring basic turn-taking skills through interactions with close family and/or with caregivers. These interactions are organized differently in different societies.

For instance, as Ochs and Schieffelin’s (2001) study showed, Anglo-American middle-class white children were considered communication partners since birth. That is, they were treated as social beings and as addressees during their interactions with adults. This study showed that Anglo-American families (the mothers) facilitated the social exchange for their children. The mothers used baby talk and repetition of words to accommodate their talk to their child’s level of competence. However, this type of interaction and consideration could vary within cultures or communities. In some societies, families assumed that the infant could not understand them (e.g., Schiefflin, 1985) or the infants were just expected to listen (e.g., Givón, 1985). Thus, in some communities, infants are not considered conversational partners and verbal interaction is discouraged.
Another example of context influencing interaction with language within social groups is the notion of different “ways with words” (Heath, 1983). As Heath explained, on the basis of her ethnographic work in three communities in the Piedmont Carolinas “the different ways children learned to use language were dependent on the ways in which each community structured their families, defined the roles that community members could assume, and played out their concepts of childhood that guided child socialization” (Heath, 1983, p. 11). According to the author, children are socialized to language through their families. They learn a language (spoken or written) according to their families’ values and those of their specific communities and society.

In her discussion of these ideas for educators, Lindfors (1987) explained that everyone (e.g., teacher and child) brings their own ways of using language into the classroom. Lindfors notes that the way teachers ask questions or tell stories might be different from those of their students who might come from communities with different cultural practices. In addition, according to Lindfors, children might have different notions of what, when, and why it is appropriate to communicate. Lindfors also remind us that children’s ways of communicating involve a complex system of rules that “also includes a variety of types of written and oral communication events that the child has observed and/or participated in, his/her community” (p. 416). As the author concluded, “What we think of as the ‘appropriate’ way to carry on a large-group discussion or interact in a reading group may, in fact, be only our own way—one way among many” (p. 415).

In sum, the sociocultural approach to literacy learning and development assumes that no activity is purely individual or fixed, but rather collective and constructed throughout the processes of changing participation in cultural activities. This perspective allowed me to look deeply into how language and literacy took place in individuals’ lives, and how components, such as the social, economic, linguistic, political, and cultural contexts, influenced learners’ experiences with literacy. Through the sociocultural perspective to literacy, I looked at literacy as a dynamic process and considered the fact that the students’ background and practices were the result of their experiences, culture, and their journey in life. Further, I was able to understand better how these features (e.g., experiences, language, and culture) related to practices in the school and home contexts.

**Perspectives on Literacy: Many Aspects to Consider**

**Literacy as a system of signs to be mastered.** As the example of language, literacy has also being viewed by many researchers and practitioners as purely cognitive in nature. Similar to Chomsky (1972), many practitioners and researchers have looked at literacy development as a set of skills to be mastered. They view reading development, and, thus, literacy, as “primarily a process of learning to recognize words by converting written language to spoken language and then combining the meaning of individuals words to construct the meaning of a text” (Freeman & Freeman, 2006, p. 26). They argue that
by acquiring a set of reading and writing skills learners will become literate, emphasizing in this way, the structure. These skills, as Freeman and Freeman explain, include the knowledge of phonemic awareness, phonics, sounds and spellings correspondence, fluency, and writing. Individuals who share this view usually believe that learners will reach “higher” level of thinking by mastering these skills. Further, some researchers even make a distinction between oral and written language (e.g., Ong, 1988) as if they were separable from each other. However, instructors who embrace these beliefs and follow these approaches, according Dyson (1991), ignore the multiple dimensions of literate practices and the complexity of children’s textual worlds. Additionally, as I have investigated in this study, instructors, who share this view, tend to approach literacy as set of skills that learners either acquire or do not acquire and as a decontextualized practices without reference to the social historical context (Street, 1984).

That does not mean that the learning of skills is not important for students. However, too much emphasis on literacy skills and decontextualized words in the early grades might limit students’ ability to construct meaning (Dyson, 1991). Moreover, identifying words or sounds in a word and words in a sentence does not guarantee that students know what these words mean (Freire, 1972). Therefore, learning the only the skills do not mean that children will be able to become good readers and writers.

Literacy experiences are challenging enough in a first language, when it comes to learning literacy in a second language; it became more abstract and challenging. Additionally, the mastering of written and oral skills alone in a second language (L2) does not seem to provide learners with meaningful experiences with reading and writing (Cummins, 1979, 1981; García, 1991). In fact placing too much emphasis on these the skills might be unnecessary mainly because when reading and writing emergent bilinguals seem to rely on many other linguistic and cultural resources they bring (e.g., first language, cross-linguistic transfers from their L1 to the second language L2). Emergent bilinguals might also use specifics strategies including cognitive and metacognitive strategies (e.g., strategies for using the knowledge and information gained in their native language to the learning of another language such as questioning, inferencing, awareness of language itself) when reading a text in a different language (García 1991; Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996; Lesaux, Koda, Siegel, & Shanahan, 2006). Still, their comprehension might also be affected by many other factors such as the level of vocabulary background and background knowledge of topics student possess (Garcia, 1991). Comprehension in a second-language can related to the level or the foundation students have in their first language (L1) (Cummins, 1980). The more knowledge students have in their (L1), the more they will be able to transfer this knowledge to their literacy in their second language (L2). Therefore, too much emphasis on the learning of skills might be pointless because the learning of reading and writing involves more than just knowing the “basics” (Dyson, 2003). It involves students’ social practices and familiarity with the worlds they engage throughout their lives.
**Literacy as a social practice.** To understand literacy as a social practice, it is important to understand students’ unique resources, complex “textual toys,” cultural experiences, gestures, sounds, moves, and multimodal resources that they bring to their literacy and learning (Dyson, 1993, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2008). What Dyson is saying is that in order to understand how children make sense of their “textual toys,” including those from popular culture, it is important to close observe and listen to them as well as to consider the various kinds activities they participate in. It is also necessary to focus on their unique literacy development and on the meaning they give to it. It is critical to encourage students to incorporate their life experiences into their literacy experiences and to think about reading and writing experiences in critical and meaningful ways.

To understand literacy as a social practice, it is necessary to be aware that the social context of instruction these students come from might be different from the one they are experiencing. Not only that, the new environment might also affect a student’s literacy learning and development. For example, in their study, Goldenberg, Rueda, and August (2006) found that sociocultural characteristics, such as context, beliefs, attitudes, practices, social political relations and other resources might influence students’ literacy outcomes. Therefore, many researchers agree that it is crucial to provide students with a supportive environment and positive attitude towards their language, culture, and literacy practices as well as to expand the meaning of what we count as literacy to include multi-languages, multimodality, multicultural ways of experiencing literacy (Heath, 1982, 1983; New London Group, 1996, Street, 1994) as well as new literacies that have emerged in modern societies. (Gee, 1991; New London Group, 1996; Street, 2001, 2003). Further, as Street (2003) explains, the New Literacy Studies should “problematicize what counts as literacy at any time and place and asking ‘whose literacies’ are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant” (p. 77).

**Multiliteracies.** Literacy as a social practice also acknowledges both the existing multiple literacies students have in their everyday lives as well as their interests as essential components of instruction. Further, when exploring how children read or write, it is important to consider and understand their unofficial social worlds, that is, their interaction with peers and those practices they initiate or put their own span on (See Dyson, 1989, 1997, 2003). And, as Norton (2003) reminds us, it is necessary to consider the new forms and places where literacy is situated in the lives of today’s children, including new technologies and media domains. Norton explains that these new forms of literacy should also include computers, iPad games, audio literacies, YouTube videos, TV, and many other resources. Additionally, as Bucher and Manning (2004) explain, children who are growing up with television and computers are involved with many forms of literacy which includes print, and many other forms of media that combine colors, motion, text, and images and that require both forms of expression, print, and visual literacy. That means that children may experience what is called “multiliteracies” (New London Group,
The importance of including these new forms of literacy, as Evans (2004) explained, is due to the influence they have on the way many of children are engaging in activities. For example, the television and the toy industries also contribute to changes in the way children may experience literacy. As Seiter (1999) has argued that children's television and mass marketed toys, whether we want it or not, see children not a passive spectator of the media, but as participants and consumers of the popular culture. Marsh (2003) explained that, “children draw from their popular culture not only when reading televisual texts, but also when engaging in multimodalities through productive practices within the home” (p.115). These practices are also related to the way children experience literacy. Additionally, studies regarding the use and influence of popular culture in young children’s lives have shown that at least some parents are aware of the importance of popular culture and media resources in their children’s education. For instance, Makin et al. (1999) explained that parents in Australia have encouraged and provided popular cultural resources to their children in order to help them with their early literacy development; mainly the parents themselves, whose language was not English, also made use of these resources (e.g., technology such as TV, videos) in order to acquire a second language themselves.

Jacobs (2007) concluded that these new forms with literacy should be seen as a resource, not as obstacle to mastery of traditional print literacy. Marsh and Millard (2000) explained that “the rejection of popular texts for consideration in the classroom, whatever the grounds, seems particularly paradoxical when we consider our youngest children, in particular in the more economically secure countries, have been born into a world which is digitalized and wired to receive the products of mass culture, to an extent that even Walt Disney could not have imagined” (p.2).

There is no doubt that these multiliteracies and multimodal ways of experiencing literacy in addition to the many studies in the field of “New Literacies Studies” have broadened our understanding of literacy pedagogy, literacy instruction, and literacy development. However, what is surprising is that even with “well-researched calls for the need for such changes” (Evans, 2004, p.8), schools do not seem to be meeting the demands of many of today’s children. Many schools have not adapted their curriculum to these new ways with literacy that seems to be more relevant for the students. Rather, the “curriculum framework for the new millennium seems to have shut its textual door to keep out the noise of society at work and at play” (Dyson, 2000, p. 363).

While schools might exclude the new ways with literacy and the popular culture from their official curriculum, young children seem to be incorporating them into their unofficial curriculum (see Dyson, 1989; 1993, 1997, 2001a; 2003). As Dyson (1997) showed in her study of the second and third graders, young children broke the constraint of the “null” curriculum by bringing to the classroom their own interests in popular cultures. She illustrated that children’s interests make their connections with popular culture so strong, at the point that they incorporate popular culture by appropriating superheroes
stories in their writing or play, and in the construction of their identities and social relationships with peers. By assisting children in pursuing their own interests and making connections between play and literacy as well as encouraging play, schooling may become more relevant for students.

In their unofficial curriculum, as I illustrate in this study, children are experiencing literacy in contextualized practices that take place in different cultural communities (e.g., home, school, and neighborhood) and their use of cultural and linguistic repertoires is situated in practices that are multimodal and that involve relationship with others. Given that, literacy does not happen only in the school, looking into the sociocultural dimension of literacy outside school is extremely necessary. That is what I explore in the next subsection.

**Out-of-School Literacy Practices**

Looking at the studies about literacy out of school, it is possible to notice that in different culture communities (e.g., schools, home, and community) and individuals support children’s literacy learning using a variety of resources prior to sending them to school (Volk & Acosta, 2001). Studies also show that families engage children in diverse and relevant set of practices at home (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Orellana et al., 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1996) and that the set of literacy practices families experience differ among families. These practices not always match with the literacy experienced at school, which can be a challenge for some children in schools (See Au, 1980; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll et al., 1992; Orellana et al., 2003; Philips, 1972; Valdés, 1996).

One example of these practices is Valdés’ (1996) ethnographic study that described the various types of knowledge existing among Mexican immigrant families living in a rural area close to the U.S. Mexican border. In her study, she investigated the school, life, and work experiences of ten families. She considered their challenges, their perceptions of the new country and the new educational system. Valdés found that these families also engaged in many types of activities that were culturally and linguistically relevant for them and possessed many types of knowledge. She also discovered that parents supported their children’s schooling efforts, but that this support differed from that of stereotypical middle class parents. For example, Valdés explained that the families participating in her study valued education and recognized the importance of applying real life experiences. Her study showed that while school expected parents to read to their children daily and to teach the ABCs at home, for parents it was more important to focus on key syllables and knowing their sounds because those were the ways Mexican families approached reading instruction back home. She explained further that education, for these families, meant to teach children certain values, giving them “spontaneous homilies designed to influence behaviors and attitudes” (p.125). She described this practice as advices or “consejos.” Valdés showed that these parents thought they were responsible for children’s behavior while the schools were responsible for their children’s intellectual development. She also noticed that the participating children were involved in
many duties at home, such as taking care of their siblings and teaching them how to read and to write. The children were also expected to provide to the families’ budget to the extent possible.

Valdés’ (1996) study gives us valuable insights into the rich ways that families experience literacy, the valuable knowledge they possess, as well as the perspectives they hold towards literacy. Her study makes us aware of the forms of literacy taking place in the context of homes and the importance of recognizing them. Her study is important because it demonstrates that families’ practices at home are contextualized in their culture are a result of their lived experiences, values, and social class. The study also illustrates that families’ perspectives on education and their parenting styles did not match to the ones practiced in “standard” U.S. homes (Valdés, 1996, p. 39). Valdés’s analysis showed that even though the families were very interested in their children's education, their practices differed and they were unfamiliar with the school’s ways of doing things, and that made the families’ relationship with school personnel at times confusing and open to misunderstanding. Valdés’s study is important because it shows that parents and schools do not always share similar ideas on how parents should be involved in children’s literacy activities.

Purcell-Gates (1996) also investigated the knowledge, the different ways, and the frequency with which families used print at home. Interested in young children’s literacy at home, she studied the types of print related activities (reading and writing) taking place in 20 low-income families. For a period of over a year, she observed 24 children (ages 4-6) in order to describe how they engaged in those practices. The families participating in her study were from diverse cultural communities: African American (10), Caucasian (7), Hispanic (2), and Asian American (5) and all of the children spoke English at home. Purcell-Gates noticed that these families engaged in many types of rich literacy activities and that children also had access to a great variety of text types at home and that entertainment or daily living tasks were the main activities children were engaged in. For instance, children often read the texts on cereal boxes, coupons, and newspaper T.V. schedules. They also spent 15% of their time reading storybooks and 12% doing school-related activities. The author argued that these practices at home were critical factors in the process of these children’s literacy development. She showed that families had different ways of engaging their children in a variety of practices that were relevant for them. Purcell-Gates’ study is important because shows that families might not engage in school-related activities or read books as much as some would expect, but they engage in real-life and meaningful literacy events (e.g., reading cereal boxes, coupons, and T.V. schedules in the newspaper). And, according to Freire (1972), practices based on meaningful events are the key for a meaningful experience with words and extremely significant for children to make connections from words to their meaning in the world.

Although the Purcell-Gates’ (1996) study gives us great insights into how parents may engage their children in many literacy practices at home and describe the variety of materials used during literacy
events, the researcher seems to rely mainly on fieldnotes collected by different research assistants as the main method of data collection, not noting much of the participants’ perspectives nor providing the reasons for children to engage in these types of literacies. Although Purcell-Gates aims for a descriptive study, throughout the paper, she seems to search for generalizability. Additionally, the study included only speakers of English language, leaving out the ESL children and the Non-English speakers. However, it is surprising that a study investigating knowledge brought to school by diverse cultural communities (African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian American) does not consider the influence, or possible influence, of participants’ cultural background on literacy practices in their literacy development. Therefore, there is a need for studies that investigate other languages minorities’ communities and consider the complexity around participants’ language and literacy experiences as well as the influence of their culture in their literacy practices.

Another study, by Orellana et al. (2003), shows some of the complexities related to children’s language and literacy experiences. These researchers argued that children’s use of literacy and literacy networks might become even more complex as they get older. They illustrated that in everyday life, children engaged in multiple practices, which involved not only many tasks, but also many people. Their five-year case study included eighteen bilingual (Spanish-English) Latino immigrant youths (ages 10-14) from four communities in Illinois. These researchers observed the homes and classrooms of the participants. They also collected journals and interviewed the participants regarding their roles as language brokers. They found that the children acted as language brokers for their parents, that is, they interpreted, translated, or paraphrased English language texts, for their families. These children also engaged in multiple literacies and used several text genres across institutions and society (e.g., letters, forms, advertisements, storybooks, instructional guides, and books). These scholars also found that schools did not recognize nor build on these literacies to develop students’ literacy skills. Instead, schools focused on more restricted, decontextualized forms of literacy and assumed that the children lacked the ability to work with interpretation. Orellana et al. also illustrated that practices and the ways of participation of children in activities at home shifted the way power was distributed in the families. Parents were not the knowledgeable ones, but the children held the power as they cooperated with their parents to interpret and negotiate the meaning of texts.

Orellana et al.’s (2003) study is important because it shows that while schools still hold the banking concept of literacy (see Freire, 1972), the study challenges the notion of the banking concept in literacy and the notion of sources of knowledge. The study places students (and, thus, their families) as the source of knowledge and agent of their learning process. Additionally, these researchers advocate the transformation of the school practices to a pedagogy that is more aligned by Freire, that is, pedagogy in which instructors embrace and respect the "knowledge of living experience" (Freire, 1994, p. 58). The
study is also significant because it is a great illustration of how individuals can challenge the statuo quo and promotes individuals’ agency as well as encourages them to question the perspectives towards the types of literacy that schools promote and preserve. It also opens possibilities to other ways of experiencing literacy and illustrates that literacy practices involve much more than reading books at home. Literacy practices involve the ability to negotiate the language, the meaning and the intentions that certain texts might carry as well as the ability to interpret how these intentions will be understood by different participants involved in the conversation.

Delgado-Gaitan (1992) also illustrates the complex ways families engage and support the literacy of their children. Focusing on the perspectives that the families hold towards the education of their children, Delgado-Gaitan investigated the everyday interactions and practices of families living near an elementary school in California. Making use of an ethnographic framework, she highlighted how six Mexican-American families socialized their second-grade children to education. Because this researcher was interested in how these families taught their children the value of school and how they supported their children throughout the schooling experience, she closely observed these families’ home environment. She noticed that at home the families provided a good learning environment for their children even though their socioeconomic resources were limited. The children in Delgado-Gaitan’s study received the motivation, interaction, and emotional support for learning from their families and despite some parents’ low level of education; they often participated in their children’s school assignments. She also noticed that the parents’ level of involvement varied depending on their familiarity with children’s school assignments, but they still had high expectations for education and strongly encouraged their children to succeed in school. Delgado-Gaitan also observed that the types of activities and the amount of work assigned by the school created a burden to some parents, particularly when parents were unfamiliar with the nature or content of the assignments. Like Valdés (1996), this researcher also highlighted the fact that parents had a much broader concept of education when compared with the one held by the school. For example, Valdés noticed that for some parents, “A child that was ‘buen educado’ (well educated) not only attended school, but also was respectful and cooperative with those around him or her. It was this behavior that was the measure of a person’s educational achievement. Parents tried to socialize their children to this concept of education but often met resistance from children’s peers as well as school personnel” (p. 512).

In another study, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) observed parents’ participation in various activities and various settings (e.g., home and school). Interested in the ways Spanish-speaking parents were involved in their children’s school activities, the author conducted an ethnographic study in six schools (four elementary, one junior high, and one high school) in a Californian school district over a four-year period. She analyzed 157 activities and events that the schools organized for parents (e.g., parent-teacher
conferences, school-site councils, the Bilingual Preschool Parent Involvement Program) with the intention of tracking their participation. She interviewed teachers and administrators who worked with these families – both those who had and who had not attended the meetings. She found that parents’ participation in school activities was limited because of the type of activities the schools promoted. For example, the author explained that some of the activities proposed by the school were unfamiliar or differed from the ones parents experienced at home. They also tended to ignore the needs of the specific families or even required specific cultural knowledge for participation. However, Delgado-Gaitan also discussed that when schools developed activities more relevant to the families, families felt their social and cultural backgrounds were recognized and were more engaged in their children's schooling and also more motivated to engage their children in cultural activities related to their own heritage background. As Delgado-Gaitan explained, by exploring non-conventional types of activities, the schools opened a space for more meaningful home-school collaboration and established a fair power balance between home and school literacy practices. Additionally, as this researcher argued, by encouraging this collaboration, parents learned about schools’ expectations, assumed more responsibility for their children’s schooling, and were able to get more involved in the school curriculum.

Delgado-Gaitan’s (1991, 1992) studies are very significant because they highlight the importance of valuing parents’ knowledge and reinforce the idea that schools play a significant role in extending, validating, and including nonconventional activities in schooling practices. These studies also imply that schools should be culturally sensitive when planning activities for families and highlights the importance of using approaches that engage families, generate dialogue between the schools and families, empower them and create a balance in the power distribution between home and school. As Delgado-Gaitan’s studies demonstrated, when families and schools work together they might better contribute to the success of children’s literacy learning and development.

Similarly, Volk and De Acosta (2001) did an ethnographic study on literacy practices of three Spanish bilingual kindergarten children (two girls and one boy), Puerto Rican, in different settings such as home, school, and in the community. Their study aimed to describe the various people involved in children’s literacy development, their beliefs about literacy, and the way they co-constructed literacy events together. They observed these children in the classroom and attended parents’ meetings as well as interviewed all of the people involved in the children’s literacy development. Focusing primarily on data related to reading and also considering other forms of literacy practices (such as writing and talking about the text), these researchers collected data from January through the end of the school year. Volk and De Acosta found these children received literacy support in many ways and in many contexts. For example, they found that literacy activities took place in a variety of settings such as the kitchen, the living room, at school, and at church. At home, for example, reading the Bible was a common literacy event for some of
these families. However, the school would not consider Bible reading as a means to literacy development. The authors also noticed that these children engaged in co-constructed literacy activities with their parents, siblings, cousins, and extended family members, all of whom scaffolded literacy learning for them (e.g., translating). However, these researchers discovered that the people involved in children’s literacy had a limited concept of reading: For them, text held the meaning for itself and “reading was about combining sounds into words” (Volk & De Acosta, 2001, p. 193).

Volk’s and De Acosta’s (2001) study is very significant because in addition to strengthening Freire’s ideas that literacy is a culture specific practice and exists in relation to families’ and children’s world, it illustrates that literacy is placed in a real context within homes, schools, communities, and in society. It also illustrates that literacy is co-constructed by people who bring many perspectives on what and how literacy should be promoted in the development for children. This study is very significant because Volk’s and De Acosta reinforce the need of “a broader view of literacy that encompasses many literacies” (p. 220). The authors suggest that literacy practices should not be a replication of school experiences at home, but an extension of the meaningfulness of home literacy practices to the school.

Approaching these studies’ findings with a critical lens is important for considering how multiple perspectives and multiple environments deal with literacy and how they balance or distribute their power, mainly because the way power relations are established in different contexts by different people, might affect directly the way children experience literacy. As the study’s implications bring to our awareness and as Freire (2005) would invite us to reflect, when thinking about literacy, it is extremely important to ask, “What? Why? How? To what end? For whom? Against whom? By whom? And in favor of what?” (p. xii) is literacy being developed?

The literature also demonstrated that families not only experience literacy in different ways, but also prepare their children for school in different ways and that these different ways with literacy might differ from the literacy occurring in schools highlighting the importance of investigating and recognizing other forms of literacy, engaging in more dialogs with families, and understanding their different ways with literacy. By doing so, school might learn about families’ diverse practices, and better support the children’s cultural experiences at school, as well as align families’ perspectives on pedagogy and literacy practices with the those school possess, avoiding in this way many challenges or cultural conflicts that might exists otherwise in the school.

**In-School Literacy Practices**

Many researchers (e.g., Au, 1980; Au & Jordan, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Philips, 1972) have illustrated that when schools learn about the diverse ways that families experience literacy at home, they are more likely to use that understanding to provide children with a pedagogy and literacy practices that are more aligned with those of the families and, thus, more culturally relevant for them. For instance,
interested in why children were not succeeding in school, Au and Jordan (1981) investigated the reading performance improvement of second grade children participating in a program called (KEEP) Kamehameha Early Education Program in Honolulu. The focus of their study was “the form and content of the interaction within the teacher-directed reading lesson” (p. 143). For that, Au and Jordan observed the reading instructions of five children during small group meetings with the teacher on a story from a basal reader titled "Freddy Finds a Frog." During her meeting, the teacher would first try to connect children’s experiences to the text by asking them to use their knowledge to interpret the story. Then, considering what they had read, the teacher would ask the children to read pieces of the story and come up with questions. In doing so, Au and Jordan found that the teacher was able to create a safe space for children to take risks in participation and, thereby, to actively participate in the text and the task. They noticed that the success of children’s engagement and improvement in their readings skills were due to several reasons: First, the reading lessons were similar to children’s cultural events at home and in the community (e.g., "talk story" or explanatory phrase, and "storytelling"). Second, the teacher’s role as a facilitator in the classroom established a good socially-relevant relationship with the children. The third, the reading lessons were co-constructed by teacher and students. This study reinforced the idea of having in the classroom learning situations that are linked to the children’s cultural experiences at home and in the community, a concept which Au (1980) calls “culturally congruent” practices (p. 113).

Similarly, Erickson and Mohatt (1982) studied cultural practices of Indian students in two classrooms: one with a teacher from the Odawa and Ojibwa community, and another with a non-Indian teacher. The study showed that the native teacher used a slow and deliberate pace throughout the classroom, made use of a small group work in the classroom, and gave personal feedback to the children. These ways of leading instruction and of participation were meaningful and familiar to the Indian children’s ways. However, Erickson and Mohatt showed that the non-Indian teacher had a different way of leading instructions participation. However, throughout the year the teacher changed her classroom practices and configuration to accommodate those that seemed to be more culturally responsive for the students. Instead of having individuals seated in rows, the teacher placed them in groups. Instead of addressing the class as a whole, Erickson & Mohatt explained that the teacher started asking individual questions of individual children. Additionally, the teacher replaced the lecture to more small groups activities. Erickson and Mohatt’s study illustrate that it is extremely significant to incorporate children’s cultural practices in school for a more meaningful education and for children’s success in school.

Another study by Heath (1983) showed that, in different communities, children had different literacy practices and different ways of talking about things that were not always well matched with those of school. Heath invetigated three diverse communities who lived in the Piedmont Carolina region of the United States: Trackton, Roadville and Maintown. In her study she showed that children had different
ways of labeling things, telling stories, participating in classroom activities, and naming features, items, and events. In other words, these communities had different ways of using speech and writing in their everyday lives. For example, Heath found that children from Roadville—a white working-class community—experienced literacy practices related to religion. In Maintown—a middle-class also predominately white community—children engaged in literacy practices that included the discussion and the reading of bedtime stories. In Trackton—a Black working-class community—children were more exposed to oral stories than written ones.

Heath’s (1983) study was significant because it showed the diverse ways that literacy can be enacted in different communities, but most importantly, it showed that different ways of experiencing literacy did not always match with those of school. The study highlights the importance of considering “all kinds of talk” in school and diverse experiences with literacy. And, most importantly, her study invited researchers and practitioners to ponder and question what types of literacy practices school usually promotes or reproduced in the classroom. It may make us reflect on if the children are benefiting, or not, from receiving a more culturally and linguistically relevant schooling, based on whose practices prevails and whose do not.

**Freirean Perspectives to Language and Literacy**

Challenging the traditional views on literacy with a new vision of teaching and learning, the educator Paulo Freire (1972) argued that we should look at literacy with a more critical lens and consider its multiple components. Some of these components include the banking concept of education; critical pedagogy; and the power and politics around education. It also includes “Concientização” and social transformation in education as well as the notion of literacy as contextualized practices. This research study draws on these core concepts of Freire’s theory to examine the literacy practices in and out of school. In the following section, I will articulate how each one of these components relates to literacy research and how I use them to understand literacy in the schools and homes.

The banking concept is based on the idea of depositing knowledge into students’ minds without considering the students’ agency and participation in the learning process (Freire, 1972). In this perspective, individuals are seen as passive recipients of knowledge and uncritically exposed to ideas. For Freire (1972), literacy is not merely the oversimplified concepts of component parts (skills based) and decoding words, but rather the understanding and the significance behind the words and their relationship to the world. For Freire, reading involves an understanding of the content and the critical interpretation of it, and he opposes the so-called banking approach to education. He proposes a more liberal view: a problem-posing one.

In a problem-posing approach, students become subjects of the learning and are in constant involvement in unveiling the world, developing critical eyes to look at the problems relating to
themselves and the world around them, and responding to the problems in a critical way (Freire, 1972). He also explains that education should include critical pedagogy, a pedagogy that values students’ backgrounds, cultures, languages, customs, and traditions, and in which instructors understand, appreciate, and respect the "knowledge of living experience" of the students (Freire, 1994, p. 58). Teachers should create possibilities for students to make connections between their experiences and the social context in which they are inserted. Therefore, for him, pedagogical approaches should not be based on limited assumptions or hegemonic concepts of literacy, but constructed through dialogue in which individuals can challenge and question narrow ways of teaching and learning (Freire, 1972). For Freire, pedagogical approaches should include many voices and emerge from the students (Freire, 1972).

Freire (1985) also explains that education is situated within political and power relations. Freire places literacy within cultural communities, cultural communities within societies, and societies within power relations. Freire further advocates critical consideration of how this relationship impacts literacy and “how this tension between individual and the social practice takes place” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 48). For Freire (1985), “No educational experience takes place in a vacuum, only in a real context—historical, economic, political, and not necessarily identical to any other context” (p. 12). Freire also explains that the literacy and power relations in societies influences, manipulates, and shapes people’s perspectives towards literacy (Freire, 1972).

Freire (1972) also points out that education should include “Concientização” (critical consciousness) and social transformation. According to Freire, individuals should develop awareness of their own reality and their place in society, mainly because this awareness empowers individuals and leads them to transforming their reality. Therefore, critical educators should create possibilities for their students to reflect on and transform their individual experiences and social realities. Freire also challenges the concept of literacy as “culture-free” by noting that there is never only one way to experience literacy and that all learning is influenced by the context of societies and their cultures.

Another important concept of Freire’s theory is the notion of contextualized practices. According to Freire (2005) literacy should be understood as socially organized practices involving specific individuals who share specific knowledge. In Freire’s words, “Educators need to know what happens in the world of the children with whom they work. They need to know the universe of their dreams, the language with which they skillfully defend themselves from the aggressiveness of their world, what they know independently of the school, and how they know it” (p.130). As Freire reminds us “[A] good beginning for a good practice would be to evaluate the context within which the practice takes place, which means recognizing what is taking place in the context, as well as how and why it is taking place”(pp.13-14). For him the starting point for extending and developing the literacy knowledge in school should be rooted in the families’ knowledge and literacy practices.
In short, for him, literacy exists within political and power relations and is contextualized in the practices of specific communities and societies. Literacy should aim for “Concientização” and social transformation. That is, literacy should validate and transform students’ experiences in the world. I make use of Freire’s critical perspectives because they invite researchers to investigate the learner’s cultural background and the cultural communities in which they learn, including their language as well as their experiences and practices (Freire, 1972). A critical perspective on education also encourages parents, learners, and schools to empower and maintain their children’s languages, culture, and cultural identities. Freire’s approach also invites parents to become activists, in the sense that, by trying to maintain their tradition, culture, and language, they are challenging the status quo.

Given that literacy is contextualized practices and that practices take place in different cultural communities, in order to better understand literacy, it is necessary to understand, first, what it means to learn a language and how the intersection of language, culture, and participation in cultural communities leads to the development of practices. In the next section, I discuss these complexities in more detail.

The Intersection of Culture, Language, Literacy, and Power

The definition of culture in this study includes people’s cultures, identities, practices, and “what people do, what people know, and things that people make and use” (Spradley, 1980, p. 05) and “the ways of doing things” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 11). Culture is seeing as dynamic, co-constructed by people, and thus, involving in individuals’ “repertoire of practices” (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). And through this dynamic negotiation individuals are constantly struggling to change or maintain the power, influence, and, thus, the cultural status quo (Freire, 1972). Culture is understood as the large “webs of significance, that is, the systems of meaning which are culturally created by individuals in their unique social circumstances (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). The understanding of culture also includes the resources, artifacts, media symbols, and a variety of media texts available such as songs, rhythms, stories, popular culture (Dyson 1993, 1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2008) and embraces the various funds of knowledge held by individuals or societies (González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992).

The definitions of culture I use take into consideration language (oral and written literacy) as one of many cultural tools that children possess and use to make sense of the world and the world around them (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the way children learn a language is tied to their cultural ways of socialization in their homes, communities, and societies. It also relates to the underlying beliefs individuals hold, their sociocultural experiences, their ways of being in the world, as well as their values (e.g., Givón, 1985; Heath, 1983; Schiefflin, 1985). These ways are shared by members of cultural communities, who, together, develop practices, which are connected to their ways of living, speaking, and being socialized. According to Delgado-Gaitan (1992), “an important aspect of socialization is the
transmission of values, which vary from culture to culture and from family to family” (p. 497). Therefore, socialization is strongly connected to individuals’ culture and their identity.

As McCarthey and Moje (2002) explain, identity is connected to the ways individuals “make sense of the world and their experiences in it, including their experiences with texts” (p. 228). Individuals’ history and their socio-economic realities are also reflected in how they conceptualize themselves and others as well as how they engage and support (or not) specific forms of literacy (Jiménez, 2003). Identity is also influenced by the engagement and participation in practices in different environments. For example, Emergent bilinguals living in a foreign country and experiencing a biculturalism are going through a “process wherein individuals learn to function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture, and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live” (Darder, 1991, p. 48). And when children are socialized in a different linguistic and cultural community (e.g., another country), they might change, expand, or assimilate into others’ cultural environment. These environments might expose children to different practices that many times are naturally assimilated by children and change their practices and identities mainly because these children might be moving away from developing a “more fully literate identity” (Jiménez, 2000, p. 985). And that might be problematic because it might affect not only children’s identity construction, but also their performance in classrooms.

For example, Jiménez (2000) studied how literacy and identity shaped the development of Latina/o students. He interviewed and observed 85 students (9 to 12 years old) enrolled in a bilingual program (grades 4-6). Jiménez’s study revealed that children experienced a complex blending of identities and their status and awareness of—bilingually, biculturally, and bilaterally—had implications for their literacy development and identity. He found that the bilinguals’ language and literacy knowledge impacted their ways of seeing themselves, that is, their self-image. Jiménez explained that the complexities of many tasks around two languages (e.g., acting as language brokers) placed a burden on students, making them unsure about their “self.” Students reported that their roles as brokers in their families gave them strength and a different insight on the discourse. It also increased the students’ concerns regarding the replacement or loss of the Spanish language (by English). These students reported that literacy learning that supported and fostered their identity (Spanish-language and literacy development) was more meaningful and engaging than those that perceived their language as a threat. For these students, when Spanish language and literacy were viewed as a danger, it generated fear and anxiety that led the students to avoid certain behaviors. Jiménez implied that this type of attitude leads students to listen only to the dominant discourse rather than their own.

Jiménez’s (2000) study is an illustration of how reductionist perspectives of literacy might influence learners, their practices, behaviors, performance in school, and thus, their identity. Allied with
Freire’s ideas, Jiménez raises awareness regarding the importance of valuing students’ language and cultural roots as a form of maintaining their identity and empowering the students. His study also created a space for students to think about issues related to the dominant discourse and to think critically about those issues. It encouraged students to question their autonomous models of literacy and to reflect on how these models might take away their own identity.

Taking into account that our languages differ from each other, and are part of our identity, and since we tend to have a deep “pride” in our language (Anzaldúa, 1987), language might also function as an instrument of power (see Foucault, 1980; Pennycook, 2001). Many individuals, through an ethnocentric view of language and culture, are unable to view other languages and cultures as equally valuable. They assume that their language or dialect and culture are superior to others. Based on these beliefs they create curricula that serve as a norm for all students. However, these ways of understanding language might generate various disagreements among schools, teachers, students, and families mainly because they might not share the same language, culture, socialization experiences, and views of literacy. These individuals might not understand or define literacy in the same way. Still, defining literacy is necessary mainly because, as Pennycook (2001) argued, the way individuals define literacy will affect directly not only the way teachers teach and students learn, but also what teachers teach, how they teach, which pedagogical material they use, and their attitude toward the students. As Pennycook explained, literacy approaches are based on policies, policies are based on ideologies, and “ideologies are the (concealed) views of particular social groups; those groups that frequently manage to promote their ideological positions to the extent that it becomes naturalized are able to do so because of their social power” (p. 81).

Therefore, defining literacy is a challenging task mainly because its definition is connected to ideologies, local politics, and power. Still, defining literacy is necessary, because the views we embrace toward literacy will have significant implications on literacy approaches, classroom practices, educational policies; and the ideologies and political relations outside the classroom are usually reproduced within the classroom (Pennycook, 2001). The way teachers see literacy will bring consequences to the ways teachers are forming students (e.g., engaged or disengaged, critical, uncritical; object of learning or subject of learning), establishing the relationship with them, and enacting literacy in their classroom.

**Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Schooling**

Ideas of including students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds into their schooling experiences have being disseminated by many researchers including Erickson and Mohatt’s (1982) study on “culturally responsive” practices, Au’s (1980) study on “culturally congruent” practices, as well as Ladson-Billings’ (1992, 1994, 1995) and Gay’s (2000) study on “culturally relevant” literacy practices. Sharing similar principles with Freire, these researchers and many others including Nieto (2010a), have
promoted the idea that culturally and linguistically relevant schooling involves practices that are engaging, participatory, meaningful, multidimensional, validating, caring, liberating, empowering, and transformative. They also agree that culturally and linguistically relevant schooling requires a socio-constructivist view of teaching and learning and assumes that building on students’ prior knowledge and experiences not only creates opportunities for authentic learning, but also contributes to the learning and achievement of students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll et al., 1992).

For example, Ladson-Billings (1994) studied culturally relevant teaching practices for African-American students. She observed the instruction of five African-American teachers and three European-American teachers in elementary classrooms. The teachers who participated in her study were known for having success working with African-American students. Ladson-Billings wanted to understand why certain practices helped students succeed academically and how these practices employed “student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (p. 17). She found that teachers’ concepts of literacy were reflected in their practices, and that their perceptions of themselves and of others, affected how they organized their relationships in the classroom. For instance, Ladson-Billings explained that when teachers encouraged and supported students, the students were more likely to do the same with each other. She also found that all the teachers participating in the study shared important ideas about what literacy entailed. For example, she showed that all teachers had high expectations towards the students and empowered them. They were also aware of their political power and the political power around education and joined forces against the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.117-118).

Another study by Ladson-Billings (1995) reinforced these ideas by affirming that in a culturally relevant classroom: “Students must experience academic success; students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p.160). She also argued that as agents of literacy, the teachers can “help students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25). Even though Ladson-Billings (1994) focused on effective teaching for African-American students, her research can be applied to students from other culturally diverse backgrounds. Her study gives us insight into excellent teaching practices and into how to create conditions that help students to succeed academically and personally.

Another study on culturally relevant schooling conducted by Moll et al. (1992) highlights the cultural and linguistic resources and knowledge students possess and their practices. These scholars noticed that the school was very far from making use of the students’ resources in classrooms. Therefore, interested in how teachers could use the students’ background knowledge in order to provide more meaningful instruction, the authors did a qualitative study on household and classroom practices of
working-class Mexican communities in Arizona. These researchers visited homes and observed the many ways and many types of activities existing there and in their communities in order to register all the cultural and linguistic resources possessed by the children. They found that these families were knowledgeable in many ways. For example, they knew about farming, animal management, construction, trade, medicine, and religion. Families also knew carpentry, plant gardening, mechanics, electrical wiring, masonry, management, and medical folk remedies. They also found that these families were familiar with archeology, biology, and mathematics and had entrepreneurial skills. The researchers concluded that these funds of knowledge—“the culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133)—could be used to inform school curriculum. However, these scholars noticed that the school was very far from making use of these social and cultural practices in the classroom. According to Moll et al., the children’s funds of knowledge give teachers the base for building more meaningful instruction and, by extension, a more consequential curriculum. By using children’s cultural and linguistic resources, instructors can make their teaching practices more culturally relevant for their students. Moll et al.’s notion of funds of knowledge also aligns with Freire’s concept of pedagogy in the sense that the curriculum should be based on the knowledge students have and that education should emerge from the students and not be unilaterally designed for them.

Another example of how instructors can make instruction more culturally relevant is the study by DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006), which highlights the importance of providing bilingual children with opportunities to read texts that they can connect and identify with through literature discussion. Interested in understanding the influence of literature discussion on children whose first language was not English or who were speakers of a nonstandard language variety in their homes, these researchers conducted a qualitative study in an English language arts classroom in a bilingual elementary school located in the Midwest. They were interested in answering the question, “How do students in literature discussion groups access cultural and linguistic resources to build collective understandings of multicultural literature?” (p. 158). For one semester, the researchers observed the bilingual children in a fourth-grade classroom, interviewed them, collected field notes, and collected students’ artifacts (e.g., sheets, evaluations, and written responses). Similarly to the study by Reyes and Azuara (2008), the teacher in this fourth-grade classroom was very conscious of her sociopolitical role. She supported and embraced children’s bilingualism and made a space for children’s heritage through the implementation of literature circles focusing on books of the children’s interest such as the book Felita (Mohr & Cruz, 1979). This book told a story about the memories, struggles, and challenges of Felita, a Puerto Rican girl growing up in New York City. Felita did feel as welcome as she had hoped to be in her new neighborhood but found in her family the support and encouragement to be proud of her linguistic and cultural background. In
DeNicolo’s and Franquiz’s (2006) study, the teachers invited children to read the book Felita in small groups and to talk and exchange ideas about the book. The researchers found that literature discussion created a space for children to become critical of their worlds (personal experiences) and critical of the world around them. That is, DeNicolo’s and Franquiz discovered that familiarity with the content of the book created an opportunity for children to connect with the story. According to the study’s conclusions, this approach to literature discussion not only allowed children to build confidence, but also helped them to reflect on the effects of the character’s anxieties and fears (e.g., racism) and connect them to real people in their lives. DeNicolo’s and Franquiz’s (2006) study is significant because in addition to being an illustration of Freire’s vision of a dialogic encounter with text, it highlights the importance of carefully chosen printed materials in the classroom, which can provide opportunities for students to connect themselves with the meaning of the reading. This study also emphasized the idea that texts students read should provide opportunities for them to be critical about the content, and, mainly, to bring the awareness of issues related to the social, cultural, and political contexts around them. Another significance of this study is that the simple act of book reading, as DeNicolo and Franquiz highlight, might transform students’ anxieties into self-assurance and their weaknesses into empowerment. As Freire (1972) would argue, through sociocultural awareness and critical discussions, children are able to deconstruct, co-construct, and reinvent the meaning of the text, creating a more critical understanding of the words in the text and their meaning in the world.

Therefore, culturally and linguistically relevant schooling involves not only the transformation of the conventional ways of teaching literacy, but also the transformation of the individuals involved in the teaching process (Nieto, 2010b) including the students and their teachers. As Nieto has highlighted, the teachers’ practices, self-awareness, and approaches to literacy all matter. And, according to her, “Unless and until teachers undergo a personal transformation, little will change in our schools” (p. 20).

A study by Soltero-Gonzalez (2009) also focused on the language and literacy practices of Latino immigrants’ children at home and in preschool in Arizona. This researcher was interested in what roles language played among these emergent bilingual children, specifically the language spoken in the home. That is, the researcher was interested in studying children growing up in a non-English speaking environment (home) who were learning a second language (English) in school. Six children (3 boys and 3 girls), aged 5, were chosen among 18 children to participate in this study. Most of these children had recently arrived from Mexico except for one girl who was a third-generation Mexican-American but spoke Spanish at home. For three years, Soltero-Gonzalez observed the children’s interaction and participation around many types of literacy activities in a sheltered English immersion classroom. The activities children participated in involved story time, circle time, learning centers, journal time, and free
choice time. Soltero-Gonzalez used field notes, children’s artifacts, and interviews with teachers and parents as data and concluded that children made use of their home language to make connections to support their English learning development. The researcher realized that the participation structures used in the classroom (e.g., free choice time and small group activities) provided children with spaces where they could draw on their home language as a resource for literacy. The researcher also noticed that supporting the home language was possible even where bilingual education was not an alternative and the schools focused on English-only instruction. Soltero-Gonzalez’s study emphasizes not only the importance of creating a space for children to use the multiple resources they have, but also the significance of promoting children’s linguistic repertoires and not viewing them as a problem or obstacle but rather a valuable foundation for learning and development.

Reyes and Azuara (2008) also studied emergent bilingual children living in a bilingual and bicultural community practices in Arizona. They were interested in describing the specific learning experiences of 12 Mexican immigrant children (ages 4-5) growing up bilingual and how these experiences shaped their biliteracy development. For this study, Reyes and Azuara focused on the writing development of bilingual preschool children enrolled in mainstream classrooms. They used a multiple-approach analysis (e.g., reading assessment tasks, interviews, and observation at home and community) to understand how the family, community, educational practices, and other factors (such as English-only environment) could possibly influence the biliteracy development of children (p. 377). Even though the instruction was delivered in English, the teacher was comfortable with Spanish and allowed the use of Spanish during her instruction (e.g., for clarification or for social interaction). Reyes and Azuara found that children possessed metalinguistic awareness and knowledge about the code (print) in both languages (Spanish and English). That is, depending on the context, children also knew which language to use. These scholars noticed that families participated in a variety of communicative practices and had access to written materials in both languages (e.g., daily living routines, entertainment, and literacy for literacy's sake such as storybook time and interpersonal communication). They emphasized that these practices and materials supported biliteracy and that at home, children counted on the expertise of their family members (parents and siblings) to support biliteracy (e.g., helping them understand print). These academics also noticed that learning also occurred from Spanish to English or vice versa.

Reyes and Azuara’s (2008) and Soltero-Gonzalez’s (2009) studies provided evidence of the complex phenomenon of biliteracy. Biliteracy develops through the influence of people and their practices, and through the environment (home, school, and community). It involves a collective effort in order to make it happen. These studies also take us back to Freire’s (1985) arguments: literacy is grounded in a power relationship and that teachers, as political agents, can welcome the cultural capital and resources students brings to school, even when the system of and the dominant discourse (English-
only) may not welcome them. Therefore there studies also illustrate that literacy learning is influenced by its surroundings: educational goals, language policies, and attitudes towards literacy. Teachers are the ones in charge of children’s educational experiences. They are the ones that will open spaces for children to improve their learning and confirm their cultural and linguistic background.

**Final Thoughts**

From the compelling literature above, it is possible to conclude that literacy is a multifaceted phenomenon. It goes beyond the concept of reading and writing printed words. Literacy involves the meaningfulness of diverse ways of experiencing reading and writing and all the events surrounding reading and writing practices. As several experts above have recognized, many cultural communities enact literacy in many significant ways in their homes (e.g., DaSilva-Iddings, 2009; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1996, 2005; Orellana et al., 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Rodriguez-Brown, 2003; Volk & De Acosta, 2001), which were not always recognized or adopted by the schools.

The studies presented above also revealed that in order to offer culturally and linguistically responsive literacy instruction for children from diverse backgrounds, it is important to value and connect their practices with the school’s practice. (Freire, 1972; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gay, 2000, 2002; Gee, 1990/1996; Heath, 1982, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Moll et al., 1992; Nieto, 2010a; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Reyes, 2001; Soltero-Gonzalez, 2009; Street, 2001; Valdés, 1996). It is also important to support, encourage, and teach students to be critical (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006). The literature also illustrates that culturally and linguistically relevant instruction should emerge from the social practices of the children and their lived experiences (Freire, 1972).

The studies reviewed in this dissertation also portrayed the literacy practices in the homes of families from unique communities such as African-American communities (Ladson-Billings, 1994), Puerto Rican communities (Volk & De Acosta, 2001), and Mexican-descent communities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1992; Orellana et al., 2003; Valdés, 1996), which have contributed to our understanding of the literacy practices outside of schools’ official world. Even though these studies revealed many practices existent in these communities, there are still many other cultural communities who have different “repertoires of practices” (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) that deserves attention. There is still the need to broaden the view of literacy to include these repertoires and the literacies of the children from diverse backgrounds and to become aware that the emergent bilinguals bring to school their unique experiences, and that the “fit all” schooling might limit children’s critical encounter with the word and world (Freire, 1972).

Therefore, it is still necessary to promote studies that investigate in depth the types of practices students have at home and learn about the cultural ways their families use to mediate literacy. It is important to consider parents’ perspective on what culturally relevance literacy practices mean, mainly
because exploring alternative perspectives of people from diverse cultural and linguistic communities is critical to providing culturally relevance literacy practices for them. That is what this study aims to do in the next chapters. My research goals are to understand the types of literacy practices a Brazilian bilingual family engaged in and what these practices meant for the participants in this study as well as to understand how culturally and relevant literacy practices figured into the participants’ everyday life events and into the focal child’s experience of schooling. That is what will be explored in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section describes the steps I took throughout this study to understand the complexities of the in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. Because this study aimed to understand the phenomenon of culturally relevant literacy practices for an emergent bilingual in the contexts of home and school, I designed a qualitative case study using the qualitative study approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Erickson, 1986).

The qualitative approach has been used to investigate, describe, understand, and capture real-life experience through in-depth description (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 2010). It highlights “narratives” and “episodes” in order to help us understand a complex case (Stake, 1995). It seeks to understand certain phenomena without disturbing the natural context or setting (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). According to the definition presented by Mertens (2010), “Qualitative research is used in research that is designed to provide an in-depth description of a specific program, practice, or setting” (p. 225). As Mertens explains, qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (p. 225).

This approach answers my questions and fits the nature of my study. I chose this methodology because I am interested in investigating the participants’ perspectives on literacy within the context of their lived experiences and practices (Freire, 1972). Hence, making uses of this methodology, I was able to understand in detail how people perceived and actually enacted their cultural and linguistic resources in their everyday practices. In addition, through qualitative methodology, I was able to explore more carefully the ways the participating Brazilian child engaged with literacy in different settings.

In this study, I made use of ethnographers’ tools—observation, field notes, and interviews—for data collection. Using these tools, I was able to better describe and capture the participants’ behavior in naturally occurring, ongoing settings (Hymes, 1982) and to understand how members from a specific language group perceived the practices and norms of their culture groups (Geertz, 1973). These tools also allowed me to code my research data, to engage in analysis, and “to move beyond the particular event or situation in the field notes to capture some more general theoretical dimension or issue” (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, 1995, p. 150). Through observation, field notes, participants’ interviews, and artifact analysis, I
was able to gather detailed description of the literacy practices and resources that the children, parents, and teachers used at home, school, and neighborhood.

This methodology allowed me to frame the case of Anita and her experiences and the complexities around literacy practices in and out of school, which could be summarized as a case that was a “messy complexity of human experience” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 3). Further, the case study frame helped me generate an understanding by discovering multiple realities and portraying the multiple views of the case (Stake, 1995).

As is common to do in case studies, I concentrated on the investigation and identification of a social unit, in relation to its context (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). This kind of a social unit, according to Dyson and Genishi, “becomes a case of something, of some phenomenon” (p.3). Such a unit of analysis, for my research, comprised of the culturally relevant literacy practices in and out of the school.

Research Site

The Home and Community

The observations and data collection took place at the participating family’s home in a town located in Midwestern United States. The family, originally from Brazil, lived in a two-bedroom apartment in a housing complex that was a part of the local university where both of the parents were visiting scholars. The complex was known for its diverse and ever-changing population. Even though the apartment was not located close to The Villa America Elementary School, the parents opted for that school because of the school’s programs like ESL classes, its diverse demographics and its philosophy of a multicultural and diverse approach to education. Observations also took place at The Youngsters’ Club, the after school program that Anita attended. The program facility was located in the same apartment complex where the family lived. I also observed Anita’ participation in some literacy events around town (e.g., local libraries, book fairs, and other public places).

The Villa America Elementary School

The Villa America Elementary School (pseudonym) was the chosen venue for this study. The school was selected because it had speakers of Brazilian Portuguese enrolled as students. I contacted the school and then the potential families to explain the research study purpose and procedures and invited the parents and their child to participate in this research. Once I got participants’ permission and letters of consent, I scheduled home and school visits.

The School district where Villa America School was located had about 750 students who spoke a language different from English, with about 400 of them being emergent bilinguals and 10% of them attending the Villa America Elementary. At the time of this study, The Villa America Elementary School had approximately 315 students in attendance. The school was a neighborhood school in the sense that most of its students lived nearby. The neighborhood was composed mostly of African Americans, who
represented about 60% of the population of the Villa America Elementary School. The majority of the students at Villa America Elementary received free lunch (85 %), which means that these students lived either at or below the poverty level. The school also had students who were children of refugee families (e.g., Vietnamese, Congolese).

The school district had a dual language program, but it was not offered at The Villa America Elementary School. However, The Villa America Elementary School tried to provide, to the extent possible, native language support for students when there were 5 children or more from the same language background. The school was well known for its multicultural and multilingual programs, which embrace native language and ESL instruction. Because of these programs, Villa America Elementary attracted many international students. Approximately 35% of these international students were sons and daughters of visiting scholars, graduate students, or individuals who had some kind of association with the local university. The students represented more than 48 nationalities and spoke more than 40 different languages. The student ethnicity breakdown is summarized in the table below.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of students in school</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Student Ethnicity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 315</td>
<td>The Villa America Elementary School</td>
<td>57.4 % Black</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25.5 % Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.7% White</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7% Multiracial</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.7% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1% American Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86% Low-income</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Programs

The school’s multicultural/multilingual programs were offered for the students still developing their English proficiency. Under the Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) designed by the state for schools with 20 emergent bilinguals or fewer, Villa America Elementary School provided students from other nationalities with options such as the Native Language Class and ESL instruction.

The native language program. This program provided the students with 45 minutes of daily instruction in their native language. In the past, the school had offered the program in many languages such as Chinese, French, Vietnamese, Russian, Indonesian, Arabic, and Turkish. According to the principal, the program implementation depended on funding and human resources. At times, the school would offer between 10 and 15 Native Language Programs. The principal noted that programs like this
were important since many of the students were in the United States temporarily, and it was important for them to keep up with and continue to develop their own native language competency in the U.S. Unfortunately, there were not many Portuguese-speaking students at the school and thus the program was not offered.

**The English as a second language (ESL) program.** Under the TPI program, the school also offered the ESL program to all of the emergent bilinguals. These students were pulled out of their mainstream classes to receive ESL instruction for two hours daily. In these classes, students learned English through content-based programs that included science, social studies and language arts. Additional help in their native language was provided in the regular classes and in their ESL classes when necessary. In order to develop the students’ English language proficiency, the school followed the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Language Proficiency standards and instructional resources (http://wida.us/standards/eld.aspx).

**ESL placement.** K-12 students, who spoke a language other than English, had to go through a set of tests to determine their placement into the ESL program. One of the tests students had to take yearly was The ACCESS, a state-required test for English language learners. This test measured the student’s basic knowledge of English (oral, listening, and writing skills) and could take many months to complete. The test determined whether a student would be placed in ESL classrooms. If the scores indicated a second language need, the student was automatically placed in an ESL class. High-scoring students did not need to be in the ESL program, but parents could still elect to keep their children in it. On the other hand, parents could choose to keep their children out of the ESL program, even if their level of English was found less than adequate in the standardized test. In those cases, parents had to sign a contract stating their choice and assuming the responsibilities of their choices.

The emergent bilinguals enrolled in the third, fourth, and fifth grades were still required to take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), a test designed for native speakers of English. When needed, these students would get additional accommodations during the test. For example, the state either allowed the students to have their test written in their native language or exempted students from taking the reading portion of the test. The tests were sent to the state where they were scored and sent back to the school. The results sought to gauge the students’ level of progress in the program. The results of these tests also determined if the school met the state benchmarks of Academic Yearly Progress (AYP).

The case study child, Anita, scored low in her tests and was placed in the ESL program. She attended the all-English classes and was pulled out to receive English as a second language instruction (ESL) for two hours daily.
Out-of-School Participants

The participants from out of school include Anita (the participating child); her mother, Elisa; her father, Sérgio; and Ms. Sally who was a secondary participant. The participants’ descriptions are summarized below:

Table 2
Descriptions of Participants in the Out-of-school Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Backgrounds</th>
<th>Native Language / Other Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elisa, The mother</td>
<td>Late forties</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>Professor of Literacy at a prestigious University in Brazil.</td>
<td>Portuguese/ French and English (intermediate level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sérgio, The father</td>
<td>Early fifties</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>Professor of History at a prestigious University in Brazil</td>
<td>Portuguese English (intermediate-level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>A students – 3rd and 4th Grades</td>
<td>Portuguese English (Introductory level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary participants: Ms. Sally, The Youngsters’ Club director</td>
<td>Late fifties</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Bachelor in Music</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participating family was originally from Brazil. I did not know the family prior to my research. The family included Sérgio and Elisa, who had two children: Anita, who was 8 years old, and Lionel, who was 22 years old. Elisa and Sérgio were both professors from a well-known federal university located in the south of Brazil. In Brazil, the family would be considered middle class in terms of their socio-economic status. They came to the United States as visiting scholars. Thus, they both held a visiting scholar position in the local university. This was the first time the family was living in the United States. Elisa and Sérgio spoke English at a communicative level. According to them, understanding English was easier than expressing themselves orally. More details of participants are given next.

Elisa’s background. Elisa was Anita’s mother and was in her late forties at the time of this research. Elisa was very kind and welcoming to me. During our interviews, she was always eager to engage in conversation and to share her views on varied topics. As I will illustrate in chapter six, Elisa was also very reflective, open to new ideas, and willing to experience different things.
Elisa was born and educated in Brazil, but her ancestral (great-grandparents) came from Germany and were established in the south of Brazil. She explained that her grandmother was born in Brazil but only spoke German, and with time she learned only some words and sentences in Portuguese, which she would rarely speak. Elisa’s parents, however, were bilinguals, and as she recalled German was the language spoken at home, but Portuguese was spoken elsewhere. This was because at that time, speaking German was seen as shameful in the southern region of Brazil, Elisa explained. She further noted that speaking German was associated with the farmers who came from Germany and that was “coisa feia, assim, ficavam com vergonha” [something ugly, and people were ashamed of that]. Elisa seemed sad to admit that she never took advantage of her family’s bilingualism.

Elisa had entered the teaching career, “por acaso” [by chance], she said. Her parents had not completed a high level of education but they were “pessoas inteligentes” [intelligent people]. Her father finished what is nowadays called a fifth-grade education. She said her father was a very hard worker and well connected. Her mother had even less schooling: “Não conseguia sair da primeira série, porque ela não aprendia, tomava reguada nos dedos aquela coisa toda da escola lá dos anos quarenta.” [She was not able to pass the first grade because she could not learn; she would get her fingers snapped with a ruler, those things of the school of the 40’s] said Elisa. Elisa’s mother failed the first grade three times. As a result, Elisa’s grandfather made her mother leave school. Elisa explained that her mother used to talk with frustration about her schooling experiences.

Although Elisa’s mother had no formal education, she could read but could not write: “Ela lê jornal, lê algumas coisas assim, revistas, e alguns poucos livros assim.” [She reads the newspaper; she reads some stuff like that; magazines, a few books as well]. As Elisa concluded, she grew up in a poor environment with few books. However, she had a sister who was the “grande leitora” [a big reader] and who was always “investindo em livros” [investing in books]. With her sister’s help and her mother’s support, Elisa was pulled towards the teaching path.

Elisa completed the “magistério,” a teaching certification course that used to be required for being a teacher in primary school level in Brazil, and began her teaching career at 17. She explained that teaching at that young age was not common in her city. She also confessed. “Não tinha a mínima noção, no terceiro ano de Magistério. Me lembro que sofria, assim, não sabia o que fazer com as crianças, e logo eu peguei uma classe de alfabetização.” [I had no notion of what to do in the third year of Magistério. I remember I suffered, like, I did not know what to do with the kids, and at first I was given a literacy class]. However, Elisa did very well in her first teaching assignment and kept her job as a literacy teacher for approximately six years until she was invited to teach at a private school. Years later, Elisa initiated the undergraduate studies program in Pedagogy also in the south of Brazil. Then, she started her career as a
professor at a prestigious public university in the south of Brazil, where she still worked at the time of this research.

“Dr. Elisa”, as she was called in Brazil, had been working in the education for twenty-two years. Elisa’s research, teaching, and areas of interest were specifically related to the Literacy and history of literacy. During the interview, she spoke with pride about her job and home institution as well as her love and enjoyment for her profession. Her role as an advisor and the idea of training future teachers also excited her.

Unlike in her parents’ house, Elisa noted, she kept many books in her home in Brazil: “Hoje a gente deve ter uns seis mil volumes, mais ou menos” [Today we should have about six thousand volumes]. Elisa clarified that most of those books entered her home after she got married with Sérgio. Besides enjoying reading, Sérgio always bought books to bring home and that was something that inspired Elisa to do the same.

Sérgio’s background. Anita’s father, Sérgio, was in his early fifties when this study took place. Son of pioneer farmers, Sérgio was born and grew up in a small village in the south of Brazil. His father, concerned that the family’s thirty-acre farm would not be enough to provide a good living for all his four boys and one girl, always emphasized the importance of education. According to Sérgio, “Ele sempre insistia conosco que a única coisa que ele poderia deixar pra nos era estudo” [He always claimed that the only thing he could leave for us, was education]. Sérgio explained that discourse like this one was common discourse in Brazil, mainly among poor families, because “A única herança que vocês podem ter é o estudo, então estudem!” [The only inheritance that you may have is your education; then, we shall study!]. Sérgio admitted sharing this point of view.

Talking about his experiences with literacy, Sérgio shared that although reading was not a very common practice in his grandmother’s youth, his grandmother was very interested in reading. She worked as a teacher for a while, and at her farmhouse, she had a library with a big selection of books, something not very common for farmers’ families, said Sérgio. Because of that, Sérgio was able to visit the library sometimes during his childhood. He told me that even though he enjoyed spending time at the library, he did not have much time to experience it very much because his family had to move to the city.

During the interview Sérgio talked about his early memories around literacy, about reading with his father under the shade of a tree during visits to their farm village house. He said,

Sérgio: Eu lembro ainda de eu criança, com meu pai, a gente, a tarde, quando o sol era muito forte, não permitia o trabalho na lavoura nós pegávamos os livros, os que restavam ainda da biblioteca e ficávamos lendo debaixo de uma árvore mais ou menos como essa aqui, na sombra. Então a gente sempre teve essa relação com a leitura. Em casa, na cidade, as primeiras leituras eram principalmente gibis, histórias em quadrinhos que meu irmão comprava pra gente. Meu irmão mais velho, nessa altura, já estava trabalhando, depois ele já era militar. Então, ele
I still remember when I was a kid. My father and I, in the afternoon, when the sun was very strong and we could work on the farms, we would take some of the remaining books from the farm library and we would read them under the shade of a tree, similar to this one. So, we always had this relationship with reading. At our home, in the city, the first readings were mostly comic book; the comic books that my brother bought for us. My older brother was already working at the time. He was in the military, so he had more money. He could buy these things. He bought [reading] materials that my other brothers and I could read.

Sérgio’s father worked hard to make a living for his family. He worked at a stone quarry during the week and the farm village on the weekends. According to Sérgio, this sacrifice had a purpose: “Tudo pra que meus irmãos mais velhos pudessem continuar estudando.” [Anything for my older brothers continuing to pursue their education]. Sérgio explained that he and his brothers were seriously committed to school, and in order to continue their middle school education, they worked during the day and studied in the evening. Sérgio and two of his siblings eventually became professors and the two other brothers joined the military. Therefore, Sérgio’s motivation to become a professor started early in life.

He told me that at fifteen, he got a job as an office boy in a local high school. Then, he went to school to study accounting and worked as an accountant during college. But that profession, according to Sérgio, was “traumático” [traumatic]. Sérgio decided to go back to the same school where he had worked as an office boy and asked for a job. The principal agreed to employ Sérgio who decided to pursue a combined degree in Social Studies and History. An opportunity to pursue a Master’s degree arose after he finished this second college degree. This opportunity opened up many opportunities for Sérgio. One of them was a job as a professor. Sérgio first taught Theory and Methodology of History, and later Latin American History. At the time of this study, Sérgio held a professor position in the same university as Elisa. There, he worked in the Department of History where he was responsible for the teacher education program of pre-service history teachers.

The family came to the United States because Sérgio and Elisa had a desire to pursue postdoctoral studies. Elisa and her husband had plans to complete their post-doctoral program right after they had finished their doctoral degree; however at that time, Elisa was pregnant with Anita. Thus, Elisa and Sérgio decided to wait and allow Anita to grow a little because they also wanted Anita to become literate in Portuguese before they moved abroad. Elisa reasoned,

Elisa: Então como eu sempre quis sair para o exterior. Eu pensei que primeiro Anita se alfabetizasse. Ela se alfabetiza na língua materna, porquê eu conhecia muitas histórias de colegas cujas crianças tinham se alfabetizado fora do país, e tiveram muitos problemas no retorno. Talvez muito mais do que o inverso. Então, assim, minha idéia é que a Anita se alfabetizasse e depois da alfabetização da Anita eu sairia.
So, I always wanted to go abroad. I thought that first Anita should become literate. She would become literate in her first language, because I knew many stories of colleagues whose children were literate abroad and who had many problems upon they return, possibly many more problems than the other way around. Then, like, my idea is that Anita became literate [in Portuguese] and after she became literate I would go abroad.

As the remarks above illustrate, Elisa believed in the importance of establishing strong roots in the native language before being exposed to the learning of a second language. In addition, according to Elisa, the second grade in Brazil held promising experiences for Anita: Anita was supposed to have a very good teacher and Elisa wanted Anita to be there for that experience. As her remarks show, Elisa was very concerned with Anita’s schooling experiences and cared deeply about the type of literacy Anita was receiving.

Due to these reasons, the family postponed the post-doctoral plans until Anita completed the two first years of schooling in Brazil. Elisa and her husband decided to accept positions as visiting scholars in the United States in 2012.

**Background of the participating child.** Anita was 8 years old at the time of this study. She often wore colorful clothes, displaying sometimes her favorite Disney characters. Anita had warm, shiny blue eyes, light skin, and straight long blond hair. Tiaras, ponytails, and braided updos were also part of Anita’s everyday hairstyle. She also had expressive tone of voice; smiles and loud laughs were often on her face. At home, Anita was a very active and performative girl, but at times very quiet and bashful in other contexts. Anita’s mother defines her:

Elisa: Eu sempre achei que Anita é pura, pura linguagem, né, desde pequena assim, em tudo. A linguagem no sentido amplo, né: é linguagem corporal, é linguagem visual, é ling-, auditiva, é linguagem escrita, é o desenho, é a música, (...) ela é puro movimento, é pura emoção, é pura representação, assim, é pura imaginação, criatividade. Ela tem muito forte isso.

[I always thought that Anita was pure, pure language, in everything, uh, and that was since she was little. Language in a broad sense, uh: her body language, visual language, it is hearing, and written language, she-, the drawing, the music, (...) she is pure movement. She is pure excitement, pure representation. She is pure imagination, and creativity. And that is very strong in herself.

Anita was also particularly interested in singing, dancing, drawing, writing, and in “fun stuff.”

“Ela gosta de criar, assim, de inventar, de inovar e gosta de coisa engraçada, ela gosta de fazer os outros rir e gosta que façam ela rir” [She enjoys creating things, uh, inventing, innovating; and she likes funny thing, she likes to make others people laugh and loves having us to make her laugh] explained Elisa. At home, Anita was always very artistic. She enjoyed playing with small toys and crafts. According to Elisa, since very young, Anita liked the fact she could make new things out of old ones. “Eu dava pratinho pra
ela, copinho, assim, e ela sempre transformava o copinho, o pratinho num edifício, numa casa, mas nunca foi de brincar de boneca” [I used to give her some paper plates, little cups, uh, and she always turned the cups and the plates to a building or a house, but she was never very interested in playing with dolls].

In Brazil, Anita studied in a private Catholic school, something that only few Brazilians, of middle or upper class, could afford. There, Anita attended pre-school as well as the first and second grades. She always attended the same school and had been with the same classmates since she was three years old. This was the first time that Anita has changed “turma, de escola, de país, de língua.” [The group, the school, country, and language], said Elisa. According to Elisa, in Brazil, Anita was always very involved in school activities, which included dance, music, drama, and English as a Foreign Language classes (EFL).

Elisa explained that in the private schools in Brazil, learning English was very common. Anita, for example, started studying EFL in Brazil since she was four. But, as Elisa noticed the English taught in the Brazilian school Anita attended was, “Inglês de brincadeira” [English for fun] and not “inglês de viver [English for real life]. Elisa highlighted several times during the interview, that learning English for fun was different from using it in real life tasks. She said that going to school, receiving orders in English, and learning in English required much more than knowing some words in a second language.

Despite that difference, according to Sérgio, Anita was very confident about her English abilities. But, as Sérgio said, when Anita arrived in the United States, “se deu por conta que ela ainda não sabia falar ingles” [she noticed that she did not know English] and that was difficult for Anita. Sérgio explained, “No começo foi difícil, ela sofreu um bocado ali, e a gente também, né, porque via o sofrimento dela.”[At first it was difficult, she suffered a lot there [at school] and we also suffered, you know, because we saw her suffering].

Secondary participants.

Ms. Sally. Ms. Sally was the after-school programming coordinator. She was born and raised in a small town in the Midwest of the United States. Ms. Sally was in her late fifties at the time of this study, and defined herself as an American. She had a degree in music and started her career working with children in high school when she was very young. Her passion for teaching was ignited during college when she worked with preschool children and “really fell in love with it.” For her, her background in music and teaching as a career was “like a good fit.” During the interview, Ms. Sally talked very passionately about her job experiences at the Youngsters’ Club.

Ms. Sally: I just can't imagine where I've had such an experience having met people from all over the world... It's just-, I love it, and it just opened me. I'm glad that I've been opened to global and diversity ... it's a whole different mindset. And it's ahh it's-, you want everybody to be open to it.
Ms. Sally worked in a Montessori preschool for many years. Incorporating some of the school philosophy to her teaching, she affirmed the belief that children learned with each other: “The older children help the younger and the younger children learn from the older kids and uhm we're all learning together.” Ms. Sally also believed in the power of learning by doing, the choice-making opportunities, and freedom. She trusted that “Children learn from doing. It is freedom within structure. You have a structured environment but the children have choice.” When I asked Ms. Sally about what she hoped kids learn at the Club, she said, “I just hope they have a good-, they've have a good experience, they have good memories. Just to have enjoyed that time for what it was at that time to take back with them.”

Talking about the emergent bilinguals enrolled in the program, Ms. Sally highlighted the importance of not only thinking about children based on the culture they come from but also about the childhood culture and the culture they co-constructed together. For her, looking at the children as children and knowing about their needs and experiences throughout the process was also fundamental. She said, “I just try to see everyone just a child, you know, and the age they're at and, you know, what they're going through. I don't always think about the culture where they're from.”

**In-School Context Participants**

The participants from the school included five teachers, Ms. Cool, and the principal who was a secondary participant. The participants taught in four different classrooms, the third-grade mainstream and ESL classrooms as well as their fourth grade counterparts. The participants’ descriptions are summarized below.

Table 3

*Descriptions of Participants in the In-school Context*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Grade level</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Natalie Nat, 3rd grade regular teacher</td>
<td>In her twenties</td>
<td>Bachelors in Elementary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Natalie Nat, Not Tenured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Alice Rose, 3rd grade ESL teacher</td>
<td>In her early sixties</td>
<td>Masters in Curriculum and Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Alice Rose, Tenured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Gu Xon, 3rd grade ESL Teacher Aide</td>
<td>In his late fifties</td>
<td>BA in law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Gu Xon, Tenured as a Chinese Language Teacher, not as an ESL teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>MA in Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (cont.)

Descriptions of Participants in the In-school Context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Tenure Status</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Kelly Carol</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>In her early thirties</td>
<td>BA in Education and earned her ESL endorsement MA in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Maria Tina</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>In her mid-thirties</td>
<td>MA in Curriculum and Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>regular teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Colleen Cool, the social worker</td>
<td>First-year employee</td>
<td></td>
<td>In her early fifties</td>
<td>BA in Sociology and History, MA in Counseling and MA from the School of Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Janice Blank, the principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In her forties</td>
<td>BA in Education, Masters in Special Ed EDD in EOL (Educational Policies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ms. Nat, The third-grade mainstream teacher.** Ms. Nat was the third-grade teacher at Villa America Elementary School. She was born and raised in the Midwest of the United States and lived in the suburbs of a large city her whole life. She stated that she did not relate to cultures other than being American. Ms. Nat had a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and a teaching certificate for the elementary level. The time of this study was during Ms. Nat’s first year teaching as full-time teacher.

Ms. Nat’s career choice was influenced by her parents, mainly her mother, who was also a preschool teacher. As Ms. Nat explained, since she little, she had been around schools, going to her mother’s classroom, or helping out with events on the weekends. Ms. Nat also mentioned that her experience working as a babysitter, nanny, or counselor at summer camps made her notice that she was good at working with kids. She said, “I have patience, I know how to talk to children, I know how to work with children, I know, you know, and I enjoy. I-, and I really enjoyed it.” Although she had the support of her mother at home, school was not necessarily easy for her: “I struggled with it,” she commented. Ms. Nat shared that she always attended the public schools in the same town in a suburban city nearby.

Ms. Nat’s classroom was the first one in the main school hallway. Her classroom was a good size with a white board in the middle; for the most part the desks were organized in rows, sometimes in pairs. On the back of her classroom, there was a cubby shelf right by the reading area as in the pictures that follow.
Ms. Rose and Mr. Xon, the third-grade ESL teachers. Ms. Rose and Mr. Xon, the teacher’s aide, shared the teaching of the third-grade ESL classroom in which Ms. Rose was in her sixties and in her late career, entering her twentieth year of teaching at Villa America Elementary School. Ms. Rose was born in Egypt, but her first language was French. She migrated to France as a small child. Ms. Rose learned English when she was approximately ten years old when she moved to the United States. She also spoke Spanish and could understand Portuguese, but could not speak it. She had lived in Venezuela for about seven years but was a naturalized American citizen from long time ago.

Ms. Rose had a Master’s degree in elementary education from a prestigious university in the Midwest. She had begun a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction but abandoned the program before she finished. She described herself as a very experienced teacher – she was a professor in a university in Venezuela, taught English as a Foreign Language to adults, and had many years of classroom experience at elementary and high school levels.

Ms. Rose became a teacher inspired by her own experiences with second language learning. She shared that, when she arrived in the United States, she could not speak English very well and the school assumed that if she were in an environment where the teacher’s pace through the material was slower, this would meet her needs. However, according to Ms. Rose, “the pace of the learning went slower,” but “the speech of the individual who is teaching does not change,” “they didn't understand what it was like to acquire a second language.”

Mr. Xon was the ESL teachers’ aide and the one responsible for working with the newly arrived emergent bilinguals more directly. Mr. Xon was in his late fifties and was originally from China. He started learning English in China when he was 26 years old. Mr. Xon came to the United States in 1987 after finishing his bachelor’s degree in law. Ms. Xon attended the same prestigious university as Ms. Rose, and pursued two Master’s degrees: the first one in Education and the second in Library and Information Science. Like Ms. Rose, Mr. Xon had been a teacher for over 20 years. Mr. Xon was not certified in ESL, but he was a tenured as a Chinese Language Teacher.
The third-grade classroom was usually arranged in small groups, in tables of 4 or 5. There were also some objects or artifacts from different countries and colorful posters spread around the walls. In the front of the classroom, there was a white board. Posters of ancient Egyptian civilization, their tools and animals were also spread around the walls. More specifically the third-grade ESL classroom looked like the following:

![Figure 2. The third-grade ESL classroom.](image)

**Ms. Tina, the fourth-grade mainstream teacher.** Ms. Tina, the African-American instructor of the fourth-grade mainstream classroom, was in her mid-thirties. She was raised in the neighborhood of the school and her own children also enrolled at Villa America Elementary at the time. She seemed very comfortable and familiar with the area. Talking about living in the neighborhood, she said,

Ms. Tina: I live in the community so I don't have a problem with it. There's not a lot of crime. You don't read about us in the newspaper and we have a park, … a lot of kids know each other because they play with each other after the school bell rings.

Ms. Tina was also very familiar with Villa America Elementary School. As she explained, she knew the school before she started teaching there from having attended the school as an elementary school student. Ms. Tina got her undergraduate degree and Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction from a respected university in the Midwest. She was entering her fourteenth year of teaching at Villa America Elementary. Ms. Tina had a total of 19 students attending her classroom.

In Ms. Tina’s classroom, the tables were always grouped together, in clusters of 4 or 6 desks. There were also colorful posters spread around the walls. On the board the teacher had posted the classroom schedule and the objectives of the lesson that day. Maps were also spread around the walls. There were posters, which included a list of the capitalization rules, punctuation rules, and the expectations. The rules and expectations seemed to be central in the teaching and visible in the classroom decor.
Ms. Carol, the fourth-grade ESL teacher. Ms. Carol was Anita’s fourth-grade ESL teacher. Although she was only thirty, she had already taught for seven years at the elementary school level. That was her sixth year working at Villa America Elementary School. Ms. Carol appeared to be African American; she preferred, though, to identify herself as, “Other stuff,” because according to her “people define themselves differently,” and therefore, she did not like “that type of question.”

Ms. Carol shared that she had planned go to a different field, but became interested in pursuing a teaching career because the influence of her math teacher who was “really good, she was a really good person” and helped her out. However, it was the idea of a free college degree, a scholarship that instigated Ms. Carol to pursue a bachelor’s in Education. After finishing college, she got a position as an elementary school teacher in a public school in a small Midwest town near the city where she grew up. Not too long after accepting the position as an elementary school teacher, Ms. Carol figured out she was “hating” what she was doing and decided go back to the university to pursue her Master’s degree. Ms. Carol decided she wanted to teach English for speakers of languages other than English and get her ESL endorsement. With that level of education, Ms. Carol was able to get a job at Villa America Elementary.

The room was open and bright. From the big window, we could see cars, the city bus, and people walking on the street. The walls of the fourth-grade classroom were covered in bright posters, decorated bulletin boards, chalkboard, and colorful charts. There was not much empty space remaining. In front of the classroom there was a rug and big beanbags in purple, green, and yellow. The next images illustrate the fourth-grade ESL classroom.
Secondary Participants

Ms. Cool, the school social worker. Ms. Cool was the school social worker and was in her early fifties at the time of this study. She defined herself as Trinidadian-American. Ms. Cool came to the United States in 1990, which was also her first year of working at Villa America Elementary. Ms. Cool reported being very familiar with the school since she did her internship at Villa America Elementary School and worked there for one year afterwards. Ms. Cool had previous experience working at middle and high school levels. She had a bachelor’s degree in Sociology and History, a Masters degree in counseling and another Masters from the School of Social Work. At Villa America Elementary School, Ms. Cool was involved in the Individual Education Plan (IP) team, designed for students with a disability. As part of that team, she was in charge of speaking with the student, the parents, and sometimes doctors and nurses to get as much information as possible about the students’ needs. She also met with parents to discuss any concerns that the team had.

Ms. Cool also assisted regular students for different reasons. She explained that some of them “don't have a disability, but the teacher or the parent, and sometimes both, have concerns that the student is lacking in specific social skills.” These students include those who have problems handling basic disagreements or have parents going through a divorce or have passed away. Ms. Cool also assisted students who needed grief counseling or had more simple needs.

Ms. Cool seemed to understand very well the interests of young children, including Anita. Ms. Cool was able to fast perceive Anita’s needs and fulfill them. She did that by inviting Anita to participate in the Friendship Group and developing a friendship with her. Anita’s parents attributed Anita’s success, engagement and motivation at school to Ms. Cool.

Ms. Cool also established a close friendship not only with Anita, but also with her parents, and as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, Ms. Cool was an important change agent. Further, she was someone who seemed to look at “relevance” and literacy practices through children’s perspective.
Ms. Blank, the principal. Ms. Janice Blank was the principal at Villa America Elementary School and was entering her eighth year as principal. She identified herself as bi-racial African American and white. Her native language was English, but she also spoke some basic Spanish.

Ms. Blank grew up in a nearby city where she also attended a small Christian school for most of her elementary education. She attended a larger and more diverse high school that was focused on college preparation and attracted many students because of its great reputation. She concluded with a smile, “I feel like I got a well-rounded education.” Ms. Blank had a Bachelor’s degree in Education; a Master’s degree is in special Ed, and an EdD in Education and Policies. Ms. Blank also had experience as a Special Ed coordinator.

Ms. Blank reported that she wore “two hats” at The Villa America Elementary School. One was that of the “manager,” the other was that of the instructional leader. As an instructional leader, she worked directly with the teachers, “by facilitating and guiding them in the right directions to make sure that they are providing the best instruction that they can.” She also helped teachers to design or implement the curriculum, and worked with them to make sure that they were using it in their instruction and assessment. In the manager role, Ms. Blank administrated the building facility, the services around the school (e.g., scheduling, the building cleaning), and assisted students and parents. During my fieldwork, I had informal conversations with Ms. Blank who provided me with the school background information, including information on the different programs offered at Villa America Elementary.

Data Collection

This was 8-month longitudinal study and the data was collected from April to December 2012. I used ethnographic tools and thus employed multiple data collecting sources for this study such as observational field notes, including memos and field jottings; audio-recordings; open-ended interviews with the children, their parents, the teacher, the school officials, and staff; and artifacts from home and school.

Interviews

I conducted open-ended interviews with the children, their parents, and the teacher, the principal, and one staff member. Participants were interviewed at home and at school.

Family members interview. In the family’s home, I began my data collection with an informal interview with the parents and with the participating child, Anita. I interviewed the parents informally in order to capture their perspectives on literacy and biliteracy, and to gain insights on literacy practices that took place at home. Throughout this interview, the parents and I talked about literacy practices (e.g., reading literature books, popular culture, media, games, first language, and so on) and resources Anita was exposed to at home. These resources refer to the many tools that were used by Anita at home and
included the shared and learned beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape one’s perceptions and behavior in his or her culture (Rogoff, 2003).

At the beginning, I planned to interview the parents approximately three times during the study. However, the amount and time of each interview varied according to parents’ availability. In the first interviews (or set of questions), I tried to capture the parents’ background and the family profile. I asked questions about their place of origin, professions, language, culture, educational background, and their own experiences with literacy. Because I did not know the family prior to this study, I also worked to establish a relationship with the family in the first visit. I thought it was important to make sure they felt comfortable with my presence in their house during data collection.

Finally, I asked the parents to talk about the more specific events I had experienced at home or that I had seen them experience at home. The parents were invited to reflect on these literacy events in the home. More details of the tentative protocol for the interviews can be found as Appendix. All the interviews were scheduled according to the parents’ availability and agenda. The interviews took about 60 minutes, sometimes less. They were held in the participants’ home or under the shade of a tree in their back yard. These interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed.

The participating child, Anita, was also invited for three informal conversations with me (open-ended interviews) regarding her literacy experiences at home and at school. I asked her questions about her experience with literacy at Villa America Elementary School, at home, and in the community. These informal talks took between 15-60 minutes each. Other conversations were carried out on an ongoing basis, as Anita felt comfortable to share her experiences with me. These conversations better captured Anita’s views about her new social context, literacy practices, and thoughts on the topics relevant to this study. In this sense, the amount of time of each interview varied according to the nature of the question and motivation Anita had to answer the questions. Details of Anita’s interview questions can also be found in Appendix. The interviews were conducted in Portuguese, but sometimes Anita would use some English words.

**In-School interviews.** I also interviewed teachers about their viewpoint on literacy and resources to be used in the classroom to enhance and promote literacy of emergent bilinguals in the school. It was my goal to gain insights into what teachers considered to be culturally and linguistically relevant for emergent bilingual children. As I did with the parents, I intended to interview the teachers 2-3 times. However, the interviews were set on an ongoing basis according to the teachers’ availability. I also posed questions to the teachers on similar topics as those I had asked the parents. These questions focused on understanding teachers’ educational philosophy, pedagogical approach to literacy instructions, and collecting information about their background (level of educational and teaching experiences, etc.) and
tried to create a safe space between me and the teachers. In the first interview, I hoped to get to know the teachers better and build a trusting relationship with them.

During the interviews, I also asked questions that could lead teachers to talk about their views of literacy, literacy practices at school, resources and how they worked with literacy instruction of emergent bilingual children. I also asked questions that focused on specific classroom episodes or literacy events. Teachers were asked to reflect on these literacy practices and talk about their plans and goals for the lesson. The interviews took between 15-60 minutes and were conducted at Villa America Elementary School. All the interviews with the teachers were scheduled according to the teachers’ availability and agenda. The interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed for analysis.

**Observations**

**Home.** During my observations (April to December), I collected field notes, including memos and field jottings. At home, these notes focused on literacy practices experiences; the ways parents promoted, supported, or simply engaged their child in literacies practices; and how the child herself engaged in certain literacy events. For instance, I observed the participating child informally during family literacy events, playing with friends, or during homework time. I paid attention to the types of conversations going on during with these events as well as to the types of resources available. I arranged the home visit according to the parents’ availability and at their convenience. Usually my visits took place after the Youngsters’ Club hours, after 5:00 pm and on different days of the week. More specifically, during my observations, I focused on the parents’ participation on literacy practices, their use and reference to L1 language and culture, and their, use of resources to engage the child in L1—if any. I also focused on the participating child’s response to parents during literacy events, resources used during literacy events, opinion on materials used for literacy events, and engagement with self-chosen literacy tasks.

**School.** At school, I used similar procedures to collect data. I began by observing and understanding the classroom culture. This observation took place from April 2012 to approximately beginning of December 2012. I also took field jottings, notes, and wrote memos to help me later with the analysis. Next, as mentioned above, I interviewed participating teachers regarding their perspectives on literacy and on education more broadly speaking. More information regarding the questions used in the interview can be found in the appendix. Again, at first, my goal was to get a sense of the classroom climate and the ways that literacy was taught, learned and used in the classroom.

The teachers were observed during literacy instruction in language arts classroom and ESL classroom (third-grade mainstream and ESL classrooms as well as their fourth-grade counterparts). The classroom visits happened every day in the first two weeks. Being in the classroom every day, I was able to perceive how the lesson progressed throughout the whole week (beginning to end of one lesson) and,
thus, I was able to better register the kinds of literacy events usually taking place in the classroom. Then, I started observing the classroom around 3 times a week, for 2 to 4 hours each visit depending on the teacher’s agenda and schedule. I visited the third-grade classrooms from April to May and the fourth-grade classrooms from August to December 2012.

During observations, I focused on understanding and looking for instances of how teachers implemented their perspectives in their everyday practices in the classroom and what types of resources and practices were promoted in their classroom. As I attempted to identify teachers’ practices and perspectives on literacy, I also tried to identify the ways in which their perspectives supported, facilitated, or possibly inhibited opportunities for literacy in the students’ first language (L1), in the second language (L2), in this case the Portuguese language (L1), and the learning of English (L2).

The children were observed as whole class and as they participated in small group activities during the literacy events. Most of the small groups’ interactions related to literacy events were audiotaped for transcription and analysis. The focal child’s artifacts and literacy activities completed during these literacy events were also collected. Artifacts brought from home to school during literacy events were also photocopied with the parents’ and teacher’s permission. No extra tasks or extra time was required from the participants. In sum, during my visits at Villa America Elementary, I focused on the focal child’s response to literacy instruction pedagogy approaches, resources used during literacy instruction, engagement with the resources available in the classroom/curriculum (official curriculum), opinion on materials used for literacy instruction (Does she like/don’t like it?), unofficial literacy tasks (Dyson, 1997) (e.g., tasks that children participate on their own, usually unofficial to the curriculum). Regarding the teachers, I focused on the teachers’ perceptions on literacy as enacted in the classroom level of engagement in literacy event in the classroom, support and motivation of L1 language and culture (how?), pedagogical approaches to literacy instruction, use of children’s resources for literacy instruction and literacy development, use of resources to engage children in L1– if any (what are they?), awareness of materials relevance for literacy instruction, use of children’s unofficial literacy tasks (Dyson, 1997). These observations were fundamental to informing my understating of what happened in the classroom and what shaped the children’ literacy practices in the schools settings. The following table summarizes the data collection and data analysis procedures.
### Table 4
**Data Collection and Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out of school</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Method of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Observations:</td>
<td>Field notes (including memos and field jottings)</td>
<td>Analysis of the interviews with parents and others secondary participants for their perspectives on literacy, culturally relevant practices, and education as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April to December</td>
<td>of observations of literacy practices at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3 times a week, 2-3 hrs.</td>
<td>Audio-recordings and transcriptions</td>
<td>The field jottings, memos and field notes, from home visits, after-school program, and other places around the neighborhood to document and describe details of the participant’s engagement in literacy events, self-initiated literacy practices, use of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each visit approx.</td>
<td>and from the interviews with parents and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>participants interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Interviews with each</td>
<td>Resources (e.g., language used, media materials)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participant and</td>
<td>used during literacy events at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>informal conversations</td>
<td>literacy practices at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elisa (Total of 180 min.</td>
<td>Artifacts (Homework assignments, classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>approx.)</td>
<td>activities, drawings, writing</td>
<td>The artifacts (e.g., handouts, texts, writing samples, drawings) resources, and materials used during literacy events at home for understanding which materials and resources were perceived as relevant for the participants in out of school context and what how the participating child responded to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>samples, postcards, diary and journals pages,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and other extra-curricular materials produced</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>at home, and during literacy activities in the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the community:</td>
<td>Observations:</td>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept. to Dec.</td>
<td>(Homework assignments, classroom activities,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3 times a week, 2 hrs.</td>
<td>drawings, writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each visit approx.</td>
<td>samples, postcards, diary and journals pages,</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and other extra-curricular materials produced</td>
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<td>at home, and during literacy activities in the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The After-School</td>
<td>Ms. Sally (The Director</td>
<td>Interviews with parents and others secondary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Youngsters’ Club) 1</td>
<td>participants for their perspectives on literacy,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interviews with</td>
<td>culturally relevant practices, and education as</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(60 min. approx.)</td>
<td>a whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Places</td>
<td>Observations:</td>
<td>Analysis of the interviews with parents and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Places</td>
<td>others secondary participants for their</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations also took</td>
<td>perspectives on literacy, culturally relevant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>place at the local library,</td>
<td>practices, and education as a whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>book fair, stores, play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group, extra activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>related to literacy attended</td>
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<td></td>
<td>by the family</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 hrs. approx.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4 (cont.)

**Data Collection and Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In school</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Method of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Grade mainstream Ms. Nat</strong></td>
<td>Observations: April to May Average of 2-3 times a week, 2-4 hrs. each visit approx. 3 Interviews: Total of 130 min. approx. Artifacts collected</td>
<td>Field notes observation (including field jottings and memos) of classroom literacy practices</td>
<td>Analysis of teachers’ interviews for their perspectives on literacy, culturally relevant practices, and education as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Grade ESL Ms. Rose and Mr. Xon</strong></td>
<td>Observations: April – May Average of 2-3 times a week, 2-4 hrs. each visit approx. 3 Interviews: Total of 130 min. approx. Artifacts collected</td>
<td>Interviews with teachers, and secondary participants Audio-recordings of small-group interaction and interviews</td>
<td>Analysis of the literacy perceptions seemingly underlining teachers’ everyday practices in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4th Grade mainstream Ms. Tina</strong></td>
<td>Observations: August to Dec. Average of 2-3 times a week, 2-4 hrs. each visit approx. 3 Interviews: Total of 130 min. approx. Artifacts collected</td>
<td>Transcriptions from classroom observations and interviews Artifacts and documents (e.g., lesson plans, handouts, drawings) collected during literacy instruction in each classroom</td>
<td>Analysis of the field jottings, memos, and field notes from classroom observations to document and describe details of the participants’ interaction during literacy practices at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4th Grade ESL Ms. Carol</strong></td>
<td>Observations: From August to Dec. Average of 2-3 times a week, 2-4 hrs. each visit approx. 3 Interviews: Total of 130 min. approx. Artifacts collected</td>
<td>Photographs of classroom and resources,</td>
<td>Analysis of the transcriptions from classroom literacy events for the ways teachers engaged with children during literacy events and the ways they approached literacy pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ms. Cool, The social worker</strong></td>
<td>Observations: April and May 01 time a week, 45 min. each, approx. 01 Interview. Total of 60 min. approx. Artifacts collected</td>
<td>The Interviews with the participating child for her perspectives on the literacy and literacy practices she was experiencing in different contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Data Analysis

To analyze this study, I used the interpretative and qualitative traditions of research (Erickson, 1986). The data includes the original conversations spoken by the participants, field notes and audiotapes of the key literacy events, and the transcriptions of field notes and audiotapes of literacy practices that happened in and out of school. These data were translated into English when participants chose to use the Portuguese language.

I analyzed the data from each participant and from each site (home and school) separately. As recommended by Merriam (1998) I also engaged in some interpretation and analysis as I collected the data. For example, I used the Microsoft Excel to make a chart with information gathered in the interviews and in the observations. I listened to the audiotapes and read the field notes and completed an informal analysis of the data (e.g., wrote notes and questions to be further explored). The figure below illustrates a part of this chart.

Using an Excel chart, I reflected on key events that needed to be further explored. This chart was also very helpful in allowing me to engage in deeper thinking about the events and interactions. It also helped me in manipulating and finding the information faster in the files when reanalyzing the data. By doing so, I was also able to explore possible categories as they emerged from the data and compare themes across the different contexts.

At the end of my fieldwork, after the data was collected and the interviews with all participants were transcribed, I re-read, sorted, and coded the data entries into categories, always paying attention to my research questions (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). I also revisited the different data sources, including the artifacts, memos, notes and the Excel chart and looked for more specific characteristics or findings that helped me understand the participating child’s social practices and experiences across the contexts (e.g., classroom, home vs. school).

Figure 5. Ongoing data analysis chart.
My focus of analysis in both home and school was first to capture participants’ perspectives on the issues related to this study, and then, to understand how, culturally and linguistically, literacy events and resources figured into the participants’ responses and into the participants’ real-life experiences. For that, I used two different levels of analysis. On the first level in both the home and the school settings, I looked at the data related to the nature of the literacy events that occurred in these settings. I also examined the interview data to identify relevant patterns and themes.

On the second level of analysis, I investigated the relation between the participants’ stated perspectives and those enacted in their everyday practices. I compared the participants’ stated perspectives and those enacted in their everyday life, in order to capture the participants’ unstated perspectives on literacy. This way, I was able to gather insights into practices and resources that the participants believed to be relevant for their instructions as well as on their perspectives of literacy. This analysis helped me to gain a sense of teachers’ undergirding beliefs about literacy and about what culturally relevant literacy practices meant for them. By looking at each teacher’s data separately, I was able to see what types of classroom practices provided opportunities or constraints for culturally relevant literacy practices and for the children’s language learning and development.

Similar analysis was done for the data collected at home. To examine the nature of literacy practices at home, I first read the data transcribed from the interviews to highlight some themes and to understand the parents and the child’s perspectives on literacy, literacy practices, and pedagogical approaches to literacy. I then examined the relation between the parents’ stated perspectives on literacy (from the interviews) and those enacted in their everyday practices. I also analyzed the data to identify the types of literacies the parents were promoting and engaging, in order to keep their child’s taste for literacy while also developing literacy skills.

After analyzing all information gathered, I thought about the data and possible relationships and meanings among them (Mertens, 2010). For instance, I looked at the data on observations at home and school. I studied the interviews and artifacts collected from home and school, and sought related patterns that seemed to be relevant for understanding the proposed phenomena. I looked for similar patterns across all of the other participants and analyzed the differences and/or similarities of participants’ perspectives in the different settings (e.g., home and school). Next, I investigated how each participant’s perspective and practices were supported or contradicted across settings. For example, when a participant affirmed during the interview that they believed in the importance of valuing students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, I looked for instances of how these participants enacted that (or not) in their daily experiences. In other words, during this process, I identified and examined segments of the data that could support or challenge my preliminary analysis (Erickson, 1986) of the interviews and artifacts and that could answer my
research questions. From this analytical procedure, I developed these two concepts that I called “Inside-out” and “Outside-in.”

The two levels of analysis used in this study did not necessarily occur in a linear way, but in interaction, giving me initial guidance on how to start answering my research questions and looking for themes. As Merriam (1998) reminds us, every time researchers engage in data examination (e.g., reading the data, transcribing, coding) they apply different levels of analysis.

Validity

In order to enhance the credibility and validity of my study, I used a variety of strategies and sources for data collection. The sources of data collection included audio recording, interviews (with the child, her parents, the teachers, and other secondary participants), the child’s artifacts, and observational field notes.

In order to reduce potential bias, I triangulated the data. I engaged in the process of “comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative methods” (Patton, 2002, p. 559). I read and reread my notes, memos, field jottings, and reviewed the data many times, always looking for consistency across data sources to create themes and categories as presented in the findings chapter. For instance, I checked the consistency between the participants’ (parents and teachers) stated perspectives in literacy practices and their everyday practices.

To enhance the credibility and validity of my study and to avoid a single research interpretation, I spent approximately seven months at the research site. I also used a peer examination strategy. That is, I shared my data with colleagues from a qualitative research class, who gave me extended feedback throughout my writing process, including feedback on my topics and themes on the data findings, and interpretation. For a semester, my colleagues and I engaged in rich dialogue about my data, which allowed me to reflect and revise some of my interpretations and reassess them. I believe that by doing so, I reduced the potential bias of a single research interpretation.

Limitations

This project aimed to explore culturally relevant literacy practices for a Brazilian emergent bilingual from the perspectives of different participants: parents, teachers, and the participating child. This study considered how the participating child engaged in literacy practices within the home and school contexts while in the process of learning English as a second language. Given the complexity of the phenomenon and its multidimensionality, it is important to consider some of its limitations.

The current investigation was limited to one family. Although the findings regarding the ways literacy practices at home and at school revealed a valuable range of literacy practices and cultural experiences, this study focused on one Brazilian family and, therefore, cannot be generalized to other families or other emergent bilingual groups. Yet, I believe that are many children like Anita that are
constantly struggling to find relevance within contexts that are, for the most part, structured, controlled, authoritarian, and that focus on “outside-in features.”

Additionally, this study provided a portrayal of a literacy that took place in a specific period, contexts, and historical time. Thus, the literacy practices were very specific to the socio-cultural contexts, and the findings might not be appropriate in other settings or communities. It is important to remember they cannot be considered as true for other Brazilian families or for other Portuguese speakers.

Also, the findings regarding literacy practices at home might be constrained by the inconsistent schedule of parents and their child. Because the observations at home were arranged according to the parents’ availability, I was able to register literacy practices that took place only during a limited number of times (e.g., in different days and times). This means that I was not able to observe all the instances of literacy practices at home. Thus, the findings represent only a snapshot of the literacy practices experienced by the participating child and her family. The same applies to the school setting. The participating child may have experienced many valuable practices that were not portrayed in this study.

Another limitation of this research is that there are many factors affecting the literacy practices of the participants and their experiences that the current study was not able to investigate. For example, my observations at school were done mostly during the mainstream and ESL classrooms. By limiting my observations to only these settings, I was probably unable to capture literacy practices that took place in other settings within the school. This means that I did not consider other literacy experiences that could be taking place in different ways in other classrooms.

The findings of this study are also limited to home, school, and some sites in the neighborhood. However, the participating child might be engaging in other types of literacy in other settings that were not portrayed this study. By limiting my observations settings, I probably left out other venues where literacy could have taken place (e.g., restaurants, church, shopping). Still, I believe that the findings of this study reveal a very complex phenomenon of literacy and illustrate the complex ways that participants view, engage in, and support literacy of the young children.

**Researcher Role**

**My identity as a researcher.** As Henry (2003) argues, “a fieldworker’s identity has a great impact upon the research process and product, challenging notions of researcher objectivity and neutrality (p. 229).” Henry’s thoughts towards the researcher identity feel very true to me. We all bring to our research some underlying beliefs about the world and about the phenomena we want to study. Throughout my experience doing research, I found myself not only strongly connected to my work, in the sense of my identity and my own experiences with literacy, but I also found myself—in terms of my identity as a researcher—affected by my study in many ways. I explore these points next.
My desire to explore literacy practices and development of young children is based mainly on my own experiences with literacy and the respect I have developed for “illiterate” people and their various forms of acting literacy in their lives. I am originally from Brazil, from the outside edge of a small town in São Paulo state. I am a student who has experienced, throughout kindergarten to high school, the so-called “banking approach” form of education: a form of education that believes that the learning of new knowledge occurs through memorization, repetition, and uncritical encounters with the content learned (Freire, 1972). I grew up surrounded by a worldview of literacy determined by a privileged society, which was interested in maintaining its privileged status. Growing up, I became aware of the social-economic condition of my family, the social class differences between my family and friends, and the inequalities existent in the neighborhoods within my city. I also became aware that people from different social classes had different educational opportunities and that only a few of them had access to good education. I also became aware that I belonged to the social class group that was highly likely to not succeed in my educational endeavors, but I never gave up on school.

When thinking about my first experiences with literacy, I first associate it with school and with the stories I heard from my teachers. I never associated literacy with home. For me, school was an important site for literacy. At school, I could talk and play with my friends. I could cut up old magazines to create cards, drawing with crayons and listening to the stories my teachers used to read. Furthermore, I could explore information that was not available at home.

At home, I liked to retell the stories I learned in school to my grandfather, with whom my mother and I lived. Some of my childhood memories from home and the most enjoyable learning experiences came through television, music, and artwork projects. In my memory book, for example, I used to keep some of my school related art. I gathered all sorts of things like notes from my friends and candy wrappers with inspirational messages. Music was always around me and I spent hours listening to music on the radio or reading music lyrics, mainly the ones in English. I simply loved to copy quotes from the songs into my memory books.

Overall, my experiences with literacy were lonely at home. I did not have brothers or sisters to play with, to talk to, or to do fun things together. My mother was always working to help support the family and to prove herself as a single mother. I have few memories of her involved in play with me, or helping me in my school assignments. Unlike many of my current graduate school friends and undergraduate students, I do not have any memories regarding books read at home or bedtime stories. I do not remember being asked to read books, either. One of my favorite things to do at home was to play “teacher” after school. I had a small black board in the back yard, my “classroom.” Grandpa was my favorite student because he was always at home when I felt like playing “teacher.”
One day, playing with grandpa was not fun anymore. I found out that my grandfather could not identify the words I was writing on the board. For a moment, I thought that grandpa had forgotten how to read because that was what happened when people grew older: they forgot about things. However, as I became more aware of the print literacy, I also understood that grandfather could not read and write. He was what people called “illiterate.” However, I thought that in my role as “teacher,” I could help my grandpa to overcome this situation. I decided to “teach” him how to read and write. The challenge was a little difficult for a small child. I tried to share with him my cartilha (primer) but it did not work, mainly because grandpa lacked even the motor skills to put the letters on the paper. As time passed, I understood the reason grandpa could not read or write was not his age, but rather his lack of access to education.

From that moment on, I felt responsible for my grandfather in many ways. For instance, because of his illiteracy, communication in general was very difficult, and my responsibilities around the house, at very young age, were significantly increased. I had to be his eyes, hands, and sometimes even his thoughts. I had to read grandpa’s prescriptions, food labels and instructions, and read signs for direction on the streets. Therefore, my responsibilities were not limited to the home but also extended to the community. Thus, I became his bridge between home and community. Given this special role of helping grandpa around the neighborhood, I was able to establish networks and learn how to communicate with many people in many different ways. For instance, I was compelled to use language in many different contexts and situations that exceeded my age level and our socioeconomic status, such as interactions with workers at the grocery store, at the street market, at the bank, and around the neighborhood.

All of these experiences provided me with some assistance in reading, using language specific purposes, addressing people from different social contexts and social classes, and learning different social cultural norms. All the aforementioned experiences forced me, many times, to communicate things that were sometimes beyond my literate abilities. It made reading and writing a must in my life, mainly because someone else (my grandfather) was also relying on my ability with literacy to make sense of the world. These experiences provided me with a variety of skills that slowly entered my literacy repertoire.

After reading my story, one might conclude that at home there was little place for language and literacy development because of the context of illiteracy, lack of communication, and the low-income condition of my family. It might appear that home created a gap in my literacy practices, mainly because I did not have at home the literacy experiences considered by many as “ideal.” It is true that I struggled to complete my homework assignments without the assistance of my parents or grandparents. Indeed, the experiences with literacy I brought from home to school were limited and had no real value in the sense that they were not teaching me some of the words and content that I needed to function in real life, and in the sense that many times, I could not share my school experiences with my family members. However, it was my experiences around different kinds of literacies that allowed me to use and develop language and
literacy in many different ways. It was at home, through experiencing different literacies that I was able to understand the importance and the power that literacy has in one’s life. Years later, looking back to my own experiences around different kinds of literacies and my close contact with “illiteracy” I recognized that people use literacy for different purposes and experience literacy in different ways. I also recognized that although I did not grow up in the most “ideal” literacy environment, with adults who had a formal education, my love for literacy and my rich experiences with it were valuable. It was beyond what school could have ever taught me. Also, these experiences were all rooted in the experiences of my family and my home environment.

It is because of these experiences with literacy that I now think about literacy and its use in a different way. For me, the lack of experience with the word does not mean lack of experience in the world (Freire, 1972). It is evident that my grandfather lacked literacy print literacy or the “skills,” that is he could not decode words and understand their significance, but despite of his inability to read and write, he was still able to maneuver successfully in life. In addition, he had wisdom and ability to teach me many valuable life lessons that did not require the ability to decode written language. In this sense, his illiteracy was no barrier to our relationship or to my ability to develop as highly literate person. Moreover, my grandfather’s illiteracy has been my motivation and the springboard to pursue education and investigate distinctive cases of literacy practices to share with others. All the aforementioned experiences allow me to bring to my research an insider perspective of someone who not only had a different experience with literacy, but also sees literacy practices through a different lens.

My history has shaped the way I see the world (Freire, 1972) and the way I see literacy learning and literacy development. As a researcher, I could not separate my “self” from my history or my history from my research journey. My history allows me to look at children’s unique way of participating in their multifaceted literacy practices.

**Researcher role.** In order to capture more details of the children’s literacy practices, I occupied an observer role. I chose the observer role because it enabled me to collect detailed data on the practices and behaviors of the participants and avoid, as much as possible, interfering in their behavior. The role of observer allowed me to watch the participating child, her parents, and teachers' participating in literacy events and to understand better what literacy practices meant for each one of them. This role also allowed me to focus on learning the many ways that the participating child was experiencing literacy and biliteracy in different settings and how, she herself, her teachers, and parents were collaboratively promoting literacy learning and development.

However, during my fieldwork, this role of being just an observer was challenged many times. As I had anticipated, during the data collection, the negotiation of roles with the participants was unavoidable. Thus, as the research progressed, my role shifted occasionally from the observer to the participant-
observer. For example, during my visits at school, during literacy practices, the participating children approached me several times to ask questions about vocabularies or to ask for clarification about the teacher’s instructions. Similarly, in some circumstances, the teacher invited me to interact with the participating child, mainly because the participating child and I shared the same language background.

The negotiation between these two roles was extremely challenging but necessary. As a researcher, I needed to make sure I did not interfere in the dynamic of the interactions going on in the classroom. However, I also wanted the participating child to feel comfortable around me. I wanted her to feel more willing to share her thoughts and to talk with me more freely about her experiences with literacy. I wanted to be helpful and also closer to her experiences without being invasive. By occasionally adopting the participant-observer role, mainly at the beginning of my fieldwork, I was able to do that. I was able to establish a relationship with her, to capture a more detailed view of her literacy practices and gain a better understanding of her perspectives on literacy practices that were relevant for her, mainly because she shared some thoughts and feelings about her experiences in the moment they happened. In other words, in order to have access to the participating child’s’ emic perspectives and establish a friendship and trustful relationship with her, this negotiation of roles was necessary.

In what follows, I present the participant’s perspectives and literacy practices and enacted in their everyday lives. I divided my findings into three chapters. In chapter 4, I explain how this dissertation study is organized and provide an overview of the research findings. In chapter 5, I turn the attention to literacy practices in the classroom and I explore in more detail how literacy practices take place within what I call “the Outside-in” concept. In chapter 6, I focus on practices that took place in the out-of-school contexts including the family home, the neighborhood, and at the after-school program (The Youngsters’ Club). On portraying literacy practices, I illustrate how literacy practices occur within what I called “The Inside-out” concept and offer details of how participants engage in practices they consider “relevant” for the young children and how they mediate literacy practices.
CHAPTER 4
THE “INSIDE-OUT” AND “OUTSIDE-IN” CONCEPT OF SCHOOLING

Through this dissertation study, I explore the literacy practices and resources, in and out of school, considered culturally relevant for supporting the second language literacy of a Brazilian emergent bilingual child. I designed this study with the purpose of understanding the complexity of literacy practices experienced by an emergent bilingual in and out of school. With that purpose in mind, I designed a qualitative case study and looked inside four culturally diverse classrooms and one Brazilian family home. More specifically, I asked: What are the literacy practices and resources considered culturally relevant, in and out of school, for supporting second language literacy learning of the Brazilian emergent bilingual participating in this study?

To answer that question, I analyzed participants’ (the child, her parents, and her five teachers) perspectives on literacy and their literacy practices enacted in their everyday lives, either at home, in the community or at school. My intention was to understand: (a) the types of literacy practices the Brazilian emergent child was experiencing in and out of school; (b) the perspectives of participants held regarding literacy practices and how these perspectives intersected to shape the emergent bilinguals’ experiences with literacy; and (c) how participants’ notions of culturally relevant literacy practices figure into the child’s everyday life events in and out of school.

In this chapter I provide an overview of major research findings, which involves the description of two major concepts that seemed to undergird participants’ notions of “relevance,” literacy, and, thus, culturally relevant practices: the “Inside-out” and “Outside-in” concepts. Then, I briefly discuss how these concepts were perceived in the school and out-of-school contexts. Following, I present how the “Inside-out” concept was negotiated by the focal child in her first encounter with schooling in the United States.

Conceptualizing Literacy and Approaching Relevance from “Inside-out” and “Outside-in”

During seven months of data collection, I had the opportunity to get to know each one of the participants involved in this study. By observing the focal child, Anita, her parents, and her teachers, I noticed that these individuals differed significantly in the expectations they held for literacy practice as well as for relevance. I also saw Anita navigating among different social communities between the contexts of school, home, and the neighborhood. I saw the struggles she had in negotiating the expectations of different individuals and her own needs as a child and as a second language learner. As I will explore throughout this dissertation, I found that the cultures of school and home were represented in a very different ways and that individuals’ notions of “relevance,” literacy, and, thus, culturally relevant practices among school and home were based mainly in the interrelationship between two concepts what I
called the “Inside-out” and the “Outside-in” concepts to literacy. These two concepts are central to the conceptualization of culturally relevant practices in this study. They are closely connected to (a) the perception that individuals held on literacy, (b) the way they facilitated practices, and (c) the way they socialized children into concepts of practices they thought were “relevant.” Following, I discuss in detail each of these two concepts.

![Figure 6. “Inside-out” and “Outside-in” concepts of literacy.](image)

**The “Inside-out” concept.** I define the “Inside-out” concept as the one that looks at literacy, “relevance,” and thus, culturally relevant practices, as emerging from the inside of learners, that is, emerging from needs of the child. Individuals who embrace this concept start in the assumption of literacy as social practices. They also consider mostly the learner’s personal resources (e.g., culture, language, motivation, values), as well as their emotional and sociocultural needs as a starting point for meaningful and relevant educational experiences.

The “Inside-out” concept can be understood within the following theoretical models. The first one is the ideological model of literacy introduced by Brian Street. According to Street (2000), “the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being”(p.7). Street also explains that literacy concepts and literacy practices will always be in conflict and, using Gee’s (1990/1996) argument, Street explained that literacy concepts and literacy practices are ideological and embedded in particular notions of literacy. For Street (1984) the ideological way of looking at literacy “offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another” (p.7). That is, this view is speaking more from the heart of the children, from their beliefs and expectations regarding literacy.

Second, the “Inside-out” concept considers the sociocultural perspective to literacy, which highlights the importance of the social context and social interaction on language development (e.g., Hymes, 1972/2001; Vygotsky, 1978), supports that knowledge is constructed through learners’ experience, and their interactions with others. Third, the “Inside-out” concept embraces Freire’s (1972) and Nieto’s (2003, 2010a) positions that children should actively take part in the pedagogical and instructional decisions in school. This could be done through the consideration of children’s interests, the resources they bring to school, and the understanding of their unique worlds. By considering “the world of the
children and the meaning intended by children’s worlds” (Dyson, 1989, p. 255), educators make efforts to assist children to succeed. This way, when it comes to instruction and pedagogy, the “Inside-out” concept also assumes a problem-posing approach to literacy (Freire, 1972) in which students become subjects of the learning and are in constant involvement in unveiling the world around them, developing critical eyes to look at the problems they face, and respond to them in critical ways (Freire, 1972).

Participants who embraced the “Inside-out” concept tended to pay close attention mainly to the How’s of the literacy practices. That is, they attended to how they could facilitate literacy practices in a way that was relevant to the children, and based on that, how they could assist learning the best. Participants who embraced the “Inside-out” concept also believed that the learning experiences a child had around that age were fundamental in setting up how they would come to perceive literacy later in life. For example, the participating parents worried about their children’s literacy learning and development; however, they also thought it was important to let their children be children and enjoy things children like doing (e.g., playing with friends, doing things of their interest). These parents also trusted that the way they facilitated literacy practices not only taught their children about reading and writing (printed skills) but also developed in them a taste for reading and the idea of using reading as a mean (e.g., making someone feel better or laugh). Therefore, participants who embraced the “Inside-out” concept cared greatly about what happened beyond the learning of “basics” (e.g., reading, writing, math, second language acquisition, and other features of the curriculum). They also cared about what literacy practices were bringing to the learners’ lives besides decoding words, and what they were teaching children about what should matter when it comes to literacy.

Finally, the “Inside-out” concept takes into consideration the ways children are socialized into certain practices. According to Halliday (1975), individuals are socialized, in social groups, through language, and learn to use language in certain ways. That is, when we learn a language, we learn a language within the cultural practices and patterns of certain community and it happens in different ways within groups of individuals depending on their social contexts (Rogoff, 2003). In this study, Halliday’s theory of language and socialization can be used to discuss how the participating child seemed to be socialized into different conceptions of “relevant” literacy practices. The primary goal of the individuals who take this perspective seems to be making literacy purposeful, enjoyable, desirable, and significant for the child and from the child’s perspective.

For the participants who held the Inside-out concept of literacy, all the aforementioned resources were believed to be primarily relevant for the young learners over what I call “outside features” which usually refers to academic skills.

**The “Outside-in” concept.** I define the “Outside-in” concept as the one that see “relevance,” and thus, culturally relevant practices, as emerging from “outside features” (e.g., usually connected with the
school demands such as language skills, vocabulary, grammar, content,) instead of emerging from needs of the child and looks at students as object of learning. Participants who embrace the “Outside-in” concept see the mastering of these “outside features” as a central condition for relevant practices to take place. It seems that these participants believe that once children master these “outside features” they would start seeing relevance in school curriculum and activities. In other words, for them, the focus on these “outside features” was also assumed to facilitate emergent bilinguals’ experiences, mainly during the transitional time in school (from when a child arrives in school for up to years of transitional schooling). Therefore individuals who embrace the “Outside-in” concept focus on the delivering of these features as fast as possible, and they do so by exploring topics and materials they believe to be appropriate for the children. As a result, individuals who apply this view to their teaching consider largely their own social-cultural experiences and notions of literacy as the starting point for developing what they believe to be culturally relevant practices.

Besides highlighting the “outside” features, little attention is given to the way these practices are mediated. When some consideration is given to the way practices are facilitated, individuals seemed to focus not on the child but rather on methods and activities. However, the use of methods and activities does not seem to change the focus on delivering the “outside features.” As a result there was a high emphasis on the “Outside-in” concept and features, and individuals seemed to deliver knowledge through methods and activities that were, for most part, deliberately authoritarian, and seemed to lack purposeful relevance from the students’ perspective. Additionally, little attention was paid to the ways children were socialized into practices, through practices.

The “Outside-in” concept can be situated within two major beliefs: the “autonomous model” of literacy (Street, 2000) and the banking concept of literacy learning (Freire, 1972). Similar to the autonomous model of literacy presented by Street (2000), the “Outside-in” concept assumes that “literacy in itself – autonomously – will have effects on other social and cognitive practices. The model, however, disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it and that can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal” (p.7). Therefore, it takes into consideration more a cognitive process to literacy (see Chomsky, 1972), which highlights and prioritizes the importance of mastering certain “skills” and mastering the content.

The “Outside-in” concept also reflects what Freire (1972) describes as the banking approach form of education. This approach considers students as objects of the learning and is hardly concerned to help students in developing critical ways of looking at the world around them. Additionally, this view supports that knowledge should be delivered by or come from someone who is an “expert”, and, thus who knows what is “appropriate” for learners. In this sense, ‘relevance’ is not considered coming from the children.
(e.g., children’s interests, their resources, and needs) but from those specialists who, for most part, decide how, when, and what do with those learners.

It is important to clarify that these two concepts and practices do not follow any particular sequence or rules. For the purpose of this dissertation, I distinguish these two concepts in order to reveal the nature of the differing conceptions of how literacy becomes relevant to the child. That is, I take an analytical stance to look for and to emphasize the maximum differentiation between teachers, parents and other individuals who participated in the literacy practices of the focal child. Therefore, these concepts are related to individuals’ notions of “relevance,” and their ideas of how to mediate practices based on the concept they embraced or that largely prevails during literacy practices. These concepts also best illustrate how participants socialize children into concepts of “relevant” literacy practices. The benefit of looking at these two approaches was that it allowed me to look at the dimensions and dynamics of these concepts more clearly. It also is important to acknowledge that many teachers may shift between these stances (“Inside-out” and “Outside-in” concepts) even within one activity.

These two concepts will be portrayed in detail in further chapters. As I proceed in the following chapters, I illustrate how Anita negotiated the “Inside-out” and “Outside-in” concepts between home and school. In what follows, in order to set the stage for the next chapters, next, I report findings related to the participant child’s perspectives in her first encounter with schooling in the United States.

The core themes I will discuss in the next subsection incorporate the pre-observation phase of this study and the first few weeks of Anita attending school in the United States. When I started data collection, in April 2012, Anita had been enrolled in third grade for four months. I was not able to observe Anita during that period; however, I thought it was important to include the details of Anita’s experiences during that phase for three main reasons. First, throughout this study, many themes related to that phase emerged from the data. Second, this phase captures many of Anita’s perceptions of what seems significant for her as a child and as a second language learner. Third, the data to be presented here tells us much about how the participating child negotiated her “Inside-out” concept at school and also reveals some principles that undergird the view of literacy as social practice. The data also illustrate some of the challenges and frustrations Anita had to face as she arrived in the new school.

**Contextualizing Schooling Experiences in the United States**

In order to contextualize Anita’s experiences as an emergent bilingual studying in the United States and capture her perceptions of the new school as well as understand Anita’s immediate needs as a child who needs to find a place in this new local context, I discuss next three major themes that emerged from the interview data analysis. These themes reflect some of Anita’s challenges at school: (a) dealing with diversity: “Tanta gente diferente” [So many different people]; (b) dealing with disappointments: Tests; and (c) dealing with the invisibility of being the minority and without identity. Before I discuss
these themes, I offer a brief background on Anita’s first encounter with the American school and way of life.

**Anita’s first encounter with the United States.** Anita’s family arrived in the United States in December 2011. Anita attended her school for only six days, and then the school semester ended. Anita was very excited about the idea of being in the United States of America. As Elisa, Anita’s mother, remembered, in those days Anita was in an “encantamento” [enchantment] stage. Anita was very happy and usually would ask: “Tu acreditas que a gente tá nos Estados Unidos?” [Can you believe we are in the United States?] However, that phase did not last long. When school began in January, Anita noticed that, “Que ela veio pra ficar, que ela não estava passeando, que ela ia morar.” [She came to stay, she was not here on vacation, but she was here to live.] Elisa sadly shared: “E ai que ela chorou.” [That was when she cried]. Elisa shared that Anita was very reluctant to go to school at first. She spoke about Anita being unhappy in the new school environment and about receiving phone calls from Villa America Elementary School very often because Anita sat at her desk in tears.

When I talked to Anita about her first experiences at Villa America Elementary School, she confirmed her mother’s report and shared that her first encounter with the new school was “hard” and “sad”. Anita admitted she did not want to go to school when school began again in January. However, because of her mother’s persistence, Anita decided to go: ““Eu fui até aqui com aquela coisa de ônibus” [I came here [school] by, that thing, bus]. As this statement revealed, Anita did not seem to be very motivated about going to school nor was she familiar with taking the bus to school. During my interview with Anita’s mother, Elisa, I understood that for Anita, The Villa America Elementary School’s culture was “uma grande novidade, né, uma coisa bastante diferente.” [Something very new, you know, something quite different]. Elisa said, for example, that having breakfast and eating lunch at school and taking the bus to and from school was not part of Anita’s school culture in Brazil. Elisa explained that in Brazil, children spend less time in school than in the United States. Children went to school in the morning or in the afternoon, only for one period, and parents were the ones who usually dropped off their children at school. That might be one of the reasons why Anita reported her experiences in an American school as something very “strange.” However, during my fieldwork, I noticed that Anita’s challenges in the United States involved much more than these cultural logistics. It involved many other challenges, which I illustrate in the next section.

**Dealing with diversity: “tanta gente diferente” [So many different people].** In Brazil, Anita studied in a Catholic school that was predominately white. But it was in the United States that she experienced diversity for the first time in Villa America Elementary school. Anita admitted being surprised with the diversity she found in her classroom, and shared that when she first arrived in the third-grade mainstream classroom; she noticed that everybody in her classroom was very different from herself.
In describing this memory, Anita made facial expressions of embarrassment and surprise:

Anita: Quando eu vi tanta gente assim, eu fiquei... ooooh, ooooh (boquiaberta). [When I saw so many people like that, I was ooooh, ooooh (Open-mouthed)]

Vivian: Mas por quê você ficou meio:: ? [But, why were you kind of …?] 
Anita: Impressionada assim. Tanta gente. Tanta gente diferente. tanta gente, (emphasis in the word.) quantas pessoas... e eu não sei falar Inglês. [like impressed. So many people. So many different people. (emphasis in the word “people”) ] So many people, and I did not know how to speak English.

Daí tinha uma guria, que falava tudo... eu não entendia nada que ela estava falando. Eu só falava hum, hum, hum, (shaking with her head to show agreement).

[And then, there was a girl that would speak a lot and I did not understand anything. I would only say hum, hum, hum, (shaking with her head up and down to show agreement).] 

As she reported above, Anita felt impressed and uncomfortable with “Tanta gente diferente.” Anita seemed to be having her first chance to experience a diverse classroom. Reflecting on the first day of school, Anita indicated uncomfortable feelings about encountering the diversity among her classmates.

**Dealing with disappointments: Tests.** Another challenge Anita faced was the school tests. Anita spoke sadly and was frustrated about many tests she had to take in school. These various tests Anita had to take brought her a high level of anxiety and shaped her identity as a learner in a very negative ways:

Anita: Aí no segundo dia a gente foi tirar um teste. A professora era substituta. (prova de matemática) [Then, in the second day I had to take a test. The teacher was a substitute.]

Daí eu só eu marcava, marcava, marcava, marcava. Sabe que nota que eu tirei? [And then, I would only mark it down, mark it down, mark it down. Guess what was my grade? ] 

Vivian: Uhm? (What?)

Anita: Um.

[One]

Vivian: Um?

[One?]

Anita: um, uum [(giggling)]

[One, One] [(giggling)]

Regardless of the giggles in the end of her statement above, Anita was very frustrated with her performance. As the passage illustrated, Anita was very aware that her grade was low and was very disappointed: “Foi a nota mais baixa, poderia ser a nota mais baixa que já tirei na minha vida. [This was the lowest grade, it could be the lowest grade I have ever had in my life] she confessed. “Pô, primeira prova e eu tirei um número tão baixo (silence/looking down) ”[Ohh! It was the first test, and I had such a low number] (silence/looking down).

The passages above illustrate Anita’s frustration about having to take a math test on her second
day of the third-grade classroom. It was clear that those grades did not reflect Anita’s strengths nor reflect where she could be in terms of content. The grade Anita received in her first test, in addition to highlighting her failure, also demonstrated how schools seem to look at their students: in terms of numbers and letters.

During our conversations about her schooling, Anita constantly referred to her experience with exams. Furthermore, she not only spoke about these testing experiences, but also wrote about them. The next figure is an example of Anita’s writing about the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT test) taken in the beginning of March. The sample was found among Anita’s home composition pieces.

Figure 7. Writing about the ISAT test.
As the composition above shows, Anita seemed to find in writing a way to ease and release her frustrations. Additionally, the ISAT test, like many of the other tests Anita had to take, seemed to cause stress in Anita’s school life.

During the interviews Anita also spoke about her experiences in school in Brazil. Based on our conversations, it was evident that Anita was a good student and was very conscious and proud about that. As Anita explained several times during our meetings that, in Brazil, she got the maximum grades in most of her classroom tests. That did not seem to be the case in Villa America Elementary School where she found herself very sad and disappointed with her lower test performance. When I asked Anita, what she thought about her grades, she said, “Uhm (pause) muito baixa” [uhm (pause) very low. (Looking down/shy)]. However, Anita quickly explained:

Anita: Mas aí minha mãe falou, Heyiiiii’ (indicating happiness) porque eu pensei, ela pensou que eu fosse tirar um zero. “Aahhhh, okay. Então se você tirou um já estava bom.
[But then my mom said, Heyiiiii (indicating happiness) because I though, She thought, I would get zero [on the test] ‘Aahhhh, okay. If you got a grade one, it is good enough’]

As the above excerpt suggests, Anita’s parents played an important role in lowering Anita’s anxiety and pressure towards her grades. For example, Elisa made the lower-grade episode seem irrelevant by saying the grade (one) was above her expectations. By giving a “fun” connotation to the grade episode (by saying that she thought Anita would get zero on the test but she got one), Elisa tried to help Anita lower her anxiety and understand that she alone did not have to bear the burden of that difficult
experience. It can be understood that for Anita’s parents, grades were not a priority or a point of concern; more important than grades was how Anita was feeling. However, as the examples above demonstrate, grades meant a lot for Anita, for her self-esteem. These experiences with literacy seemed to be heavily influencing her perceptions of her abilities and her identity as a learner.

Dealing with invisibility and the feeling of being without identity. Being invisible and feeling without identity in the new school was something that Anita not only experienced, but also had to deal with. After I got to know Anita, it was not hard to notice that one of the most important things for her was identity was “good” student status. Being a successful student was very important to Anita mainly because that was the status she held in her school back in Brazil. That status, though, was not being reinforced at Villa America Elementary School, but rather questioned. At Villa America Elementary School, Anita seemed to be noticed not for being a “good” learner, but for her several highlighted failures at school.

During the interview with Anita’s mother, Elisa, she also spoke about noticing Anita’s feelings regarding being unnoticed at school and feeling identityless. Elisa mentioned that Anita constantly asked her if the people around school, the teachers, and the principal knew who she was. Elisa explained that in Brazil Anita went to the same school since she was three-years old and everybody knew who she was. However, when Anita arrived in the United States, she suddenly became anonymous, said Elisa. Elisa compared:


[So, she was a well-known and very popular child in her school [in Brazil], and became unknown here, you know. Totally, totally unknown, you know. Thus, she asks me a lot if the principal knows who she is. Then I always say, of course she knows. Like yesterday we talked about it. "But she [the principal] thinks about me?"

Ferdman (1990) has argued that “cultural identity mediates the process of becoming literate as well as the types of literate behavior in which a person subsequently engages” (p. 197). According to
Elisa’s report above, Ferdman’s statement seemed to apply to Anita. Anita’s cultural identity was strongly related to her notions of literacy and to the ways she behaved and expected people to behave around her. As Elisa’s remarks above showed, there were many reasons for Anita’s feelings of being invisible. For one, in Brazil, Anita was very well-known. She also held the status and certain prestige for being the daughter of “Professor Elisa”. But when Anita arrived at Villa America Elementary School, as mentioned by Elisa, Anita could not find the same status, prestige, or recognition. The passage above also highlights Anita’s needs: the need to be noticed by the people around school, to be recognized, and, and, to borrow from Freire (1972), to be treated as the subject of learning instead of an object.

Elisa concluded our conversation by saying that what Anita needed the most was “se sentir importante sabe. (…) Eu acho que essa idéia dela ter uma identidade aqui, das pessoas saberem que ela existe, isso é muito importante pra ela.” [to feel important, you know. (…) I think that the idea of having an identity here and of people knowing that she exists is very important for her].

During my conversations with Anita and through classroom observations, I was able to confirm Elisa’s remarks about Anita. Being known, being accepted by the group, having an identity in the United States, and feeling that people cared about her, was very important for Anita. Anita herself indicated that several times during our interview. She would say things like, “Eu não sabia se as pessoas gostavam de mim.” [I did not know if people liked me]. In another situation, Anita also spoke about feeling unnoticed during small groups activities in the classroom because nobody would talk to her. Anita’s also seemed to feel lonely during the school recess. Anita explained that during the break nobody would play with her. She said: “Porque até hoje eu não sei se as pessoas (pause), se eu tenho amigos de verdade porque eu não brinco com ninguém até hoje.” [Because until now, I don’t know if people (pause), if I have true friends because I don’t play with anybody]. When we had this conversation, Anita had been attending school for approximately four months. She was still talking about how she did not feel she belonged to her new social community and about the feeling that nobody cared about her in school.

Anita’s aforementioned needs can be understood in relation to the “Inside-out” concept, in the sense that her needs highlight elements (inside features) that were essential from Anita’s perspective as a child and as a learner. As Anita’s statements above exemplified she placed great importance on friendship and on caring and close relationships with others. For Anita, to be visible in school, to be “someone” and to feel that people cared about her was very important. Besides, her emotional and sociocultural needs were a priority over anything else, and those elements seemed to be overlooked by the third-grade teachers, mainly, in the first days of school.

Anita’s parents spoke sorrowfully about Anita’s experiences in the first months of schooling. Her parents were concerned about the fact that Anita was not motivated about going to school or being in school at that time. They shared that tears often happened in combination with Anita’s frustrating events
mentioned earlier in this chapter. They also acknowledged the effort that the third-grade’s mainstream teacher (Ms. Nat) had made in order to communicate with Anita. However, like Elisa emphasized, something was still missing, and besides that Elisa knew that the teacher “tem uma turma grande” [has a big classroom] and the classroom “tem muitas diferenças” [had many differences] to work with.

At the end of the first month of school, around the last week of January, the family shared that something happened that seemed to increase Anita’s enthusiasm to participate in school tasks and to be in school. Elisa shared a change that happened around Anita’s birthday. Elisa remembered that Anita did not feel motivated to go to school at that time, and that she would try any excuse to try to convince her parents that she should stay home. That was what she did in the weeks prior to her birthday. Anita asked her parents if she could skip school on her birthday. Anita explained she wanted to spend her day with the family. Anita’s parents contacted the school to inform them that Anita would be absent on her birthday. Elisa spoke with Ms. Cool, the school’s social worker who understood the parents’ decision, but advised the family that they should encourage Anita to go to school in that day. Ms. Cool explained that day the principal would announce Anita’s birthday in the classroom speakers, which was also connected to the whole school. Besides, as Ms. Cool emphasized, Anita could bring cookies to share with her classmates and she thought that Anita would enjoy that experience. Elisa and Sérgio, Anita’s father, considered Ms. Cool’s advice and convinced Anita to go to school on her birthday. Elisa shared that Anita’s parents sent cookies and several snacks to school for Anita to share them with her classmates. As a result, “Desse dia em diante, chorar nunca mais chorou.” [From that day on Anita has never cried again]. The episode of “no more crying” at school, according to Elisa, also had a special place in Anita’s wall calendar at home.

Based on the family report, the birthday experience seemed to bring Anita the motivation, happiness, and the sense of visibility she was looking for. It bolstered her self-esteem and gave her the feeling of social acceptance she seemed to be looking for. Talking about this event, she indicated mixed feelings about the experience: surprise, embarrassment, shyness, and happiness. She reported with a smile that hearing her name in the classroom megaphone was something unexpected, but “good.” The fact that the principal announced Anita’s name over the school speakers and acknowledged that she existed, plus the fact that the classmates’ attention was focused on her, made Anita feel notable, more than that, it made her feel like people cared about her. This simple action seemed to develop in Anita positive feelings and positive expectations towards school. Additionally, as reflected in the literature review section of this study and also in Anita’s “Birthday” episode, social interaction was very important in shaping Anita’s experiences in school and also building her new identity within the school community. Additionally, the experiences Anita had during her birthday celebration all connected and combined to define how Anita began experiencing the new school world, including the way she came, later, to experience literacy.

In this section, I have highlighted some the elements that Anita seemed to value and prioritize
regarding literacy practices. Through a detailed description of Anita’s experiences at school, in the next section, I hope to demonstrate how the “Inside-out” concept seemed to undergird culturally relevant practices for the participating child. I start the next section by talking about what seems to be Anita’s notions of “relevance” on literacy practices and resources.

Anita’s perspectives on literacy practices and resources. In the case of Anita, I found that the “Inside-out” concept undergirded her notions of “relevance,” of literacy and, thus culturally relevant practice she held. And when it came to literacy practices, Anita found relevance in the following:

- Practices based on trust and caring, close relationships (with teacher, peers, parents)
- Practices that allowed her “to exploit familiar symbolic tools” (e.g., talk, drawing, dramatic action) (Dyson, 1997, p.172) and use multimodalities
- Practices that allowed her to use her cultural and linguistic resources (e.g., the use of first language, her interest in popular culture and Disney characters)
- Practices that were more socially driven and usually scaffolded by friends (e.g., collaborative activity)
- Practices that were authentic, fun, and purposefully relevant for her, usually connected with the context of use (e.g., her interest of experiencing the culturally situated experiences in America and learning about other people’s way of life and their cultures).

Anita who seemed to have a better chance to connect, to engage, and, thus find relevance as well as to create opportunities for learning to take place when participating in practices like the ones stated above. As I will illustrate through this study, these five components were frequently present in many of the out-of-school settings and practices. However, in the classroom, not all teachers seemed to display these five characteristics. Additionally, as could be expected, different teachers had different ideas of literacy, and what was “relevant” for their students, and therefore teachers’ pedagogy varied significantly, shaping students’ practices in different and complex ways. As I will explore in more detail through chapter 5, in the classroom, teachers seemed to focus, for the most part, on the “Outside-in” concept, making it difficult for Anita to find connection in the classroom.

At school, however, there was someone who was very important in understanding and pursuing Anita’s “Inside-out” needs: Ms. Cool, the school social worker. I will explore her role in the next section.

**Pursuing the “Inside-out” Concept in School**

Elisa: Ms. Cool foi uma pessoa muito importante nesse processo todo, muito importante. Não tenho dúvidas em relação a isso! [Ms. Cool was a very important person in the whole process, very important. I have no doubts about that!]

The statement above came from Anita’s mother. During the several conversations I had with Elisa and
with Sérgio, they spoke caringly about Ms. Cool, the school’s social worker. She defined herself as a Trinidadian-American. She was in her earlier fifties, and that was her first year working at the Villa America Elementary as a full-time staff. She had worked at Villa America Elementary as an intern the year before she enrolled the school as a permanent staff.

Anita’s parents attributed the success of Anita’s motivation and engagement to Ms. Cool. As the parents acknowledged above, Ms. Cool was a very important person in the Anita’s schooling experience at school. I could not agree more with Anita’s parents about Ms. Cool’s crucial role. She was important not because she advised parents to send Anita to school in her birthday as I discussed in the previous section, but because Ms. Cool seemed to understand the interests of the young children very well. From the way Ms. Cool perceived Anita to the way she established a close relationship with Anita and with Anita’s parents, everything made Ms. Cool a very important change agent. Ms. Cool captured fairly soon what mattered the most for Anita (her “inside features”). Additionally, Ms. Cool seemed to be the only person at the school who viewed “relevance” and literacy practices through the “Inside-out” concept, as I hope to illustrate in this chapter.

Establishing relationships with parents. Ms. Cool shared that she met Anita’s mother, Elisa, by chance, sometime in December when they were both outside of the school building. Ms. Cool explained that because she liked to “chat a lot,” she approached Anita’s mother and said “hi, are you new to the school?” and they started talking. Ms. Cool reported that when Elisa told her she came from Brazil, she was “extra excited” because, coincidently, she had just visited Brazil in the previous summer. Ms. Cool shared that, in that day, they talked about her trip to Brazil for a while. They also talked about Anita being a new student at The Villa America Elementary School. As her story demonstrated, Ms. Cool connected with Anita’s mother, Elisa, from the very first time.

Elisa, Anita’s mother, said that in January, one of the first phone calls she received from school came from Ms. Cool. The phone call regarded an invitation for Anita to participate in a Friendship Group with some other girls from school. The group was scheduled to meet once a week during lunchtime at Ms. Cools’ office.

Ms. Cool decided to meet the children during lunchtime because she did not want to take them away from their regular class; she knew the children had “low English speaking skills” and it was important for them to be in the classroom. She explained that children would grab their lunch and come to her office where they ate and worked together. For that, Ms. Cool needed the parents’ approval. Ms. Cool explained that, as a social worker, she was allowed to see students up to five times without a parent’s permission, but she thought it would be a good idea to get Anita’s parents’ consent right away because, as she explained, “I think, as a parent myself, it is just important for the parent to know what the child is doing during the school day.” As the above example illustrates, Ms. Cool was not contacting the parents
only because she needed to get their consent, but also because she saw the importance of communication with parents about what their children were doing in school. Ms. Cool seemed to value that type of communication and relationship with parents.

According to Ms. Cool, the idea of organizing the Friendship Group happened after one of the schoolteachers reported having some challenges in her classroom with a student from Guatemala. Ms. Cool explained that she invited Anita because she suspected that Anita had similar challenges: she did not have many friends and could not speak English very well.

According to Ms. Cool, in that same day, after the phone call, she wrote the consent letter and came to the classroom to give it to Anita to take home to get her parents’ signature. Ms. Cool explained that when she arrived in Anita’s classroom (the third-grade mainstream classroom), she was really upset by what she saw:

Ms. Cool: I see Anita in tears and I was like-, Oh my god, I just told the mom she's fine, what is happening? And then Ms. Nat said she's been like this all morning. So why didn't you say something? Because again, I don't want my child crying all morning in school, yes, she [Anita] was new, she was unhappy and in an unfamiliar setting. If she can't speak English, tell someone. But again I guess, you know, Ms. Nat being, this is her first year she didn't realize she could have come to the social worker.

As the statement above illustrated, Ms. Cool was very surprised and frustrated about finding Anita in tears over her desk. The passage also reveals Ms. Cool disappointed with the teacher that simply let Anita cry all morning without talking to anyone about the situation. While disappointed with the teacher, Ms. Cool did not seem to blame the situation on the teacher, but rather on the teacher’s inexperience (as a first year teacher) or lack of awareness about the option to bring the case to the school social worker.

Ms. Cool shared that after finding Anita in tears in the third-grade classroom, she brought Anita to her room and called her parents again but this time to apologize about what happened in the third-grade classroom that day. Ms. Cool explained that she did not know that Anita was also struggling in her classrooms. Ms. Cool said that, she later found out, that Anita was in that situation for a while and that the third-grade teacher, Ms. Nat, “didn’t think to tell me about Anita’s crying,” said Ms. Cool. According to Ms. Cool from that day on, she “struck up that relationship with Elisa.” Ms. Cool explained, “I promised Elisa I would check on her [Anita], (...) if she [Anita] was crying in the morning. Ms. Cool exchanged many emails with the family to report on how Anita was feeling and doing on school, as did parents. Ms. Cool also met the with Anita’s parents to discuss what they could do to make Anita’s experiences in school better.

Talking about the Friendship Group, Ms. Cool also highlighted the fact that she did not want to only promote friendship among the group; she said, “I wanted to have my own relationship with Anita.”
She saw in the Friendship Group an opportunity to do that. Ms. Cool clarified that she carefully selected the students to be part of the Friendship Group. She invited to the group not only students with similar struggles, but also students who had similar language backgrounds. For example, Ms. Cool invited to the group a second student from Guatemala who spoke very good Spanish and English. Ms. Cool justified, “because you know, the closeness between Spanish and Portuguese, that student was in the group and she [the Guatemalan student] would help Anita.”

The Friendship Group was composed of two smaller groups; sometimes there were different students, but Samantha, Jennie, Diva, Joana, Olive, Joice, and Lea were present in the group most often. The group included children from different ethnic groups such as African, Guatemalan, Indian, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

During my conversations with Ms. Cool, she explained that there were several reasons for organizing the Friendship Group. She explained that at the elementary levels children do not have a lot of opportunity to do a Friendship Group, “because a lot of the kids, and specially at this specific school, because so many of our kids are coming in from different countries.” Ms. Cool also explained that “being a foreigner myself,” “I [she] totally understand the dynamics of diversity and the needs of the children.” Additionally, the fact that two of her daughters attended Villa America Elementary School for a year made Ms. Cool “very comfortable” with working on projects like that, she added.

When I started my observation at The Villa America Elementary School in April, Anita was still meeting with the Friendship Group. They met for approximately three more weeks after that. I did not have the opportunity to observe the group as much as I would have liked. However, based on the few observations and on the analyses of the interview data with the participants, I have no doubt that the project was very significant for Anita for several reasons. Ms. Cool was a very important not only in promoting friendship among the group and integrating Anita to the new school community, but also in empowering Anita and creating an environment in which Anita felt safe to share her experiences and take risks. Besides the culture represented by the Friendship Group was somehow similar to the one Anita had at home. It was engaging, fun, socially based, mediated by a caring relationship, and very focused on making Anita’s experience enjoyable and significant. Following, I present examples of activities that took place during the Friendship Group.

**Literacy practices socially driven and usually scaffolded by friends.** The activities that took place during the Friendship Group were social in nature, were collaborative, involved group work, and were for most part scaffolded by friends. They did not focus on the “outside” features but rather on the friendship-making skills. For instance, the children interviewed each other to get to know the other group members. They learned vocabulary such as happy, angry, anxious, tense and so on in order to talk to each other and express their feelings. From the beginning, Ms. Cool made clear the flowing:
Ms. Cool: I didn't want it to be just about, “Ok, we're going to help them learn to speak English, etc. etc. etc.” So what I decided to do was to do a, like I said, we have within, uhm, within the whole vein of social work, we have friendship-making skills and so I decided to build a group around that.

Which was exactly what she did. Ms. Cool also shared that before the group engaged in the “friendship-making skills,” they talked about friendship as an introduction and talked about themselves. She gave examples:

Ms. Cool: I had the students talk about themselves, what country they're from and I actually put up a map of the world so that they can see the different countries, you know, where the countries are situated and I had Anita not just point to Brazil but she showed us where Pétalas [the city where she came from was], I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly, but I had her show us exactly where it is located within Brazil and uhm, so I think with some of them we actually went on the computer too so that they could see some pictures, images, different scenes within the country and not just where it was located on the map uhmm, what else? (Thinking out loud)

As the excerpt above indicates, students engaged in many communicative activities. The group talked about themselves, their nations, and used the computer to search for photographs of their countries. Ms. Cool also made available many resources for the group: oral communication in many languages as well as visuals such as maps, pictures, images, and technology (e.g., computer).

Ms. Cool also showed awareness that students should not only talk to her, but also to each other. For that, Ms. Cool explained that she prepared particular handouts (refer to figures below) with questions they could use as a prompt so students could get information from their friends. She explained:

Ms. Cool: Again it’s friendship [group], but I didn't just want them to come and talk and then leave. So in order to get them talking with each other, and not always with me, I had them do, you know, activities where I had some questions and they would have to get the answers from each other.

As the passage above illustrated, Ms. Cool was very aware of the importance of promoting activities centered on the students and not on herself.

Ms. Cool emphasized several times during the interview the importance of situating the activities within the social interaction. Ms. Cool explained that activities like these were common in the group. The group also talked about things they did in their life outside of school. They talked, wrote about it, and learned about things with, and from, each other. Following are examples of the activities.
Figure 8. Friend scavenger hunt and adjectives.

Figure 9. Who am I?
Literacy practices: expression of multiple worlds in multiple ways. The Friendship Group was built around activities that allowed Anita to explore “familiar symbolic tools” (Dyson, 1997, p.172) such as drawing and talking, writing in addition to the use of technology, all in order to express her feelings and her thoughts. For example, Ms. Cool affirmed that when necessary, she would invite Anita to her office to do some activity together: “I would go get her [Anita] and we would draw. She would- Anita would draw and then I would draw something and, so that was how we communicated.” Ms. Cool did not speak Portuguese and therefore drawing was very important in shaping the interaction between her and Anita. Through their drawings, according to Ms. Cool, Anita and her exchanged meanings and communicated back and forward to each other. Ms. Cool also explained that she and Anita engaged in talking about those drawings and that sometimes they had to use the “Google Translation” to help translate keywords and phrases they needed to communicate to each other.

Literacy practices embracing and empowering students’ resources and interest. During the Friendship Group, students were encouraged to use their linguistic and cultural resources. For example, children’s native languages were seen as a very important resource. The children were encouraged to talk in their first language, or in any language they felt comfortable (even using signs or mimicking). Ms. Cool was aware of children’s linguistic limitations. She acknowledged that, “They [children] had to communicate however best they could because these children’s languages were very different “primarily French, Spanish, Portuguese, or English” said Ms. Cool. Still, children were encouraged to talk about several topics such as their hobbies, their favorite food, places they visited or wanted to visit, people they loved, and friends they had.

According to Elisa, “Ms. Cool fazia muitas coisas de traduzir” [Ms. Cool did many translations.” Elisa explained that “Ela [Ms Cool] traduzia as palavras, usava o Google. Ela pedia pra Anita desenhar no quadro, e a Anita desenhava, então dizia as palavras pelo dezenho.” [She translated I think, you should talk to her about that. She translated words using Google translator. She asked Anita to draw on the board, and Anita drew, and then she would say her words through her drawings].

Additionally, during the Friendship Group meetings, Ms. Cool used the students’ funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) as powerful resource. For example, Ms. Cool suggested that Anita bring to school a picture of her family and her dog so she could show them to the group. In another meeting, Ms. Cool also suggested that Anita talk about the Brazilian Carnaval to the lunch-group. Elisa commented, “ A gente imprimiu várias fotos, ela levou. E ela fez uma exposição nesse grupo no almoço das terças-feiras do carnaval.” [We printed several pictures and she [Anita] took them to school. She did an exhibition about the Carnaval in the Tuesday’s lunch group].

Intertwining authenticity, pleasure, and relevance into literacy practices. In addition to emphasizing social interaction and valuing children resources, the activities that took place during the
Friendship Group were also “fun,” authentic, and purposefully relevant from students’ perspectives. According to Elisa, “Anita aprendeu a fazer crochê, a Ms. Cool levou linha, levou agulha e enfim.” [Anita learned to crochet; Ms. Cool brought yarn, and also took a needle, anyways. Ms. Cool did many things. According to Ms. Cool activities like that was “just a fun thing to do, no rhyme or reason behind it.” (…) “I just thought it would be cool for them.” Ms. Cool gave the example of a “picture-taking event” around the school as one of these activities. She commented “I had them choose, each of the students, where they wanted to get their picture taken. (…) And they had options to get however many pictures they wanted.” These pictures were used later in the semester to design the children’s final project, which involved creating a picture frame. The children were instructed to decorate their frames and write descriptions about the events underneath the pictures. For that Ms. Cool brought some materials the students could use to design their picture frames. She brought stickers, colored pencils, and markers. She explained the stickers were used not for the sake of letting the project colorful, but “to represent anything about them [the students].” She further commented, “So then, if they like pizza, if they like science.” (…). “There’s one girl, she chose the Eiffel Tower because she wants to go to France.” (…). “Another student wants to be a doctor, so, this is the one with the medical supplies.” (…) “There was one about the beach, because this student had never been to the beach, so she chose beach.” Ms. Cool also mentioned she gave the students the option of including written words. As Ms. Cool’s statement above revealed, she used a very creative and resourceful approach. Children mixed and matched many resources to develop their final projects, and they seemed to really enjoy doing so.

Even though Ms. Cool admitted not having any “rhyme or reason” for doing the final project, she seemed to have some expectations for the activity and for the students. Regarding the activity she hoped that “this is just for them to give a snapshot of who they are at this time in their life with what things they like, what things they wish for.” Regarding the students, she hoped the project was much more than having students taking home a picture-frame or picture that registered the time the group spent together. She elaborated:

Ms. Cool: So this is to show them, maybe 5 years from now when I was in third grade, I said I wanted to go to the beach and look, I’ve been to the beach about 3 times since, you know. And just to have them see, even particular point in life, you can also dream about the future, and you can have those dreams, they help you to make your plans and your goals, so that's what the project is.

As seen above, Ms. Cool’s goals hoped that the children took home with them more than a picture frame and memories from the for the Friendship-group’s project.

She wanted the children to write up, draw, or stick their dreams to the paper and look back to it later on in life so they could not only remember what they wished, during the group meeting, but also realize how much they had accomplished. In the passage above Ms. Cool also highlighted the importance
of having children “dream about the future” so they can set plans and goals in life.

Ms. Cool’s comments made me think about those critical educators cited by Freire (1972): those educators who create possibilities for their students to reflect on their experiences and transform their social realities. From talking to Ms. Cool, it was very clear that she aspired to empower the students not only by promoting understanding about their current lives but also having them dream about the future. Ms. Cool seemed to be very aware that some of the children in Villa America Elementary School had many limiting elements in their lives (e.g., not many of them could afford to go to the beach). Nonetheless, during their meeting, Ms. Cool had student to dream about things they wanted to do or about being what they want to become. Ms. Cool pushed the children’s understanding of the fact that the oppressive elements in their lives will not be there forever. These elements would change according to their life trajectory and that there dreams and wishes could become true.

**Literacy bonds and beyonds.** The Friendship Group was also significant because it was based on close and caring relationships (among Ms. Cool, the children and the children’s parents). Ms. Cool, for example, was someone who truly cared about Anita, understood her needs, and promoted students cared about each other. Ms. Cool also played a positive role in shaping Anita’s identity in school. Ms. Cool also seemed to carry out the responsibility of not only being around students’ lives as the social worker, but also, as she mentioned, treating the students like they were her own children: “I do call the students my children. I call them, and I speak to them just like they were my own.” In addition, Ms. Cool seemed to carry out the responsibility to bring something positive into the children’s lives. Ms. Cool was very conscious of her role of both helping students confront their difficulties in school as well as being a positive influence in their lives and for their identities. The following passage demonstrates the details of thoughts:

Ms. Cool: At the elementary level, I mean, when you are young, the experiences you go through, the confirmations you receive from others, but at the same time, the crises and the trauma that you go through, those are the events, and the people that you meet around that time. Those are the events, the people, and the situations begin to shape one's personality and one's self-esteem, and one's self-concept. And, so, I think it's very critical for me to play a positive role in the lives of our children.

In the passage above, Ms. Cool talked about the reasons why it was important to “play a positive role” in the children’s lives. Ms. Cool understood that the people and the experiences students were encountering at that time of their lives were central in shaping the children’s personalities, self-esteem, and self-concept. Ms. Cool also explained that playing a positive role also meant setting limitations and sometimes being strict with the children. She said:

Ms. Cool: I want to try and be positive, at the same time, when I have to be firm, I will be firm, because children need to know that there are boundaries and limitations and
that you're not going to always get want you want out of life. (...) Yeah, I think it's always important for students to know that life isn't always going to go your way, it's just like Anita, she had to go through that struggle, that challenge when she first came, I mean, all I did was to try and ease the stress, ease her stress, but some things you have to go through. (...) And all I could do, and anybody else, teachers and whoever else, is to help them as they go through it.

Ms. Cool demonstrated awareness about the fact that she and the teachers played an important role in the process of the students’ identity formation and experience with literacy. In the excerpt above, Ms. Cool talked about being positive but firm with the students in order to show them that life isn't always going to go your way.” Ms. Cool finished our conversation by saying that, for every child the school transition would be different. She also spoke about the importance of teachers and people like her helping students “to go through” their challenges and “to ease the stress” they face. Ms. Cool also spoke about the importance of reaching out parents and inviting them to come to school, and volunteer, mainly at the beginning. Ms. Cool explained:

Ms. Cool: I tried to go to Elisa, ask for the parent, if she had the time to come in and volunteer so that, even though Elisa didn't have strong English skills, but she's an adult and so, I think she would picked on even Anita crying, that the teacher didn’t think to tell me. And, so, just that she would have been a bridge, just because she's an adult, she would have the transition easier than Anita, and she would have been helping Anita with the transition so even some in our emails, I would try to tell her what was going on, so that when Anita got home, she can help.

As seen above, Ms. Cool was not only very conscious about the importance of parents’ participation and involvement in school, but also acted upon reaching out to the parents and encouraging them to volunteer at the school. The statement above also demonstrated that Ms. Cool saw parents as potential “bridges” between the student and school. That is, Ms. Cool saw parents as great resources in helping their children transition even when they have limited English skills. Like Ms. Cool explained, Anita’s mother, Elisa, “she would pick up on even Anita crying,” something that the mainstream teacher did not do.

At the end of our conversation, Ms. Cool also spoke of her own limitations as well as her strengths: “I'm not good, I don't know much about literacy instruction because I'm not a teacher, but in terms of communicating with her, and, you know, just trying to help her fit in and understand.”

When I asked Anita what she thought about Ms. Cool, she reported, with a smile, that Ms. Cool as someone who was calm and who would often make her laugh, someone she liked a lot: “Eu gosto muito dela. ela é muito:-(pausa) é calma e as vezes, ela faz a gente rir. Ela nos ajuda assim, tipo, como é que posso dizer? [I like her a lot. She is very (pause) calm and sometimes she makes us laugh. She helps us like, how can I say?]”. Anita shared that in Ms. Cool’s office she tried to communicate with her
about her feelings and that was good because Ms. Cool’s support helped her a lot when she was feeling sad. Anita said “Ela ajuda, ajuda mesmo” [She helps, she truly helps].

I asked Anita about the type of activities the group did during the lunch meetings. As Anita narrated the experiences, she stood up and offered a detailed performance pretending she was Ms. Cool:

Anita: Isso aqui é pra você hoje (pretending to handle a handout), isso aqui é pra você hoje “que tal se a gente falhar sobre::: (long pause thinking). Hoje a gente vai falar sobre família, (…) Ah, hoje eu to tão feliz, tomara que você também este::jam” e bla bla bla “e hoje eu vou tirar fotos. Hoje a gente vai "outside.

[This one for you today (pretending to handle a handout), this one's for you today. How about if we talk about::: (long pause thinking). Today we'll talk about family. (…) "Ah, today I'm so happy, I hope that you are happy too” and bla bla bla “And today, I'm going to take pictures. Today we are going go outside]

As Anita performed her narrative, the activities that took place during the lunchtime involved much talking and walking. The children talked about her lives and also explored the physical spaces around the school. For example, Ms. Cool took the group to go outside of her office for some type of “fun” activity. The children took pictures and used the pictures later on to write and talk about the experiences they had in that day. Ms. Cool also brought to the meetings themes that were connected to the personal experiences of the students. Talking about family was one of them. As I illustrated in this chapter, the experiences students had in Ms. Cool’s office involved much more than the “social” component.

Summary

From this chapter, we noticed the many tensions and challenges that Anita experienced when she first arrived at Villa America Elementary School. Anita also engaged in many exciting activities that emerged from the experiences she had in Ms. Cool’s office during the Friendship Group. There, the way Anita experienced literacy was very close to the ways she made sense of her world (Freire, 1972), including the ways she seemed to experience literacy. The possibilities of exploring tools that were familiar to her, to explore many meanings, engaged Anita in activities that seemed to be very motivating and relevant. The flexibility of the activities that took place in Ms. Cool’s office also allowed Anita to express herself through drawings and talk in whatever modes or language that she felt comfortable. The Friendship Group experiences also seemed to fulfill Anita’s desires to create relationships with others and to get the visibility she was looking for. It also provided Anita with practices that were caring, social, and relevant for her.

The Friendship Group project and the way Ms. Cool approached and facilitated literacy, as well as the way she socialized children into literacy practices can be understood as an illustration of how individuals who embrace the “Inside-out” concept view culturally relevant practices. It also illustrates many elements that seemed to resonate with the focal student. Furthermore, the experiences Anita had in
Ms. Cool’s office are also examples of how schools and families can work together for the success of the children’s learning and development. Ms. Cool and Anita’s family made a joint effort to address Anita’s needs and empower her. Allied with Freire’s (1972) ideas, the Friendship Group experiences raise awareness of the importance of both understanding the students’ needs and developing practices that emerge from these needs and from the children themselves, as well as empowering them to prosper in school.

In school, however, not all teachers displayed these characteristics in their classrooms. Teachers were, for the most part, concerned with the “outside” features of literacy and took an “Outside-in” concept to literacy learning. While focusing on the “Outside-in” concept the teachers highlighted specific “features” that they believed to be necessary to the student. I will explore this in more detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
LITERACY PRACTICES WITHIN THE “OUTSIDE-IN” CONCEPT

Anita: Livro sobre o Brasil? Mas eu sou Brasileira.
[A book about Brazil? But, I am Brazilian.]

The statement that introduces this chapter came from a conversation that took place at the school’s library when the participating child, Anita, and a classmate, Linda, were searching for books to check out. Linda found a book about Brazil and took the book to Anita. Linda was trying her best to convince Anita to bring the book home. “It is a good book,” said Linda. Anita opened the book, looked at the pictures, skimmed at the text, and read the headings: Carnaval, comida, churrasco, futebol, praia [carnival, food, barbecue, soccer, and beach] and so on. The book did not seem to impress Anita who said with a smile, “Oka::y,” closed the book, and gave it back to Linda. Not convinced, Linda tried again: “Look Anita, it has Brazil and Guatemala” (…) “Do you like it, Anita?” Anita nodded her head indicating yes, but walked away with a gentle smile. As she walked toward another bookshelf, she commented: “Livro sobre o Brasil? Mas eu sou Brasileira” [A book about Brazil? But, I am Brazilian]. Noticing Anita’s comments, I asked her why she did not want to check out that book. Then she said:

Anita: Porque pra falar verdade eu já sei bastante coisa que tem lá. Na verdade quase tudo! [Because to tell you the truth I know a lot of things in that book. To be honest, I know almost everything]. (Anita walked to the bookshelf close by and said, “I think I will take one of Arthur’s books.”)

I chose the excerpt above because it illustrates how culture is understood in this study: not as a set of “culturally scripted” features as probably it was illustrated in the book Anita did not want to check out from the library, but as the stories and experiences that each child has and bring with them to school. As the library episode illustrated, it seemed that for Anita, culturally relevant readings did not have anything to do with reading books about features of her ethnic or cultural background but rather involved books of her interests. By that time, these included books that were usually related to American popular culture and traditions. However, it is important to highlight that Anita not wanting to check out books about Brazil does not mean that she was not interested in reading books from Brazil. As I will explore in more detail in the later chapters, Anita’s bookshelf at home was full of books written by Brazilian authors and she enjoyed these books very much.

It is also important to highlight that Anita did not literally know all the information contained in the book as she affirmed. However, she still placed herself as someone who held “true” information and had knowledge about her country and culture. Putting herself in such a position, Anita saw herself as a resourceful person and expected to be seen as such by others: a resourceful girl who not only knew a great deal about Brazil, but could also share that expertise with her school friends and teachers. Still, as I
explored in Chapter four, she could not share her expertise, as she seemed to wish, because Anita was part of an invisible minority in her new school environment. She also had limited English language proficiency, and lacked opportunities to develop friendships. Furthermore, unlike in the school library episode, in the classroom Anita was not in the position of choosing her own materials or saying no to things that did not interest her. The classroom was much more structured and regulated.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to the classroom culture. I focus on answering the question: What types of literacy practices is the participating child, Anita, experiencing in the school environment? Throughout this chapter, I also highlight how literacy practices took place within what I call the “Outside-in” concept. As outlined earlier in chapter four, the “Outside-in” concept is defined as the one that looks at “relevance,” and thus, culturally relevant practices as emerging from “outside” features instead of the needs of the children. More specifically, the “Outside-in” concept embraces mainly the following:

- It considers largely the outside features (e.g., language skills, grammar, content) as a central condition for relevant practices and, thus, for learning to take place, and little attention is given to individual students’ personal resources.
- The focus is, for the most part, on the school demands – on the What’s of the curriculum. (e.g., What is relevant to learn?) and on exploring topics believed to be relevant to the learners or things students “needed to know.”
- The way students are socialized into practices does not seem to be a matter of concern. The concern was to deliver the instruction and reach benchmarks.

Because this concept is closely connected to the perception that individuals held on literacy, the way they facilitated practices, and the way they socialized children into literacy practices they believe to be relevant, the findings presented this chapter are developed through the description of the teachers’ perspectives on literacy practices, their classroom practices, and the way teachers socialized students into literacy practices they thought to be culturally relevant for the students.

In order to answer my research question: What type of literacy practices was the participating child experiencing in the school environment? I used the following supporting questions:

a) What are the teachers’ perspectives on literacy development and instruction of emergent bilingual children? How do the teachers’ perspectives interplay with their classroom practices to shape the educational experiences of their students?

b) What are the ways and the resources teachers use to support and promote aspects of L2 literacy in their classroom?

c) How were teachers socializing students into practices they believed to be relevant?

These questions will be answered in more detail throughout this chapter as I portray how the participating child experienced literacy in each one of the four different classrooms: third-grade
mainstream and ESL classrooms as well as their fourth grade counterparts.

According to analyses of the data, I found that the participating child’s notion of culturally relevant literacy practices was constantly challenged and negotiated by several participants in the school who shaped the student practices in very different and complex ways. I also found that the teachers’ notions of culturally relevant practices not only varied significantly from one teacher to another, but these ideas also changed between spaces (e.g., classroom to classroom; home and school) and did not always align with the same forms, purpose, and expectations. Examples of that can be summarized as follows.

Table 5

*Analysis Based on Teachers’ Perspectives on Learning Literacy and Their Classroom Practice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Perspectives</th>
<th>Literacy Practices</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Nat Third-Grade</td>
<td>Teacher-centered</td>
<td>Teacher judged authentic activities, but lacking purposeful relevance from the</td>
<td>Native language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream teacher</td>
<td>Student are to be focused, quiet, and</td>
<td>student’s perspectives</td>
<td>Third language (e.g., Spanish</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“following the expectations”</td>
<td>Participation controlled by</td>
<td>language)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher’s rules and expectations</td>
<td>Google translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Rose Mr. Xon Third-</td>
<td>Teacher-centered/Behaviorist lens</td>
<td>Mechanical practices</td>
<td>Peers as facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade ESL teacher</td>
<td>Student are to copy and repeat</td>
<td>No interesting content from</td>
<td>Socially driven practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>students’ perspectives</td>
<td>Realia (realistic objects)</td>
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<td>With Ms. Rose social</td>
<td>Familiar tools (e.g., talk,</td>
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<td>organization/disorganization</td>
<td>drawing, drama)</td>
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<td>allowed for peer interaction and</td>
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<td>environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Tina Fourth-Grade</td>
<td>Teacher-centered/Behaviorist lens</td>
<td>Literacy practices around the</td>
<td>Drills, handouts, and textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mainstream teacher</td>
<td>Students are to be serious and focused and practice</td>
<td>textbooks</td>
<td>Free time playful activities as</td>
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<td>words and their pronunciations</td>
<td>Teacher used fill-in-the-blank</td>
<td>rewards for work</td>
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<td>activities so students could</td>
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<td>make learning “permanent.”</td>
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<td>Low-anxiety environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Carol Fourth-Grade</td>
<td>Teacher-centered /Experiential learning</td>
<td>Literacy practices around hands-on activities and project-based instruction</td>
<td>Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL teacher</td>
<td>Students are to learn by doing and through</td>
<td>Focus on the display (e.g., make it neat, fix it) and authoritarian,</td>
<td>Lab experiments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>multiple exposures</td>
<td>fear-based approach</td>
<td>Realia (realistic objects)</td>
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<td>Dictionary</td>
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<td>Handouts</td>
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Below, I introduce each teacher individually and discuss their notions of culturally relevant practices as articulated in the interviews followed by the findings of their classroom observations. I start
with the description of the third-grade mainstream teacher, Ms. Nat.

The Third-Grade Mainstream Teacher: Ms. Nat

Ms. Nat was the third-grade mainstream teacher. She was in her twenties and was born and raised in the suburbs of a big city in the Midwest of the United States. Ms. Nat identified her cultural heritage as European and described her own culture as “American.” Ms. Nat held a Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and a teaching certificate for the elementary level. This was Ms. Nat’s first year teaching as a full time teacher.

Ms. Nat became a teacher due to the influence of her parents, mainly her mother, who was a pre-school teacher. According to Ms. Nat, her parents “really stressed schoolwork, doing your best in school, getting good grades and getting an education.” Recalling her earlier experiences with literacy, Ms. Nat affirmed loving learning and loving being in school. She noted that she read many novels and did activities involving reading in school. Her teachers did not seem to have many textbooks and all the core materials that are available now. She suspected that during her own schooling, there was not much focus on the differentiation of instruction and that the teachers were the ones who chose what students had to read and created literacy activities around those choices. Her memories of elementary school were also around daylong reading projects where she and her classmates had “much fun” reading their favorite books and enjoying the snacks the teacher brought to the classroom. Ms. Nat concluded, “Those little tiny days that had such an impact on me,” and she affirmed using similar projects in her teaching practices.

Ms. Nat: Just little things like that really stick out in my mind that I even still think about it, and will sometimes use today because I'm like, if I liked it that much, and I remember it fifteen years later, then it must have been pretty great.

Ms. Nat’s Philosophy of Teaching and Learning Literacy

Learning through practice and interactive skills and recurrence. Ms. Nat believed in the interconnection of language processes (e.g., reading, writing, listening, speaking), which, as she explained, was encouraged by researchers in the field of literacy. She also reported that the key to literacy learning was “lots and lots of practice.” By that, she meant repetition of certain types of activities. During the interview, Ms. Nat highlighted the importance of focusing not only on the reading, “which is usually what we think of as literacy,” but also on speaking and listening. She explained that these features “together kind of make up a whole of what a student should have in order to become, uhm, you know, literate and fluent in any language.”

Literacy requires modeling. Ms. Nat emphasized the importance of modeling writing assignments for students, and allowing them to use “my [her] words in their writing.” She explained that not everyone had to do that: “That's for kids that need it,” she said. Ms. Nat further explained that children like Anita would probably choose to use it, just because sometimes, for Anita “it was hard to
formulate those sentences in English on her own,” she said,

Ms. Nat: It's easier for her to come up with just a couple of words, like to buy a toy, a dog, or a pony, or whatever it is that she chooses, it's easier to come up with and for me to help her find just one or two words to complete the sentence, rather than the whole sentence.

**Literacy entails enjoyment.** For Ms. Nat literacy should also involve enjoyment. She thought that when literacy activities are imposed, the experience could be frustrating. To illustrate, she talked with discontent about her college experiences when she had to do write several research papers and reflective papers. She also explained with frustration that “in college it was a lot about reading your textbooks and reading these articles that are assigned to you and I don't enjoy that as much.” However, she affirmed loving reading and writing for enjoyment and wished for more free time during the semester to engage in these activities for entertainment. She shared that during the summer, she reads five or six books. Ms. Nat enjoyed reading mainly the books that were popular among children, “because then it's like you know what they're reading.” For example, among her favorite books were ones from the Hunger Games and Harry Potter series. Ms. Nat also reported to believe in differentiating instruction. She said she trusted in the significance of small groups work as well as the importance of the using visual aids, charts, and gestures to engage students and push them towards comprehension.

**The curriculum is a helpful tool.** Although Ms. Nat acknowledged that she had the freedom to “pick and choose” some of the activities to incorporate in her lessons, in the classroom she preferred to trust, for the most part, The Houghton Mifflin curriculum. During the interview, Ms. Nat talked enthusiastically in support of the Math Expression book and The Houghton Mifflin Reading Curriculum (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007) that was adopted by the school; her teaching was very aligned with the curriculum. She felt that the curriculum was a helpful tool for her, mainly for being a first-year teacher.

**Teaching benefits from an open-door policy and parent involvement.** Ms. Nat affirmed having an open-door policy with all parents. She said that she valued building relationships with her students and their parents. For her, “parent involvement is a huge priority.” Ms. Nat not only stated that maintaining relationships with parents was important, but also that she tried to reach parents through parent-teacher conferences and through social events promoted by the school.

The teacher also reported noticing that some parents were more involved than others. Ms. Nat justified that by saying that some parents worked very long hours, sometimes in overnight shifts, and some of them lived far from school. She also felt that literacy engagement was lacking at her students’ home, as she explained, “I don't necessarily see or hear about a whole about literacy engagement at home.” She also felt that parents might lack the skills and knowledge to help their kids with schoolwork. She used the example of the weekly Reading Log homework, where 10 out of the 22 students had
completed the assignment. She thought that happened because “they [students] don't have as much access to books at home.” For that reason, she did not take that homework as a form of an assessment. Instead, she preferred to test students 5 minutes in the beginning of the class. At the end of our interview, Ms. Nat made sure to justify that “I do feel that it's not that they don't care about their child,” but rather that “a lot of times they're just so busy.”

Ms. Nat recognized that Anita's parents had been a great support for Anita and very involved in Anita’s schooling experience. She said, “She's [Elisa, Anita’s mother] been wonderful, she's been on both of our field trips so far, they've been to every single family event. She'll email me whenever she has a concern or just a question of any kind.” Ms. Nat thought that this communication was great because “I know that she's really keeping in touch with how Anita is feeling and she can always communicate something to me that maybe Anita didn't or that I didn't catch.”

Perception of Students and Parents

Anita’s place in the system. Ms. Nat described Anita as shy and “very sensitive to others people's feelings and doesn't want other people to be upset with her.” She also said Anita was “very bright when it comes to Math,” and that “she's caught on very quickly.” Regarding her English language proficiency, Ms. Nat reported that Anita was making steady progress. During the interview, Ms. Nat talked about Anita’s experience at Villa America Elementary School. She thought it was overwhelming and made Anita cry throughout the day in the classroom, and sometimes during recess and in the lunchroom. The teacher also noted that it took some time for Anita to realize that she was not expected to understand every little thing in the classroom.

Ms. Nat’s views of her emergent bilinguals. During the interview, Ms. Nat’s shared positive views towards diversity. When talking about the emergent bilingual students, Ms. Nat affirmed, “It would be so boring if everybody in the classroom was exactly the same and spoke the same language and was from the same place.” Ms. Nat believed that it was important to give the children the opportunity to see and understand that they are people who are different from them, and that “they learn to accept it and see how great it is and cool it is when you speak another language,” she said.

However, for Ms. Nat, working with emergent bilinguals was challenging for three main reasons. First, it was the classroom demographics. Working with such diverse students was a challenge for her. Another challenge was helping all her students with reading skills. She said that her students struggled significantly with decoding and she wished that they could be more comfortable with reading. By that she meant, “just being able to read the words on the page,” and “to be able to, we call it cracking the code.” Ms. Nat believed that once that challenge was overcome by the students, “other things will come more easily to them.” Ms. Nat wished she could see them “really developing a deep understanding of the text, being able to think critically about it, put their own opinions towards it,” and could read more while
developing “a love and a passion for it.” The final challenge was her lack of experience in her teaching career, which she described as “definitely a challenge.”

As I illustrated in this section, Ms. Nat reported believing in teaching as an interactive skills and recurrence. She trusted that literacy required modeling and entailed enjoyment. She saw the curriculum as a helpful tool and affirmed that parents’ involvement was essential to students learning. Because of that she had open-door policy for parents. In general, Ms. Nat shared a positive view towards diversity and towards her students. Although Ms. Nat had really good intentions and seemed to spend a great amount of time preparing her lessons, she seemed to have some difficulties in enacting her teaching intentions in her classroom.

The Third-Grade Mainstream Classroom Practices

Although Ms. Nat made use of many resources in her classroom and brought for her instruction many enjoyable and fresh ideas, her instruction was very focused on the program curriculum and rooted in the “rules-and-regulations” approach to literacy. From the beginning, Ms. Nat established her authority with the students by setting the rules and procedures for the third graders and emphasizing them repeatedly. The persistent focus on the rules, on the step-by-steps procedures, and on the textbook material, which she was very supportive of, seemed to take away the joy and potential for learning in her instruction.

A typical day in Ms. Nat’s classroom. A typical day in Ms. Nat’s classroom started at 8:00 am with breakfast time, followed by morning work, which included some revisions of previous written texts or readings. Afterwards, students would work on their math skills, followed by science or social studies activities. For native language instruction, some of the emergent bilingual students would be pulled out of the regular classroom at around 9:30 am. When they returned around 10:00 am, it was time for the whole classroom to go to the Language Arts class or sometimes to the library. The literacy time started at 12:45 pm. At that time, the emergent bilinguals were pulled into their English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. On Thursdays, the children went to the computer lab for 25 minutes. More specifically, Ms. Nat’s classroom schedule looked like this:
Ms. Nat was very strict in following the schedule and the set times for the activities. Her afternoons started with literacy events. During her literacy block, she read stories to the whole class and then broke up the class into small groups to work at specific workstations that she called “centers.” At each center, students were involved with different tasks for approximately 20 minutes. At the one of the centers, the students received support directly from the teacher through individual conferences. The teacher would help the children with words that they did not know by reading out loud, and, at other times, having the children read to her. Sometimes Ms. Nat only listened to the students read, “mostly looking for decoding,” or if “they are making mistakes.” She would also tap them on the shoulder and say some supporting words like “good job” or “good work.”

At another center, the students who were able to read without or with little help read books independently. At the Wordwork center, students worked on spelling activities, manipulating letters and making new words out of old words. They also applied those words in reading comprehension activities, sentences, or fill-in-the-blank activities. Finally, at the Listening center students were able to listen to stories on tape from a system called the Daily Five, which provided students with suggestions for different types of reading activities such as reading to self and reading to someone.

Ms. Nat observed that working in these centers did not always guarantee that the students would remain focused. However, she explained that just by getting that practice in, “that stamina,” for being able to read for twenty minutes at a time was a good thing, mainly because she believed that activity like that helped improve a student’s vocabulary. She said, “Seeing those new words, that’s what allows them to decode these bigger larger words that might be irregular or different, but just seeing them five times in the same story over and over again and understanding what it means and then being able to use it.” Children participated in these centers in the same rotation every day so the structure used was constant in her
classroom. Ms. Nat used Fridays as assessment days.

Resources

It was clear that Ms. Nat tried her best to create a fun and enjoyable environment like the one she described earlier when describing her elementary school experiences. The third-grade lessons were well planned. Since Ms. Nat had recognized that Anita and most of her students, often struggled with writing assignments and had problems coming up with original ideas and forming sentences, she used many resources such as translation, the peer-facilitator, and the students’ native language as resources in her classroom.

Native language as a valuable resource. In order to facilitate communication with her emergent bilingual students, Ms. Nat also embraced her students’ native language as a valuable resource and encouraged students to use it in her classroom. For example, she would tell Anita, if “you don't know how to say it in English just write it down in Portuguese and then we can look it up later, we can find it.” Ms. Nat explained that she gave these alternatives to the students who had “struggles with English,” because “they get so worried and flustered” around writing assignments and that should not be the point. Instead, as she explained, “the point of writing is getting your ideas down.”

“Googling” and translating. In Ms. Nat’s classroom, Google Translator was an important resource for facilitating communication with her emergent bilingual students. Once Ms. Nat got the other students started with their work, she would invite Anita over to her desk, show her the translation, and ask her if she understood. This tool was also used when Anita had a question. She would type it in Portuguese and the teacher would read the translation.

Peer-facilitator as resources. Another important resource used by this teacher in her classroom was the use of the third language (e.g., Spanish) and the bilingual peer-facilitator as resources. The teacher paired Anita with a peer that could be supportive, relate to Anita, and understand her. To help Anita feel more supported during the instruction, Ms. Nat paired Anita with Samantha, a student from the Congo. Although Samantha spoke French, the teacher explained that, “Samantha was kind of in this boat as a second-grader coming to a new school from a new country with, trying to learn a new language.” Then, because of the similarities between Portuguese and Spanish, Ms. Nat decided to pair Anita with Jennie, a Spanish speaker from Guatemala. The teacher thought that, “maybe sitting next to a Spanish speaker might be little bit better, maybe there can be a little bit of translation, a little bit more understanding there.” This proved right because Jennie played an important role in Anita’s experience with literacy. She was Anita’s direct coach for the entire third grade.

Although Ms. Nat made use of all these resources in her classroom and brought for her instruction fresh ideas, good intentions, her instruction was very focused on the program curriculum and rooted in the “rules-and-regulations” approach to literacy. The data analysis showed that for this third-
grade mainstream teacher, relevant literacy practices were the ones delivered through very regulated and teacher-centered lectures. Additionally, for the most part, her literacy practices seemed to be designed with mainly mainstream students in mind and most of her activities seemed to be created for the students, not with them. The teacher also spent a great amount of time highlighting misbehavior and reinforcing expectations. Her teaching was very regulated, teacher-centered, and disconnected, and thus, lacking relevance for the student. This seemed to create obstacles to negotiating culturally relevant literacy practices.

**The Nature of Ms. Nat’s literacy practices**

**Teaching with mainstream students in mind.** Ms. Nat had 23 students in her third-grade mainstream classroom. Most them received free or reduced lunch, which means they're from a low economic backgrounds. Fourteen of her students spoke English as their first language. Most of them were from African-American background and the rest came from other countries and had different linguistic backgrounds such as Arabic (1), French (3), Lao (1), Portuguese (1), Spanish (2), and Vietnamese (1). Her classroom had colorful posters on the walls, including the school rules and expectations. In her classroom, the desks were usually organized in rows. Sometimes teacher would pair some students to work together, but that did not happen often.

Although out of 23 students from Ms. Nat’s classroom, 9 were from a culturally and linguistically backgrounds and 14 were from Americans background, Ms. Nat seemed to have her classroom designed with only mainstream students in mind. Ms. Nat admitted to not being too familiar with the work of the third-grade ESL teacher nor to work in partnership with her. She explained, “For the most part, I mean we do our own thing.”

Ms. Nat said, “The students that I'm working with know English as their first language whereas Ms. Rose is working with, you know, students that are learning English, so I think some of her tasks and goals for her students they might turn out to be different.

**Designing the lesson for the students, not with them.** Even though Ms. Nat believed that diversity brought “so much, so many different and valuable viewpoints and things to the classroom” and affirmed to appreciate student’s different perspectives, in the classroom, what seemed to count in her classroom was her own perspectives and expectations when choosing activities, topics, and materials. Most of the reading activities were chosen by the teacher from the Houghton Mifflin curriculum and focused on helping student to learn skills such as exploring, comparing, contrasting, and making connections and inferences. Ms. Nat seemed to be very committed to this curriculum and used the material like the Houghton Mifflin textbooks to support her teaching, mainly because, as she shared, “I'm still so new to it that this is the only way, as far as teaching it.”

Talking about the texts used in her classroom, Ms. Nat explained, “I usually choose them for a
reason, like, for instance we read um, we've doing a fundraiser school-wide for one of the Leukemia Lymphoma societies.” The teacher said that she chose these readings because “there's some significance to it.” She gave the examples of the Earth Day when she chose to read with the children The Giving Tree Story (Silverstein, 1964/1992) and the African-American History Month when she read stories by African-American authors.

Students had to not only read texts that were, for most part, of the teachers’ preferences, but they also had to read them several times. According to Ms. Nat, reading the same book repeatedly would give the students the chance to identify the words that they didn't know the first time they read. She said, “They'll get them the second time and they'll learn new words from it.” Therefore, for Ms. Nat, repetition was a good way to learn new words. As Ms. Nat explained, “I just want practice reading so it can be, it honestly can be anything.” As a result of these approaches, students did not seem to be engaged or connected with the lessons. During instruction, some of the students seemed to be daydreaming – staring at a fixed point in the classroom or ignoring the conversation – while others were trying to talk with their classmates. The Giving Tree (Silverstein, 1964/1992) storytelling lesson is an example of the assertions above.

**Highlighting misbehavior and reinforcing expectations.** The teacher invited the students on the carpet and announced the story: The Giving Tree (Silverstein, 1964/1992). During the reading of The Giving Tree, the teacher stopped several times to focus the students’ attention: “Okay, Linda, stop it,” “Girls, you're being disrespectful” and so on. During the storytelling time, the teacher also reprimanded some of the students’ reactions to the story, and sometimes wanted to convince students to comply with her interpretation of the story. I remember that at some point during the story, a student started giggling and signaling that the story was funny. The teacher commented, “This is what I told you was one of my favorite stories, It's supposed to send a message and we're gonna talk about that message, but it's not funny.” Melanie, another student, reminded the teacher that different people felt differently about the story. Ignoring this student’s comment, the teacher selected other students to answer some questions related to the book they had just read together. Only students who were quiet, following along, and meeting the expectations were selected. At that time, students were more focused on their classmates than on the teacher. Frustrated with the students’ lack of participation and noticing that they were not engaged in her activity, Ms. Nat yelled at the class for being “too distracted”, and sent a student, “to think” outside, in the hallways. She also warned the students they would miss out on their Friday activity, and again made clear that students were responsible for that decision, “That was your choice.”

Although occasionally the teacher offered suitable comments for students by saying, “Wow! It’s so impressive, so impressive the way Alan came and went to his seat quietly,” for the most part she highlighted students’ misbehavior for not “being a good listener” and “following the expectations.”
teacher frequently interrupted the classroom activities, sent students back to their desks, and asked them to sit quiet, put their heads down, and keep silent. Ms. Nat also had students copy the classroom rules in their notebook as a form of reprimand for their misbehavior.

**Literacy Practices: disconnected, regulated, and teacher-centered.** Even though during the interview Ms. Nat highlighted the importance of thinking in literacy as a set of interconnected abilities (e.g., involving speaking, listening, writing, and reading), in her classroom students were not supposed to talk while writing. When they were asked to talk, it was at a specific time and in a particular way, and thus, very controlled. The patterns reinforced in Ms. Nat mainstream third-grade classroom were clearly ones of rules and regulations. For Ms. Nat the relevant practices were the ones that delivered learning through teacher-centered lectures while the students were listening, focused, quiet, and “following the expectations.”

For example, during her literacy events, Ms. Nat. used the overhead projector where she displayed her lessons and lecture to the students. During that time the students were expected to have their eyes on her, to concentrate on her explanations and to follow along with every step. In other words, Ms. Nat spent a significant amount of time during instruction trying to keep students focused on the overhead in front of the class and on her. She seemed to feel it was necessary to keep students in control, quiet, and with their eyes on her.

It was common in Ms. Nat classroom to hear, “You are gonna be working silently,” “You don’t need to be talking to anybody in order to copy something down off of something you already wrote,” or something like, “If you have a question or you need help with something, your hand gets raised,” “Nobody is out of their seats without permission.” “Sit down on your bottom and then turn around,” “Stop the conversation, because it is disrespectful.” “Sssshhh,” “Okay, I’ gonna count down from 3 and I will give you those 3 seconds to start following expectations again,” “You have 5 more minutes to work.” Even to line up, the teacher would say, “Please line up at the door, as quickly as possible, as quietly as possible.” Ms. Nat would call students by name, give them orders, assign their tasks, and expect the students to follow her expectations strictly.

Ms. Nat would constantly ask students to remind her of the classroom expectations: “Who can remind, raise your hand and remind me of my expectations.” When students talked to someone else in the classroom or ignored the teachers’ commands, she would deduct points from them. She also emphasized the students’ own responsibility for the punishment. She would say, for example, “Okay, if you are going to choose to start talking while you wait for your paper, you are choosing to lose a point.” My data is full of such instances of disciplinary actions. That might be understood due to Ms. Nat’s lack of preparation in teaching children from different cultures and language backgrounds.

**Lacking relevance for the student.** For the most part, the literacy activities in the third-grade
classroom were somewhat authentic through their relation to real life tasks, but they seemed to lack relevance from the student’s perspective. For instance, in her writing assignments, Ms. Nat asked the students to write about real life tasks and hypothetical experiences. She guided them to write about topics that did not seem to relate with the participating students’ experiences: For example, most of her emergent bilingual students were asked to write about, “Do you think that children should do their own laundry?” and “what would you do with if you had a thousand dollars?” Although these topics related to real life experiences, they seemed to be far way from the students’ reality and interest, and, thus, lacked purpose and relevance for most of them. Anita, for example, had a house assistant to help the family with their laundry while some of the other students did not have a washing machine at home, which would make doing laundry elsewhere a family activity by necessity. In short, the topic was not a pertinent part of the students’ everyday experience.

Summary

In sum, in the third-grade mainstream classroom Anita was exposed to many resources that seemed to assist with the learning of English. However, the teacher’s heavy emphasis on the rules and regulations seemed to limit opportunities for learning. In this classroom Anita and her peers were seen as the objects of learning, and the teaching was very focused on the school’s demands. In this classroom, students were being socialized to be passive, to keep silent, and to comply with the teachers’ expectations. This type of socialization and “rules-and-regulations” approach to literacy seems to be suitable to the outside in concept of literacy, one in which the teacher explores topics and use materials that she believes to be appropriate for the children, follows the schools demands, and see the students as object of learning.

The Third-Grade ESL Teachers: Ms. Rose and Mr. Xon

Now, I turn to the description of the third-grade ESL classroom in which Ms. Rose and Mr. Xon, the teacher aide, shared the teaching.

Ms. Rose was in her sixties and in her late career entering her twentieth year of teaching at The Villa America Elementary School. She taught the third and fifth grade ESL classes. Ms. Rose was born in Egypt, but moved to France as a child. Therefore, she reported French as her first language. Ms. Rose learned English when she was approximately 10 years old. She also spoke Spanish and said she could understand Portuguese, better than she could speak it. She lived in Venezuela for about seven years, but had been a naturalized American citizen for a long time.

Ms. Rose had Masters degree in elementary education from a prestigious university in the Midwest and an incomplete doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the same university. She described herself as a very experienced teacher: a professor at a university in Venezuela, where she had taught English as a Foreign Language for adults, and an educator who had many years of classroom experience at elementary and high school levels.
Ms. Rose became a teacher because she was inspired by her own experiences with second language learning. She shared that she could not speak English when she arrived in the United States and the school assumed that if she was in an environment where the pace of the material was slower, this would meet the needs. However, according to Ms. Rose, this was problematic because even though “the pace of the learning went slower,” the speech of the individual who is teaching does not change,” in addition, “they didn't understand what it was like to acquire a second language.”

During the interview Ms. Rose mentioned several times her own experience with literacy in a second language to reinforce the idea that it was essential to challenge the students so they can reach their highest potential. She also stated that it was important not to assume that just because children cannot communicate, that they have “nothing to offer.” Recalling her earlier experiences with literacy, Ms. Rose saw herself as being someone who suffered the consequences of the school system’s wrong assumptions and lack of knowledge of how to work with bilingual children. She said, “Unfortunately, I paid the price for the school system that, uh, that didn't understand bilingual education.” For example, she shared that when in France, she was very good at Math, but when she arrived in the United States the teachers thought, “I had no clue how to divide.” Ms. Rose explained that the problem was that she could not understand the way certain problems were set up. She said, “Therefore they assumed wrongly that I didn't know how to do division problems, and I was very strong in division problems.” All these experiences motivated Ms. Rose to work with students who were culturally and linguistically different.

Mr. Xon was originally from China. He was the ESL teachers’ aide in Ms. Rose’s classroom, the one responsible for working with the new emergent bilinguals more directly. At the time of this study, Mr. Xon was in his late fifties. Similar to Ms. Rose, Mr. Xon also had experience learning a second language. However, as he explained, he learned English in China and his experiences learning a second language happened later in his life, when he was 26 years old. He came to the United States in the eighties after finishing his bachelor’s degree in law. He wanted to try a different career. Mr. Xon attended the same university as Ms. Rose, and pursued two Masters degrees: one in Education and one in Library Information Science. Mr. Xon was not certified in ESL, but he was a tenured as a Chinese Language Teacher. Similar to Ms. Rose, Mr. Xon had been teaching at Villa America Elementary School for a long time, more than 20 years.

Like Ms. Rose, Mr. Xon compared his own school experience to his perception of teaching and learning at Villa America Elementary School. When I asked Mr. Xon about his earlier school memories, he talked with smiles about the school-break time between classes. He explained that in the Chinese school system children have 45 minutes of classroom and then a 15 minutes break. They also had 30-minute-break every other two classes. According to Mr. Xon, student had time “to do their own business, to do their own thing, play, talking, something.” He also noted that in China, the students got a lot of
homework. Although Ms. Xon appreciated the break time, he thought that the school systems in the United States were “more relaxed” and that school did not assign “a lot of homework.” Comparing the educational experiences in China and in the United States, Mr. Xon also noted other differences. For example, he said that the number of students in each classrooms in China were much higher when compared to the United States. In China, the classrooms had approximately 40 students. He also said that discussions were discouraged in the classrooms and that the emphasis was on lecturing and on listening: “student just sit there in rows,” and “one teacher and uhm, teacher just give you instruction.” Mr. Xon also recounted noticing differences in the teachers’ roles. He said that, in China, teachers are seen as experts. He said that parents usually followed what the teacher said without questioning the teachers’ authority, while in the United States, parents questioned teachers’ authority by talking to the principal, for instance. For Mr. Xon, because of these differences between Chinese and American educational systems, “the students [in America] are failing.” He explained that after studying in the United States, Chinese students usually had a hard time adapting to the Chinese schools, which were very competitive and intensive. Mr. Xon’s remark illustrates not only his notions of the American education system as a failure component, but also reveals his aspiration for a more strict and system to prepare the Chinese students.

Philosophy of Teaching and Learning Literacy Operating in the third-grade ESL

Teaching required copying, repetition, and memorization. Overall Mr. Xon and Ms. Rose brought to the third-grade ESL classroom more traditional educational philosophies. For example, based in his own experiences, to explain that a good way to learn a language was through emphasis on writing, copying, repetition and memorization, Mr. Xon said, “So, you can make sentences, writing, okay. That's a good way to memorize those new vocabularies.” Within this practice, he also saw it as the parents’ duty to monitor their children’s educational path. He noted the importance of parents helping their children to develop “a working habit”: “If you do it, you got the right direction. So, they will follow and later it's a habit. They will do it automatically themselves.” In addition to drawing from his own schooling experiences, Mr. Xon also admitted to aiming for habit-formation with his own children at home, thus basing his expectations of parents’ behavior on his own habits as well.

Expecting outcomes for the test. Ms. Rose’s beliefs echoed those of Mr. Xon. She also believed that literacy required transmission of information and “habits.” She also trusted that parents were the ones in charge to set the examples for these habits. During the interview, Ms. Rose shared awareness about the fact that second language literacy involved more than learning a language: “it's teaching throughout the curriculum problem solving activities so that these kids can function and they do very well on standardized tests, they do very well in the classroom.” Thus her view of teaching the emergent bilingual children was also geared towards training and testing.

Considering the students’ needs. Ms. Rose seemed to genuinely trust that teaching required
transmission of information, but affirmed to be conscious that teaching required more than that. For example, during the interview, she emphasized the importance of having students “to communicate in all aspects of literacy” and also to be able to be “creative thinkers” and to use strategies solve problems. She expressed that it was fundamental to meet the students’ emotional needs.

Ms. Rose: I think being a teacher requires that you are, obviously transmitting information, but you are doing much more than transmitting information, you are also dealing with an individual and their emotional needs, and if that child, uh, their emotional needs are not being met, then learning is not going to take place.

**Individualizing instruction in order to succeed in school.** Ms. Rose also declared to believe that teachers must to take into consideration students’ needs and to be able to individualize instruction in order to help them to succeed in school. During the interview, she talked about the importance of having individual goals for each student: “I cannot expect the kids that uh, have just arrived to function in the same level as the kids that uh that have exited ESL, so the goal depends on the child.” Also, because of her own experience with literacy, Ms. Rose perceived her instruction as being very different from to the other grade-level teachers. As she explained, being a “second and third language learner,” she understood the children’s frustrations: “I know what the kids are going through because I've experienced it myself.”

**Mastering reading and writing skills using different modalities.** Ms. Rose was a strong proponent of reading and writing skills. Literacy practices around writing were a big part of her lessons. Ms. Rose affirmed, “I think I teach writing in all aspects, everything I do, and everything involves writing.” For Ms. Rose, an important component of teaching reading was to aim for fluency. Therefore building fluency skills was, according to her, a priority in her classroom. In order to develop these skills, Ms. Rose said that she starts working at the word level to develop vocabulary. Then, she asked students to write sentences using the words they were currently learning. Similarly, immediately after she finished reading a text, she asked students to retell the story orally and, then in writing. She said, “I want them to retell it in writing, so if they can, if you can retell something in a piece of writing then you've actually have mastered, you learned a lot about the language, just because you are using it in a different modalities.”

I agree with Ms. Rose on the importance of making use of different modalities. However, as Ms. Rose’s remarks above seem to illustrate that the uses for these modalities was not for the purpose of facilitating learning the best or making sure students revisited certain concepts more than once for understanding. The drive for the multimodal tasks seemed to be more the mastering of the skills and on understanding the expectations, than on learning the actual content. It seems that, for Ms. Rose, it was primary that her students understand how this systems worked and learn to perform within that system instead of being more about “Inside-out” features: how do the students learn and how can I assist learning better by making use of multimodal activities?
**Wishing for a textbook that aligned with the curriculum.** As Ms. Rose explained, the school district defined what the teachers should do in their classroom, as far as science and social studies curriculum, but the ESL teachers could design their own curriculum units and materials. During the interview, Ms. Rose mentioned with a disappointing tone about the fact that the ESL teachers did not have a textbook to use in their classroom. She said, “You cannot unfortunately, unlike other subjects you can't pick up a textbook and say this is what I'm gonna do, a textbook in ESL does not exist.” From our conversation, it seemed that Ms. Rose wished for her third-graders a more structured textbook that aligned to the curriculum. She had an explanation for that. She said that while the mainstream classroom teachers focus mainly on teaching Math, the ESL teachers were responsible for teaching everything else (which includes science, social sciences and literacy) and according to her, “That makes it hard.” While Ms. Rose seemed to wish for materials that were more integrated to the curriculum, she also seemed to recognize that not having a specific textbook gave her more flexibility in her teaching. She explained that the ESL teachers could “pick and choose” components from the curriculum. She also highlighted that “Not everything [in the curriculum] is appropriate for ESL kids, I try to choose the ones that are more hands-on” and that “I don't think there's a single teacher that covers every single thing that's on the curriculum.”

It important to bring to our awareness that when teachers, like Ms. Rose, adopt textbooks, they not only adopt a schoolbook, but many other boundaries that come with it such as its philosophy, controlled content, organization of activities, and the standards. Also by adopting a textbook, Ms. Rose might replace the flexibility for a much more structured and limiting significant instructions possibilities to take place in her classroom. All that might narrow even more our definition of culturally relevant Practices and move us closer to practices that heavily emphasis the “Outside-in” concept of teaching and learning, and that is what we certainly want to avoid.

**Perception of Students and Parents**

**Dividing parents into three categories.** Portraying the parents of her emergent bilinguals students, Ms. Rose talked about three types of parents: The parents who were “enriching a culture,” the “working parents,” and “the out-of-country parents.”

Ms. Rose talked about the “enriching a culture” parents.” These parents, according to Ms. Rose description, were very affluent and able to afford materials such as games, computers. They also came from settings, “where they know the importance of education, they will also make sure their kids study and do their homework and they will offer assistance at home because education is valued.” These parents were described as the ones who took children on trips around the country and exposed their children to new cultural experiences very often. Ms. Rose also talked about the “working parents.” These parents were portrayed as the ones who had large families and large number of kids. According to Ms. Rose,
usually these parents were “illiterate” and “work many hours and have a lot of difficulty giving attention
to their kids.” Ms. Rose also talked about the parents who come from other countries, “The out-of-country
parents,” the ones who did not know the language very well, lacked skills and, thus, could not always
assist their children very well nor push their educational experiences.

As Ms. Rose’s remarks above illustrate, she had not only constructed an idea of who the parents
of her students were, but also placed parents into specific categories: The parents who were “enriching a
culture,” the “working parents,” and “the out-of-country parents.” As you might agree, parents’ profiles
might be much more complex than these three categories. While we did not discuss where Anita’s parents
would fall in her categories, my research shows how they might fit each of these categories to an extent,
troubling the clear distinctions drawn by Ms. Rose. As I will illustrate later in this chapter, these images
Ms. Rose had of parents seemed to be reflected in her literacy practices and in the ways she socialized the
students in her classroom.

**Students have an “internal drive” towards learning.** Ms. Rose believed that students came to
school with an “internal drive” towards learning. She explained that some children even at a very young
age are more committed to schoolwork and driven towards learning than others. She said that independent
of the teacher’s intentions, “some kids don't care, don't care if they do quality work, don't care if they do
the work at all, don't care if they get frequently, uh, uh, reprimanded by the teacher, kept in for recess,
they don't care and others take it very seriously. She said that some children “outshine even the American
kids, they do better at standardized testing than the American kids.”

In general, Ms. Rose portrayed her third-grade emergent bilinguals as “not readers” with “very
poor decoding skills.” As Ms. Rose explained, “their oral comprehension is wonderful, but, however,
their academic skills are very poor.” Displaying knowledge about the theory of second language learning,
Ms. Rose reflected on what she considered the cause of the problem. She believed that some of her
students did not have a good foundation in their native language nor in English.

Ms. Rose: These kids that are caught in between, if they arrived very young it means that
they don't necessarily have a stable native language and if you have a stable
native language and you come here with strong skills, strong academic skills in
your own language, it's easier to add another language.

As Ms. Rose’s comments reveled, she believed that independent of the effort of the teachers,
students have their internally generated level of motivation towards learning. Ms. Rose also portrayed her
students in terms of skills and in relation to the schools’ demands. Even when describing her emergent
bilingual children, she tended to emphasize their performance on the test rather than emphasizing their
cognitive gifts or ability for reasoning. The focus seems to be on students’ outside features (e.g., language
skills, grammar, content).

For Mr. Xon, working with emergent bilinguals did not bring too many challenges, mainly
because, “Kids learn fast,” he said. Mr. Xon acknowledged that his students’ English language levels were different, but he believed that by copying, reciting, and using the dictionary they learned fast.

**Anita’s place in the system.** Mr. Xon portrayed Anita as a very shy student, but very hard worker. She was a girl who would “catch up very fast,” said Mr. Xon. He recalled Anita being “very nervous” in his classes and ascribed that to the Anita’s lack of English language. According to Mr. Xon, the more Anita knew the language, the more confident she became. During the interview, Ms. Rose portrayed Anita as a “nice girl,” “well liked by her peers,” and that “the kids seek her out to play. She identified Anita as someone who had made a great progress since she had arrived at the school. She also acknowledged that Anita, at the very beginning, was unhappy about being in school. As Ms. Rose explained, at the beginning, Anita found herself completely lost due to several things:

Ms. Rose: She found herself cut off from anybody that she could talk to, there are people around but these people when they open their mouth to her it sounded like noise, they weren't communicating anything to her, and of course, she didn't understand the school system… she didn't have a support group. She didn't have a native language teacher that she could communicate with her problems.

It is interesting to note that during the interview, Ms. Rose never mentioned anything about understanding her student’s unique systems. She seemed to recognize the lack of fit in a student and not in the system. For example, she seemed to recognize Anita as the one who did not fit or understand the school system. Also, it appeared that for Mr. Xon and for Ms. Rose there was an implied assumption that a focus on the “outside features” (e.g., language skills, grammar, content) could facilitate the students’ experiences, mainly during the transitional time in school (from when a child arrives in school through the years of transitional schooling).

**Teaching emergent bilinguals is “always challenging.”** For Ms. Rose, teaching emergent bilinguals is “always challenging, everything is challenging, every year is challenging, and every child is challenging.” She said that they all had unique needs and the teachers did not have enough time to address students’ needs and still accomplish what the school requires. A challenge described by her during the interview was about working with different levels of English proficiency in her classroom. Ms. Rose said that, in the same classroom, she had the new students, who had very little to no English language knowledge and also the students that “no longer, technically, need ESL.” This not only made her teaching a challenge, but also reflected on the progress of the students with a higher level of English language. Ms. Rose thought that these students did not make the expected progress throughout the year. She also implied that these students should be in ESL classroom only for a transitional period and then should be placed in the mainstream classroom to work on their skills.

In sum, as I illustrated in this section, the beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning of Mr. Xon and Ms. Rose can be summarized as follows. Teaching requires copying, repetition and
memorization. Although Ms. Rose sees the importance in considering the students’ needs and individualizing instruction for them, the mastering of reading and writing skills and the expectation for tests outcomes remain more central than individualized attention to students’ needs. Ms. Rose also seemed to believe in the benefits of what more structured material, aligned with the curriculum, could bring to her teaching. She also seemed to have a strong view about her students having different levels of “internal drive” towards learning. Dealing with those differences, along with varying levels of English competence, was challenging.

The Third-Grade ESL Classroom

Even though Ms. Rose was a very experienced and resourceful teacher, and seemed to know about the importance of “meaningful activities” she brought more traditional ideas and activities to her instruction. In her ESL classroom, the activities were very mechanical and there was a high emphasis on copying and repetitions. However, the classroom also offered a comfortable environment and literacy practices that were more socially driven, scaffolded by peers, and familiar to the participating student. These practices, intentional or unintentional, seemed to be very appreciated by the students and seemed to allow them with more relevance for learning to take place.

Ms. Rose had a total of 14 students in her classroom. Ten of them were African American, and the remaining nine were Asian (7), Hispanic (2), white (4), and black (1). These students spoke several languages such as Arabic (1), French (1), Lao (1), Portuguese (1), Spanish (2), Vietnamese (2), Chinese (2), Romanian (1), Hindi, (1), Turkish (1), and Cambodian (1).

A typical day in the third-grade ESL classroom. A typical day in the third-grade ESL classroom would usually start with a sharing time. The teacher, Ms. Rose, would ask students questions about what happened in their lives and they would share their thoughts about their family, their friends, or “whatever they have on their mind,” said Ms. Rose. Then, the classroom was divided in small groups according to their level of English proficiency. Ms. Rose facilitated the activities with the first group and Mr. Xon would work with the lower-level students, which included Anita. Mr. Xon explained that when working with the emergent bilinguals he had to followed Ms. Rose’s directions. However, when he was assigned to work with these students in the room next door, Mr. Xon seemed to operate according to his own rules and beliefs, which seemed to be very connected to how he had described his own socialization in school in China. That is, these methods that he used drew heavily on copying and repetition as the main methodology for learning.

Copying. When engaged in literacy practices of reading with his students (e.g., reading the book, *The Magic Bean*, by Robinett, Bell, & Rojas, 1970) Mr. Xon seemed to use the same procedures he had described from his own experience. As he explained, “The procedure is to copy five times and sentence making, answer questions, summary.” During his instruction, Mr. Xon would show students’ pictures
from a literature book, say the word out loud, and ask the students to copy those words on their notebook. Students were also asked to study those words as homework and memorize them for a quick spelling test in the next day.

Repetition. If students got a word wrong in the test, they had to recopy that word several times. Mr. Xon also gave students activities in which students had to give a definition of the new vocabulary. Summaries of the chapters were also requested. Mr. Xon explained that some students read the same book up to six times. According to him, that “helped students to memorize the content and then put them down.” The figures that follow illustrate some of these activities.

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*Figure 11.* Copying words, writing sentences, verb tense activity (upper from the left) spelling tests, (lower from the left).
As the figures above illustrate and as was evident in the teachers’ comments, the cultural model of the third-grade ESL classroom involved copying, repetition, and memorization. This model seemed to be perceived by the teachers, mainly by Mr. Xon, as a relevant model for learning vocabulary, and, thus, learning reading in a new language. However, this cultural model did not seem to fit Anita well because she seemed to resist.

**Resistance and lack of relevance.** Anita thought copying words and sentences several times was, “Um horror!” [Horrible]. Anita made clear that neither the approach used during group reading nor the literature book chosen by the teacher was that interesting for her. She also affirmed to be bored about exploring the same topic at such length (Egypt). Anita said, “Eu já estou cansada do Egito… e do Magic Bean.” [I am already tired of studying Egypt… and [reading] The Magic Bean]. Anita did not seem very interested in studying this topic, which seemed to lack purposeful relevance from the student’s perspective. She did not seem motivated about the literature books she had to read which were assigned by the teacher according to the students’ levels of English ability. For example, the teacher used The Magic Bean (Robinett et al., 1970) for the beginning level and The Littles (Peterson, Clark, & Rogers, 1967) for the intermediate level.

**Searching for relevance.** When I asked Anita why she was tired of The Magic Bean book (Robinett et al., 1970) she explained: “Que é um livrinho com uma historinha assim, que todo mundo sabe essa história.” [This is a little book, with a little story that everyone knows about it]. Anita explained that she wanted to be part of the other group, the group that was reading The Littles (Peterson et al., 1967). She reasoned that this story was much more interesting since it was about “pequenas pessoas que descobrem o grande mundo” [little people who discover a big world]. She also explained that some of the other students in her group read too slow, “Eles só querem ficar no segundo capítulo. Eles não querem sair de lá” [they just want to stay in the second chapter. They do not want move forward]. Another reason she gave was that the audience (e.g., her peers) was not as excited about listening to the presentation on The Magic Bean as they were about listening to the report on The Littles (Peterson et al., 1967). As the conversation continued, Anita explained with certain frustration that she tried to tell the teacher she aspired to be part of a different reading group, but that every time she tried to talk to the teacher, she would say, “wait a second, wait a second.” Anita finished our conversation with a disappointing face and with the comment, “Eu, eu, eu to pedindo pra ir pro outro grupo pra mim me motivar” [I, I, am asking to change groups to motivate myself].

As the comments above illustrate, in the third-grade ESL classroom, Anita did not have much freedom to construct her own experiences with literacy. The teacher was the one who chose the literature book for her to read based on what the teacher perceived as her level of proficiency in English. Anita was also asked to repeat the same story more than once and was expected to develop at the same pace as the
others children in her group, which according to her was “too slow.” The examples above also capture Anita’s dissatisfaction about the fact that she had to read a book that apparently was not interesting to either herself or to her audience. Even though it seems that Ms. Rose sees significance in grouping students by their reading level, Anita used many cues to indicate her preference for grouping students either by interests or book choices. In sum, instead of leading the participating child to love and appreciate reading practices, these classroom activities seemed to produce a set of unintended outcomes: dissatisfaction, boredom, and frustration.

Although the third-grade ESL sections mediated by Mr. Xon was highly mechanical and repetitive and the classroom content did not seem to be very interesting for Anita, she was still able to benefit from this classroom in other ways. In the third grade, Anita found an environment where she felt comfortable. The literacy practices during Ms. Rose’s sections were built around socially-driven activities and usually scaffolded by peers. Also, because Ms. Rose seemed to have some difficulty with classroom management, they also had more opportunities to interact. This also seemed to provide students with moments for potential learning and language acquisition. In these classroom moments, Anita had the opportunity to explore familiar tools such as talking, drawing, and asking questions, and to interact with her peers and that seemed to help her in the content being introduced by the teacher. Next, I present some examples of the literacy events Anita was exposed to in this classroom and opportunities that allowed her to use and explore learning.

**Literacy practices facilitated through socially-driven activities.** Ms. Rose used three particular types of activities to involve students with their peers in socially-driven learning activities. One of these was the *Work-Center*. It was very common in Ms. Rose’s classroom to have students working in small groups. Although Ms. Rose divided the students into groups according to the children’s proficiency level, within the group, there were kids whose oral language was more developed than others. In these groups, each student was assigned a specific role such as the facilitator, the reporter, the register, and so on. Students changed these roles in different days of the week. Working in the work-center, Anita seemed to have more opportunities to hear her classmates, ask questions, and practice new words.

Another socially-driven activity arose from *Story-creation*. During story creation events, children would develop a story, talk about it, retell the story, and then write it. As Ms. Rose explained, “they probably rewrote the story maybe about 5 sometimes even seven to eight times, same story, … to get a finished product.” In other words, during story-creation students interacted with each other, shared their experiences with the group and wrote together. It is interesting to note that while it seemed that the teacher’s focus during the literacy practices was on the “final product,” the way she facilitated these practices—usually without a blueprint—intentionally or unintentionally, seemed to provide a good outcome and called for interaction and participation in the practices of writing.
Finally, the students also engaged each other socially when learning vocabulary in the activity, *Writing about objects*. Ms. Rose used real objects (realia) in her classroom to teach vocabulary. For example, in order to teach vocabulary related to the tools the Egyptians used to build the pyramids, Ms. Rose brought to class some tools so children could see them, manipulate these objects, and write sentences using the names of these objects. For that, the student used repetitive sentences with different vocabulary words in them. Using these new words, the teacher also encouraged students to create their own bilingual dictionary, writing the sentences in English and in their native language. During this time, Anita developed questions about the objects and about the meaning of certain words. She would spontaneously check with her peers the spelling patterns of words or ask them about the pronunciation. Anita got many answers and much help from her group mates, and that approach seemed to help her to expand her prior knowledge about the content and about the language (English). The third-graders also did a lot of artwork and presentations to the whole school all practices that Anita was very familiar with and engaged in during her out-of-school environment.

In brief, literacy practices facilitated by peers through socially-driven activities such as the *Work-Center, the Story-creation, and Writing about objects* seemed to involve Anita with the task being presented by the teacher and expose Anita to opportunities that allowed her to explore learning in ways that were more relevant to her. This seemed to create a comfortable classroom environment where Anita was more likely to take risks using the new language (English). Similarly, drawing from the classroom that participation, Anita benefited very much from the resources available in the third-grade ESL classroom.

**Peers as facilitators supporting literacy.** Similar to Ms. Nat (the third-grade mainstream teacher), during literacy events Ms. Rose also valued and used peers as facilitators. According to Ms. Rose, her strategy was also “to pair kids that have the same language so that they can support each other.” Not too often, Ms. Rose would pair Anita with Jennie, the Spanish speaker from Guatemala, the same student who played an important role in Anita’s experience with literacy in the third-grade mainstream. However, because Jennie was in a higher level of English proficiency, Anita and Jennie did not get a chance to work together.

Nevertheless, Anita’s literacy practices were facilitated by many students who spoke many different languages such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, and French. Ms. Rose also moved Anita to work in many different groups. This model seemed to provide Anita with the opportunity to work in one-one-one interaction with her peers who had had similar experiences and who could assist Anita better in the sense that they could answer specific questions Anita had as they arose through literacy practices. By doing so, Anita was not only more connected to the classroom community but also seemed more confident about her progress and motivated to continue with literacy learning.
**Literacy multilingual support.** Even though Ms. Rose did not mention during the interview using student’s native languages as a resource, this approach was an important resource in her classroom. For example, during literacy practices, Ms. Rose spoke French, and used her Spanish with students targeting specific English vocabulary or trying to facilitate their understanding of instruction during certain activities. As a French speaker, Ms. Rose did “a lot of going back and forth between languages” with her students from Africa or Europe. She also tried many times, to use my language ability in Portuguese as resource in her classroom. She would ask me sometimes to translate some words to Anita or tell her what to do in specific activities. Ms. Rose also had students who spoke the same language work together. When it was not possible to pair students with someone who spoke the same language, the teacher paired the newcomers with children who spoke similar languages.

In sum, overall Mr. Xon and Ms. Rose brought to the third-grade ESL classroom more traditional educational philosophies. The type of socialization taking place in the third-grade ESL classroom involves training children into a system where they copy words, they say it, and write it, memorize it, learn the rules, and follow them. This type of socialization does not seem to leave much room for exploration of features that the “Inside-out” approach seemed to appreciate and seek out from the students. Still, within this mostly “Outside-in” approach, there was some space for literacy practices that were more socially driven, scaffolded by peers, and familiar for the participating child. The peer-as-facilitator approach and the use of the students’ native language as a resource was also a powerful tool in this classroom. Literacy practices like these, mediated and facilitated by peers, were crucial in the sense that they allowed Anita and the students in her classroom to develop their agency for their own learning and act more as subjects of their learning instead of its objects.

**The Fourth-Grade Mainstream Teacher: Ms. Tina**

Ms. Tina was the fourth-grade mainstream classroom. Ms. Tina was in her mid-thirties, and identified herself as an “African-American” teacher. She was born and raised in the same neighborhood as The Villa America Elementary School. Her own children also enrolled in the school at that time. She seemed very comfortable and familiar with the area. Talking about living in the neighborhood, she said,

**Ms. Tina:** I live in the community so I don't have a problem with it. There's not a lot of crime. You don't read about us in the newspaper and we have a park, ... a lot of kids know each other because they play with each other after the school bell rings.

Ms. Tina was also very familiar with The Villa America Elementary School. As she explained, she knew the school even before started teaching there. She attended that school when she was an elementary student.

Ms. Tina got her undergraduate degree and a Masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction from a respected university in the Midwest. During my observation, she was entering in her fourteenth year of
teaching at Villa America Elementary School. Recalling her own elementary school experiences, Ms. Tina said that they were always fun and that she had “good times” at school. She also recalled that the building looked much different from what it was at the time of this research. The student body changed, according to Ms. Tina. She explained, “I remember going with a lot of more white kids at school where you don't see a lot of white population now.”

**Ms. Tina’s Philosophy of Teaching and Learning Literacy**

_School is not a place “to have fun,” it is a place “to get knowledge.”_ During the interview, when I asked Ms. Tina to talk about her views of teaching and learning, she shared a page from a booklet that clearly stated her teaching and learning philosophy. It read,

> Education should be challenging, exciting, and thought provoking. You are not here to have fun. If you want fun, go to a party, the beach, a movie, shopping, or take a vacation. We are not here to entertain you. This is not BET, Disney channel, or Computer Games. School is a serious place. You come to school to study; work, and produce just like an adult workplace. School is where you learn skills that will help you to become a productive citizen and grow to your fullest potential. It is where you go to get knowledge.

Ms. Tina not only shared with me this passage, but also made sure students and parents knew about it. At the beginning of the school year, Ms. Tina sent the little booklet with her message, above statement, her greetings, and expectations home with her students. The expectations section of the booklet included the school-wide rules and homework expectations. It also detailed the students’ daily routine, line procedures, hallways behavior, and a long list of things that could get students into trouble (e.g., blaming, lying, bullying, having the “I can’t do it” attitude and so on).

**Content delivered is content learned.** Talking about the curriculum, Ms. Tina admitted, “I like the curriculum it's a good curriculum.” Ms. Tina explained that she and the ESL teachers cover the same subjects and the curriculum at different times. Although Ms. Tina acknowledged that this overlapping of subjects at the same grade level was helpful for the emergent bilinguals because “it helps them with their vocabulary,” she did not agree with how the units were placed in different grade levels, mainly for science. She clarified that units repeated in different grade levels, and that the second and fourth graders, for example, were doing the same units at that time, which she did not agree with.

Ms. Tina: What I can’t understand is that how come you can't switch it up, where if they are-, can’t learn about plants of the second grade they really need to learn about it in fourth-grade. Aren't there other science topics that we could be doing so we already cover that in the second grade?

As the passage above shows, it seemed that, for Ms. Tina content delivered is content learned. It also suggests that this teacher understood learning and, thus teaching in a more linear way.

**“I can” statements or canned statements.** Still talking about the curriculum, Ms. Tina
mentioned that the state curriculum was made more teacher-friendly for the instructors. She explained that the district made the Common Core Standards into the “I can” statements so teachers could “understand clearly what we are supposed to do.” She explained, “So that's why I have to put that on the board.” As Ms. Tina’s remarks suggest, and as her classrooms observations demonstrates, the “I can statements” were written on her board mostly because it was recommended by the district and because it assisted the teacher with the content to be delivered to the students. Instead of using the “I can” statements to enhance learning and to assist students to understand and meet the lesson’s objectives, it seems that Ms. Tina used the “I can” statements mostly as a prescriptive guide, or a canned to-do list for herself to follow during her lesson. During the interview, Ms. Tina never mentioned anything about expecting the students to take ownership of these goals; instead, she seemed to expect the students to accept these goals as presented. By doing so, Ms. Tina seemed to see the students’ role as more passive, as that of the objects of learning, and separate from these objectives that were developed for the students and not with them.

**Perception of her Students and their Parents**

**Acknowledged students’ different needs.** Ms. Tina acknowledged that her students’ needs differed. She said that, overall, reading and comprehension was not a problem for her students, since “They don't necessarily need help in reading and in understanding it. There are kids that really need help but that is not their big issue.” Ms. Tina believed that what the group needed was reading strategies to become more fluent and “more help with simple grammar skills, like, do they know subjects and predicates, and nouns or verbs, they need more help with that type of stuff.” To work those strategies and fluency, Ms. Tina relied on a particular program called *Read Naturally* (Read Naturally Inc, 2004), a program was built around three goals: to improve student’s fluency, phonics skills, and vocabulary. For reading activities, Ms. Tina used the *Houghton Mifflin* book series (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007) provided by the district. Ms. Tina also highlighted the importance of working on spelling and, not having a specific spelling curriculum, Ms. Tina copied activities from a spelling sample-book, *ZB Spelling Connections* (Gentry & Zaner-Bloser, 2004) that she received years back from a publisher.

**Emergent bilinguals.** When I asked Ms. Tina to talk about her students, she did not talk about them in terms of personality. She talked about things she had learned from them. For example, she learned that in Brazil, the school year went from January to December and when children arrived in the United States, these children have already had almost a quarter of the their grade level. She also mentioned noticing that Arabic students needed more time to learn the English language because the Arabic written order goes from right to left. She said, “Their language is totally different and then I start from right to left, so they have to get use to being in America doing everything totally opposite.” The fourth-grade teacher also perceived some students from Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese as being more
skilled when it came to Math. She affirmed, “They are stronger than the US” students. Overall, Ms. Tina portrayed her students in a positive way. She believed that the group of emergent bilinguals she had “add spice to the classroom,” but did not explain what she meant by that.

**Anita.** Ms. Tina portrayed Anita as a shy and quiet and shy girl. Ms. Tina explained, when something happened in the classroom, like the day some of her pencils disappeared, Anita would not report the incident to the teacher but would cry instead. Ms. Tina also portrayed Anita as very concerned about her homework assignments. She mentioned, “She seeks me out to make sure she understands whether she has homework.” Ms. Tina also thought that Anita could improve her math skills.

**Parents’ participation as crucial for learning.** Ms. Tina trusted that parents’ participation was fundamental for students learning. Ms. Tina wished for more parent participation at home. She thought it was parents’ job to assist their children at home. She explained that parents’ assistance should go far beyond the just having parents watching their kids do their homework or the doing it for them. For Ms. Tina, parents should be attentive to their children’s challenges and report them to the teacher.

Ms. Tina affirmed having an open-doors policy and also explained, “If a parent really wants to speak to me my door is usually open, so come on in. They don't have to wait after school.” She also explained that she did not write referral forms for parents. She said that when it is necessary to contact parents for any reason she would call parents from her cell phone. Ms. Tina made it clear also for the students that filling up forms and sending them to detention was “a waste of time” for both her and them. She explained,

Ms. Tina: So what's a detention really gonna do? You are going to the office and stay for 45 minutes and fill out a story plan and actually you know exactly what to do they know why you are upset, you know what they are doing wrong and what you are going to do next time you already know.

The teacher also acknowledged that parents’ involvement looks different for different families and that “just because you if don't see the parent at school doesn’t mean they are not involved with their kid's life” or that “they are too tired to talk to their kids.”

Because Ms. Tina lived in the school neighborhood, she also seemed to have closer contact with the parents of her students, more than the other teachers. Ms. Tina explained that some of her students were in the same football team as her sons, or they attended the same church she did. She said, “I see them out in the community, so I just talk to them when I'm out.” Approaching parents during events like these and talking to them about how their children were doing in school was not a problem for Ms. Tina. Actually, she thought, “That's a good thing” for a simple reason: “students know where I live.”

**The Fourth Grade Mainstream Classroom Practices**

The analysis of the data shows that Ms. Tina, the fourth-grade teacher, believed in “practice makes it permanent” approach to learning. Therefore, her lessons were built around the recurrence of
activities from textbooks, handouts, lots of fill-in-the-blank activities, and drills, so students could make their learning “permanent” through repeated training.

That year Ms. Tina had a total of 19 students in her classroom. Ten of them were African Americans, and the remaining nine were Asian (4), Hispanic (1), white (2), and multiracial (2). These students spoke several languages such as Arabic (1), Cambodian (1), English (11), French (1), Gujarati (1), Portuguese (1), Spanish (2), and Vietnamese (2).

Talking about her class as a whole, Ms. Tina admitted, that it was “a group that no one wanted to be around” mainly because of some of the students’ behaviors and attitude towards school. Echoing her strict reported teaching philosophy, she explained that it took a couple of weeks and “hardcore straight discipline” for students to understand that “I'm not here to micromanage their behavior, that's not my job not to tell you all the time all throughout the day to sit down and get to work,” and that “this [the classroom] can be a fun place only when you are allowed to be.”

**A typical day in the fourth-grade classroom.** In Ms. Tina’s classroom, the tables were always grouped together, in clusters of 4 or 6 desks. There were also colorful posters spread around the walls. There were posters that gave tips about “Being a problem detective,” “Investigating solids,” and “Measuring.” Other posters showed a list of the capitalization rules, punctuation rules or expectation rules students had to follow before they turned in assignments. On the board the teacher had posted the classroom schedule and the objectives of the lesson that day. Maps were also spread around the walls. The rules and expectations seemed to be central in the teaching and visible in the classroom decor.

In the morning, when students arrived in Ms. Tina’s classroom, they knew what the expectations were. As Ms. Tina explained, “Usually they don't ask, what we do next? or what we going to do today? They already know what we are going to do.” That meant that they first had to stop by their lockers and empty everything into the lockers. While they had breakfast and they also had to make their lunch choices. When students finished eating, they started on their Daily Oral Language Activity (DOL), in which the students had to identify spelling mistakes in sentences.
After that, the students went over the DOL together or shared their journals with their peers. Around 9:00 am, the emergent bilingual students were pulled out of the classroom so they could attend their ESL classes. After lunch, the students were back to the classroom and explored their math and social studies subjects, for which Ms. Tina divided the classroom into small groups. The groups were formed based upon how well students knew the math concepts being explored. Some students were pulled out to see a math specialist and others went to another fourth-grade classroom to work with students in their grade levels. Before being dismissed, the students attended the Fine Arts classroom. More specifically, Ms. Tina’s schedule was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:30</td>
<td>Breakfast Journals DOL</td>
<td>Breakfast Journals DOL</td>
<td>Breakfast Journals DOL</td>
<td>Breakfast Journals DOL</td>
<td>Breakfast Journals DOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 9:00</td>
<td>Writer’s Workshop</td>
<td>Writer’s Workshop</td>
<td>Writer’s Workshop</td>
<td>Writer’s Workshop</td>
<td>Writer’s Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 11:00</td>
<td>Literacy ESL Computer Lab</td>
<td>Literacy ESL Computer Lab</td>
<td>Literacy ESL Computer Lab</td>
<td>Literacy ESL Computer Lab</td>
<td>Literacy ESL Computer Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 11:45</td>
<td>Self Selected Learning</td>
<td>Self Selected Learning</td>
<td>Self Selected Learning</td>
<td>Self Selected Learning</td>
<td>Self Selected Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 - 12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 - 1:30</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 - 2:20</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>P.E. Study Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20 - 3:00</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50 - 3:00</td>
<td>Clean Up and Dismiss</td>
<td>Clean Up and Dismiss</td>
<td>Clean Up and Dismiss</td>
<td>Clean Up and Dismiss</td>
<td>Clean Up and Dismiss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 12. Daily oral language activity (DOL).*

*Figure 13. The fourth-grade mainstream daily schedule.*
Enforcing the rules. In Ms. Tina’s classroom children were expected to follow the rules, most of them academic (e.g., finishing their assignments, doing their homework). Ms. Tina enforced adherence to the rules by keeping track of student behavior. When the students did not follow the rules, they were punished by losing one of their stars on the classroom door. Their stars illustrated the points the students had earned throughout the week. As Ms. Tina explained, if they chose not to turn in their homework, to talk too much, to be very disorganized, or to not get anything done, she would take away their stars. Depending on the case, students would also be punished, for example, with the loss of their free time activity on Fridays, or by not getting a chance to pick out an item from the classroom goody basket. Ms. Tina kept a bucket of different things such as small toys and candies that students could chose from. As Ms. Tina said, students “look forward to Friday bucket time.” When the problem was more chronic, the teacher kept the student’s name on the board and that, as Ms. Tina reported, annoyed the students because, “they don't like their names to be on the board.” Additionally, these students would miss their break, lunch and recess as a penalty.

Learning by drilling. Despite her occasional deviation from the curriculum, Ms. Tina liked and was very comfortable following it. During literacy practices she relied heavily on the ready-to-go materials and textbooks to deliver her lessons. The students’ classroom time were dominated by drills, fill-in-the-back activities such as the ones illustrated below:

![Classroom handouts and activities](image)

*Figure 14. Classroom handouts and activities.*
Teaching for the test. Ms. Tina constantly reminded students about the importance of knowing the math content for their tests. When presenting a lesson, Ms. Tina would introduce a topic by asking her students to open their math book to a specific page, “Come on guys, let’s get a book” “Okay, please turn to page forty-four, in your Math Book; page forty-four,” Ms. Tina would yell. Some students who were lost would yell, “What page?” Then, Ms. Tina would quickly review orally the math concept they had learned previously and introduce a new topic. Ms. Tina demonstrated some of the problems on the board or on the overhead and called students’ names to answer her questions and to provide example. During her lectures, Ms. Tina was constantly reminding students, “You need to know that. On your test, its (inaud) says, give a definition about it… and give an example… Are you able to do that? Can you? Can you?” She also reminded students about the importance of repeating the activity, “You could try, do it harder because practice makes permanent.” Ms. Tina walked around the classroom small-groups and asked students, “Are you practicing? Practice makes permanent.”

When students practiced some activities, Ms. Tina announced, “It’s time for you to actually show me what you know. So, we will have a test possibly tomorrow.” Using activities from the ISAT Daily Test Prep Book by Houghton Mifflin series she had students practice more problems. The next figures are instances of this.

Figure 15. The ISAT daily test prep.
As the passage above illustrate, although Ms. Tina attempted to involve the students during her lessons, by calling their names and asking them questions. Ms. Tina’s lessons were very focused on her lectures and controlled. Also even though students were sitting in small groups, there was not much interaction going on because they were expected to complete their textbook activities or to show the teacher how much they knew.

This type of classroom format seemed very problematic for Anita, who seemed constantly lost in that class, trying to catch up to the teacher’s fast pace and to understand the activity instruction and clarify information. Anita seemed to find the classroom structure very uncomfortable and disconnected.

**Reading for the tests.** In the fourth-grade mainstream classroom, most of the readings came from a booklet titled Fascinating Creatures. As the figures below illustrate the text brought specific vocabulary to be worked within the text followed by some questions about the text.

![Figure 16. Reading about fascinating creatures.](image)

Reading texts like these were very common in Ms. Tina’s classroom. She also assigned reading from the Houghton Mifflin Reading series such as story of *The Alaskan Racing Husky dogs* (Cooper, 2005). While the teacher seemed to place importance on the topic, because “they [the students] had to understand what a husky dog is and where they can be found, and why are they so useful for those doing racing in Alaska,” Anita, and for most of her classmates, the topic did not seem to be relevant. The students seemed to be more interested in talking about their own pets or stranger creatures
they had a chance to see than in the subject matter presented in the materials they were using in the classroom. Still, Ms. Tina relied on these prescribed materials during her instruction.

Overall, Ms. Tina’s classroom revealed a type of “practice makes permanent,” approach placing much emphasis on drilling and repetition through her fairly rigid classroom structure and homework load. In fact, Anita’s parents seemed concerned about the amount of homework assigned by Ms. Tina. Completing that work was also difficult: while the students took home the photocopied booklet Ms. Tina used for teaching, the students’ notes from class were not available for the parents to use as reference. Since Ms. Tina focused on quickly delivering the content of the lesson and then providing the students with free time for recreation. Because of that, the balance between work at home and in the classroom could be seen as problematic. Ms. Tina often reviewed and corrected homework orally, making it difficult for the emergent bilingual students to follow and properly check their understanding. I will explore this in more detail in chapter six.

“Inside-out” moments. Even though Ms. Tina stuck to the curriculum and expected the students to follow the rules and complete the handouts and assignments swiftly, she also provided them with small breaks and social opportunities. For instance, despite her strict stated philosophy, Ms. Tina’s classes were often quite entertaining. She used a “fun “approach” to her teaching and managed learning in a more playful way. For example, she was very playful and often played with the students’ imaginations during her instructions. For example, sometimes when teaching she would pretend to be a princess, “Princess Tina.” Also, she would make up stories about her mother being Chinese, Vietnamese, Australian, Brazilian, and so on. Thus she could capture students’ interest in the topics or activities presented in her classroom. Students knew that those stories were not true, yet they thought the way Ms. Tina talked was funny. Those unique ways of interacting with the students seemed to get their attention, and create a comfortable, fun, and less anxious environment for the fourth-grade mainstream classroom.

A social start of the day. Often, at the beginning of each day, Ms. Tina provided students with time to talk about things that they were interested in. Students talked about their pets, family members, friends, things they had done the previous day at home, and about many other unique experiences they had. During that time, Ms. Tina and the students were seriously listening and engaged in each other’s stories. This activity provided students time not only to share stories and life projects, but also to share their feelings.

Free time as a reward. Often, Ms. Tina seemed to deviate from official school assignments. For example, in her classroom she gave students some free time playful activities (puzzles, chess, board games, connect 4), as rewards for their work During the free time interaction, Anita seemed to be more actively engaged in developing her understanding of new words. At times the classroom was what many people would call, “messy.” During that time, there was often a lot of walking and talking around the
classroom and the children were also very involved. Ms. Tina also allowed a 15 minute break or more for students to play or spent time doing “fun activities” which included eating popcorn, cupcakes, ice-cream, or cookies, or playing the balloon belly popping game. Ms. Tina explained “usually most kids need that break whether 15-20 minutes to just run around and talk.” However, she explicated that in order to go outside for the break, students needed to work hard to receive that privilege. She said, “They know that break time is not actually in our schedule so if they want a break, then they have to, like, earn it.” Students earned it by accomplishing their activities successfully. Ms. Tina not only seemed to think about these activities as a fun thing to do, but as necessary for the students’ learning mood.

Fun, freedom and deviation from the curriculum. Ms. Tina’s fun approach, classroom environment, and deviation from the curriculum seemed to provide students with time for informal talk, making friends, and oral learning possibilities which seemed to not only make Anita more connected to the other children, but also allowed her to personalize the learning of new words. For example, in order to participate in certain games or projects, Anita had to learn new words or strategies. During these events, Anita also had classmates asking her questions about her life and her friends in Brazil. The children also talked about things they did during the weekend or things they were planning to do in the following weekend. Although some of these games and free time were not really connected with the subject being studied, they illustrate the significance of more freedom within the curriculum and more fun and integrated activities, activities that relate with the context of use: activities that do not teach words in isolation, through drilling, but that generate participation, and engage learners into ways of actively understanding words immersed in their context of use.

Fun and freedom within the curriculum. When games and fun-approach were connected with the content being studied, or with the objective of the lesson, the outcome seemed much more valuable. For example, once, the students were so engaged, that they would ask their peers to be quiet because they wanted to listen to what the teacher was about to say or read. That was the day when Ms. Tina was working with her classroom on “The Flat Stanley” book project. This project aimed to connect the students with other children or teachers who were participating in the project. After reading the book, students created their own flat drawing and shared them with someone else (teachers, school staff, peers) who had to compose a short story about their flat visitor’s journey, trips, and adventures. The short story combined written form, pictures, and sometimes drawing. When teacher received a story back from one of the Stanley adventures, she would read them in front of the classroom for everyone. Students giggled and murmured “wow’s,” “oohh,” “Ugh! Eww!” “Wohoo!” and clapped their hands in response to the readings. They seemed very delighted about these experiences. After reading the story, the teacher gave students some time to go around the class showing their Flat Stanley drawings with others.

The Fourth Grade ESL Teacher: Ms. Carol
Ms. Carol was Anita’s fourth-grade ESL teacher. Although she was only thirty, she had already taught for seven years at the elementary school level. This was her sixth year working at The Villa America Elementary School. Although I would identify Ms. Carol as an African American, she self-identified as “Other, stuff,” because according to her “people define themselves differently,” and therefore, she did not like “that type of questions.” Ms. Carol decided to pursue a teaching career because of her math teacher who was “really good, she was a really good person” and needed some help with subbing sometimes. But it was the idea of a free college degree and a scholarship that pushed Ms. Carol to pursue a bachelor’s degree in the field of Education. She also had a Masters degree in education and an endorsement in ESL.

Ms. Carol’s philosophy of teaching and learning literacy. Overall, Ms. Carol’s philosophy of teaching and learning was strongly grounded in beliefs that literacy learning and instruction should be based on multiple exposures, ownership and independence. During the interview, Ms. Carol also talked about the significance of differentiating teaching, and exploring topics through inquiry. She affirmed that students benefit from instruction that uses a slower pace, repetitions, and deep engagement with the concepts as well as projects that promote multiple encounters with concrete learning materials. She reported that lessons should be built on projects and materials from various perspectives.

Positioning herself as the facilitator. Ms. Carol viewed herself as a “facilitator” and the one in charge of building on student’s background knowledge. She strongly believed she had the responsibility to teach her students’ the skills to become successful. Ms. Carol also trusted that students should have ownership over their learning. She justified, “I think the students need to understand that they are in charge of their own learning. I’m a facilitator.” She further explained, “if I'm doing everything for them, then it's my learning, it's not theirs. So, I want them to own what they're doing.”

Embracing the expert role. Ms. Carol positioned herself in the role of an expert, and as the expert she knew what she was expected to say. Throughout my interview with her, Ms. Carol repeatedly displayed knowledge of theories of second language learning and literacy. She used that knowledge to justify her answers and her stated teaching beliefs during the interview. For example, when explaining the rationale for using Reading Logs in her classroom, she explained: “We have research that shows that you become a better reader if you read.” She also used her knowledge about the theory to talk about the importance of the first language in facilitating the learning of the second language: “Like, if they are solid in their first language, it's much easier to bridge it over than a student who hasn't-, who pretty much has nothing in either one.” It was clear that she devoted a great amount of time to preparing her lessons and purchasing materials to make her classes more interesting for the students.

Freedom in the curriculum and its limitation. For Ms. Carol, the curriculum was “fine,” but limited by the state standards. As Ms. Carol explained, in her school district, she was “free to design your
“I don't have a standard, I have like, a standard unit that I do every year…” Ms. Carol explained that she would adjust the units depending on the ability of the group she had and what they could do. Ms. Carol clarified that there was not common core for ESL students, but there were State standards that according to her they limited her freedom. She explained that the common core was for Math and Reading only, and for ESL classroom there were certain topics teachers had to cover at a certain grade level. She gave the example of the topic about Space: “I can't do Space right now because it's a third, fifth-grade curriculum. I'd love to, but I can't.” Ms. Carol was not happy about these limitations. The ESL teacher also reported that in her classes there were “no textbook, no worksheets.”

**Importance of welcoming languages and cultures.** Ms. Carol admitted, “I try to bring their culture or their language in for translation if possible.” And comparing herself with other teachers, she said, “I know, I know where resources are a little bit more too.” Ms. Carol reported that welcoming languages and cultures, besides a good way of learning about the students’ backgrounds, provided students with a classroom environment where they could feel safe, take risk and make mistakes. She believed that her classroom, offered a great environment for that. She explained,

Ms. Carol: I think they also are a little bit less shy about making mistakes if they’re with a group that either will also make those kind of mistakes or have. It’s like no one’s making fun of it. It’s not like “Oh, you didn’t say that right”. It’s… people… they all know that they’ve done that themselves. It’s not such a big deal if you make mistakes in here.

As the passage above illustrated Ms. Carol saw her classroom as safe and inviting space where student could take risks and make mistakes. The ESL teacher also believed on the importance of welcoming students’ language and culture to the classroom in order to learn about the students them.

**Reading and writing activities incorporated throughout the lessons.** During the interview, she also affirmed that writing activities did not have a “special place” in the classroom agenda, but was incorporated with other activities. For example, it was part of social studies and sciences write-ups. Reading practice, for Ms. Carol, required attention to the message the story conveyed and the understanding of the information being communicated. According to her, following the teachers’ directions on what to do, filling out a guideline from workbooks, and answering questions while reading were relevant practices for her students. In Ms. Carol’ words,

Ms. Carol: Well, there's a workbook that they work out of and then ask some serious-, they're reading a story or informational text of the different topics, and ask questions that they have to answer while they're reading. So, that's really good practice for them to not just read a book, but to think about what the story is telling them or what the information is about.

**Reading Log.** A highly valued practice for Ms. Carol was the Reading Logs activities. According to her, the students were free to choose the books to include on their Reading Log and were also allowed
to read books in their first language. She also explained, that the Logs were part of the “homework contract” school had with the students and, thus, parents: “It’s in the parent handbook, we have the rules and you know expectations and stuff and we had to as a school come up with how many minutes a night that children are going to have homework.” As Ms. Carol’s comments illustrates, the intention behind this assignment was that all students read certain amount of pages a book for certain amount of minutes a day. Hence, as the teacher reported, the Reading Log had two central roles: Prompting reading time outside of school and encouraging parents to read to their children. Ms. Carol further elaborated:

Ms. Carol: Because we have research that shows that you become a better reader if you read…I have the Reading Log where they have to write down the title of the book in capital letters and which is something I checked today, author, how much of the book they read and they have to read at least 30 minutes and have it signed by parent or someone older in their house.

As Ms. Carol’s remarks illustrates, for her, the significance of the reading Logs was mainly in endorsing reading time outside of school walls and her focus seemed to be on the “Outside-in” features of literacy, (e.g., the title was written in “capital letter”) and on the mechanics of this reading practices (e.g., to write down the title, author, number of pages, the time spending reading, get signature of an adult).

Another role of the Reading Logs was to encourage parents to read to their children. Ms. Carol explained:

Ms. Carol: So they, [school officials and teachers] they want to encourage parents to read to their children. And everyone from kindergarten, first, and second, has a fast fluency folder. A fluency folder, it used to be called a Fast Start. But it’s a poem once a week that they read and they do different things with the poem each day and they checkmark off when they’ve done it and they sign to show that they’re reading with their child and helping them practice different skills.

Again, As Ms. Carol’s comments highlight the “outside- in” features of literacy, such as fluency, amount of reading and practicing the “skills.” Additionally, her comments seemed to bring the hidden assumption that parents do not read for their children.

Perception of Students and Parents

Parents lacking know-how and “skills.” Overall, Ms. Carols portrayed parents as concerned with their children's education, but deprived of the know-how and “skills” to participate in their children assignments. Ms. Carol also attributed the low level of progress in second language learning of her students to the lack of parents’ proficiency in English, lack of encouragement, and participation. Although the ESL teacher acknowledged that some parents tried to participate in their children’s learning, she affirmed that most of them lack the expertise on the subject matter or time to work with their children at home. Even though Ms. Carol acknowledged, “success looks different for different families,” she seemed to hold the responsibility for teaching the parents “the skills” to become successful in addition to “to help
Additionally, during the interview, Ms. Carol’s suggested that the lack of parents’ English proficiency, their encouragement, and participation is believed to be related to the low level of progress in second language learning of her students. Additionally, during the interview, Ms. Carol’s suggested that the lack of parents’ English proficiency reflects on their children progress and learning of a second language. The excerpt below, when Ms. Carol talks about one of her second-grade students, is an example of that:

Ms. Carol: Her levels of English are not really rising at a level that you’d think. It could be because of her-, her dad is gone a lot, like with work, and her mom doesn’t speak any English, and, so like, any practice that she does, she does on her own. (...) I don’t know how much encouragement there also is in, like, … finding a way to help her.

Ms. Carol’s comments above revealed, the lack of parents’ English proficiency, their encouragement, and participation is believed to be related to the low level of progress in second language learning of her students.

**Describing the students in terms of geographic location.** When describing her students, Ms. Carol basically talked in terms of geographical locations (country of origin), level of proficiency, and communicative skills. She explained that her students came from “come from all over,” and made the point that some of her students, who were born in the United States but spent “so much time in their native language outside the school” that they “don’t sound bilingual at all.” Ms. Carol also made the point that students who were born in the United States and who spoke English outside of school and their first language (both languages) had pretty good communicative skills in English as well as their first language. During the interview, Ms. Carol also talked about the differences between teaching emergent bilinguals and native speakers, pointing out that the main difference was compartmental. That is, for Ms. Carol her ESL students were “generally a little bit calmer and, uhm, a little bit more obedient. I guess would be the word. Like if I tell them to change their behavior they’re willing to do so without an argument.”

**An “Outside-in” description of Anita.** Ms. Carol portrayed Anita as a “slow worker” who makes many grammatical mistakes and “get distracted easily.” She said,

Ms. Carol: I have seen that she [Anita] works very, very slowly and she makes grammatical mistakes like with capitalizing that . . . . I just have to tell her, “Honey, in Portuguese it would be the same. So you should not actually be making these mistakes at this point.

As the above passage illustrates, when talking about Anita the teacher highlighted, for the most part, the negative aspects of the participating child’s performance: “vague” writing, “short responses,” and focused mostly on “outside features” in her descriptions of Anita. These words also illustrate what the
teacher thought it would be relevant to have displayed in terms of knowledge.

**Anita does not fit in the teacher’s expectations.** Besides that, during the interview, when talking about the students, Ms. Carol seemed to focus on her own notions of what was relevant for the students, rather than in what students thought it was relevant for them. For instance, although Ms. Carol acknowledged that “she [Anita] is doing pretty good with the reading” and that she was very careful with her work, and that “carefulness of her work is not what I would expect of her.” Throughout my conversation with Ms. Carol it was evident that the expectations were that students “move along” in the same pace and display knowledge in ways she thought pertinent.

In sum, Ms. Carol’s notions of relevant literacy practices as detailed in the interviews seemed to reveal many important tenants of culturally relevant literacy practices highlighted by many researchers, such as: valuing students culture and language, inquiry-based; adopting a slower pace, and deep engagement with the concepts; facilitating instruction in order to accommodate students’ needs. However, although this teacher had well-intended philosophy of teaching and learning, they differed from her actual classroom practices. As a result, her discourses of effective practices and her classroom practices seemed very contradictory. In order to show these contradictions, I will next describe the findings of Ms. Carol’s classroom literacy practices.

**The Fourth-Grade ESL Classroom Practices**

The fourth-grade ESL classroom was open, bright, and decorated with bulletin boards, colorful charts, and a chalkboard. There was not much empty space on the walls. At the front of the classroom there were a large rug and big beanbags in purple, green, and yellow. Through the big window, we could see cars, the city bus, and people walking on the street.

**A typical day in the fourth-grade ESL classroom.** Ms. Carol’s student’s school day usually started with a daily oral reading (DOL). Then, students would get involved in science activities, followed by social studies and sometimes reading groups. The fourth-graders also had scheduled visits to the school library, computer lab hours, and Physical Education (PE) in the gymnasium. Ms. Carol explained that in her classroom, her children “rarely do games on the computer” and that “the computer time was used to do typing or for working on our projects in which we need to do some typing.” She said that the children did some interactive activities with the smart board depending on their lesson. To be more precise, Ms. Carol’s classrooms schedule
Figure 17. The fourth-grade ESL schedule.

Ms. Carol had a total of 13 emergent bilinguals in her classroom: (7) of her students were Asians, and the remaining (2) were Hispanic, Black (2), and white (2). All students were emergent bilinguals and spoke a variety of languages such as Cambodian (1), Chinese (2), French (2), Gujarati (1), Hindi (1), Lao (1), Portuguese (1), Spanish (2), and Vietnamese (2).

As the description of her students illustrates, the fourth-grade ESL classroom was very diverse. This classroom also could be seen to represent “the projects-based and hands-on” type of activities. Even thought the events were constructed around hands-on and for the most part seemingly “authentic” activities (e.g., activities connected to real-life such as field trips and experiments), students did not seem to understand the purpose of doing certain types of activities. They did not seem to “get the point” and their interest levels seemed low. For many students, practices like that tended to lack “relevance.”

In other words, although many of the events in the fourth grade ESL classroom involved practical, experiential, and what many would call authentic activities (e.g., activities connected to the real-life, such as field trips, experiments), as the section below shows, these elements alone did not seem to guarantee meaningful practices for the participant child nor for most of the other children in the fourth-grade ESL classroom. Students’ engagement did not seem to occur. The literacy practices and methodologies that were believed “ideal” by this teacher in fact turned out not being that ideal.

Perhaps that happened because of this classroom’s authoritarian, fear-based, self-reliant instructions and a high focus on “outside features” which seemed to take away the efficacy that such activities could have. My data are full of vignettes of events that demonstrate these assertions. I selected two examples to present next in order to illustrate these points.
The first example occurred during a science experiment, as part of a lesson about temperature in which the teacher wanted to teach the students how a thermometer worked. The second example relates to the Reading Log activity.

**The Science Experiment**

Ms. Carol started her lesson by showing the students a thermometer. On the table in front of the classroom was a jar with hot water and some other lab materials. She directed the students’ attention to the beginning of the experiment and drew their focus to a thermometer placed inside the jar with hot water. While children were observing the liquid inside of the thermometer going up, the teacher shared with the students many other details about the experiment: “You want to make sure when you are using, when you are measuring temperature you are using the same tool, umm, the same degree. So you want them all to be in Celsius or Fahrenheit.” Directing the students’ attention back to the liquid, Ms. Carol asked the students if they knew what was inside the thermometer: she asked, “water or alcohol?” In unison, the students answered, “alcohol.” The teacher, then solicited, “Do we know that for sure?” The Teacher’s question obviously led students to answer back in unison, “No:::” Continuing the experiment by using a pipe tube with water and other pipe tube with alcohol, the teacher proposed to the students that they investigate what was inside the thermometer.

The teacher continued with the explanations and the experiment. While some students were trying to see what was going on in the table in front of them, other students, seated further back, were not. Olive, for example, was skimming a book. Noticing that, Ms. Carol called her attention:

Ms. Carol: Olive, what is your problem with you (inaud) ? (…) Is that important right now? The grand scheme of things, of you doing all the Science Lab right now, is that what's important to you? It shouldn't be? No.

Olive placed her book under her desk and Ms. Carol continued with the experiment. After lecturing about the experiment, the teacher came to the conclusion that water did work to measure the temperature, but compared with the alcohol, which “expands faster,” water was not the best option to use in the thermometer. She rationalized, “that is why companies used alcohol inside the thermometers.” The teacher also talked about other details she considered important to consider. For example, she talked about the fact that some thermometers used mercury, but because mercury was “poisonous” the companies stopped using it. She also reminded students again about making sure that they use the same degree (Celsius or Fahrenheit) when doing the experiment.

After giving the students all these details, in order to review the experiment, the teacher asked, “So what is the tool we're working on? What is this?” she asked. In unison some students responded, “Thermometer.” Everyone, says "Thermometer," requested Ms. Carol, and the students did. Ms. Carol then began asking questions to individuals students. Xonly, a student from China, was the first one to be
chosen by the teacher.

Ms. Carol: Xonly, what is this? (pause)
What is this?
Xonly: (trying to look at his notes)
No. What is this? (Teacher approaches Xonly and spells)
Ther-mo-me-ter.
Xonly: Thermometer (nearly inaudible)
Ms. Carol: Thermometer. Thank you. This is a thermometer.
What was the idea that we were testing? What were we testing Linda? (pause)
What were we TESTING? (Voice increasing)
Linda: Thermometer?
Ms. Carol: Why are you in this class?
Linda: (inaud)
Ms. Carol: Right. So you tell me what I was testing and showing you guys.
Linda: Water and alcohol? (Teacher gave up on Linda)
Ms. Carol: Anita, what were we testing?
Anita: Water and alcohol.
Ms. Carol: What were we testing water and alcohol for?
Anita: (no response) (Teacher gave up on Anita)
Ms. Carol: What was important in me testing this? Joanne, what was the point in testing water and alcohol?
Joanne: (no answer)
Ms. Carol: Cecilia, what was the point in me testing water and alcohol, the tube and how it expands?
Cecilia: (no answer)

Ms. Carol, very frustrated, delegated, “That's just it. Exit slip for everyone.” Individually, she assigned students to write about what they had just learned in the experiment. Some students tried to get a paper from their notebook, but the teacher yelled, “No. Put your hands down. I'm giving you a half sheet of paper and you are gonna write down what the whole point of this experiment was.” As Ms. Carol kept talking in a frustrated tone, some students began to talk about their ideas. Again Ms. Carol intervened, “Nope. Don't say it. You're gonna write an exit slip for me. This is gonna let me know who's listening and who is watching the pretty blue, uhm, the liquid that goes up in the tube (very frustrated).” As she handed a piece of paper to the students, she kept saying things like:

Ms. Carol: There is a point to this lesson. I said it at least ten times, what we were doing, why we were doing it. I kept talking about the- objectives. I kept pointing to them, I kept referring to them. I kept- how many times did I just say why we were doing this?
So, you know- those people who act like- no, I understand language issues, but, like, most of you who do not-, that's not necessarily the problem. You're gonna write on your exit slip what we were testing. What was the point of this experiment? (in a raised tone of voice) What were we testing? Tell me WHY we were testing water and alcohol. Why were we doing that? and if you know, you write it down.

As Ms. Carol walked by Nilo’s desk, a student judged by the group as a “really smart kid,” she
warned, “You hide your paper so people won't copy.” Noticing that Olive was trying to glance at a classmate’s notes for help, the teacher ironically said, “Would you like me to write some of the words down on the board for you? Look at your own paper. I want your eyes only on yours, Olive. Tell me WHY we did this experiment. That's your exit slip.”

While the students were trying to write their responses into their “exit slip,” the teacher, very frustrated, kept asking the students, “What was the point in that? There was a reason. What is it? I said it multiple times.” The teacher also wrote these questions on the board and still very frustrated she commented, “Your job is to KNOW why you're doing our work. (...) Like I said it wasn't just to look at something pretty. (...) You can remember that if you were engaged and listening. (...) What is the point? Your point is not to sit here want me to entertain you. I get paid way too much for that.”

As the comments above illustrate, Ms. Carol was very disturbed and upset with the fact that students did not seem to understand “the point” of the experiment. No one could deny that the fourth-grade ESL teacher worked hard to prepare her lessons, in this case the lesson about temperature. However, the way the teacher facilitated her practices during this lesson did not reflect her stated philosophies; instead the lesson seemed to focus in the “Outside-in.”

**A “banking approach” delivery of instruction.** As the data sample illustrated, the vision of teaching and learning that teacher carried in the classroom reflected the “banking approach” where the students were seen as "containers," to be "filled" (Freire, 1972). After banking information about the lab experiment into her students’ minds, the teacher expected that all of her students would have automatically memorized her narrated explanation and could recite it back to her. This teacher also seemed to assume that since she was using hands-on materials and practical activities, that experience would automatically resonate with all of the students in her class. However, that did not seem to be true for many of her students.

**Underlying messages behind the teachers’ instructional attitude.** The sample also illustrated that the teacher used a verbally threatening way to address the students and ask them questions. For example, she said to some students, “You hide your paper so people won't copy” (addressing Nilo), or by used sarcasm, “Would you like me to write some of the words down on the board for you? (addressing Olive),” or by saying, “Look at your own paper. I want your eyes only on yours, Olive.” What could be the underlying messages the teacher was communicating through her assertions? These types of comments seemed to label kids as “smart” and “non-smart.” Nilo was seen by his peers as the “smartest” student in the classroom, the one who always knew the “right answer,” while others children were not. The way Ms. Carol mediated practices seemed to affect the overall participation of the students as well as their confidence as learners by reinforcing these perceptions of different students’ abilities.

**Not validating students’ contributions.** Also, the way the ESL teacher became frustrated
because students could not produce the correct answer for her also deserves attention. At the end of the
lesson, the teacher got very frustrated when Linda did not have the answer she expected to the question:
“What was the idea that we were testing?” When Linda answered the teacher’s question by saying,
“Thermometer?” the teacher immediately reacted by saying “Why are you in this class?” The teachers’
response not only communicated that the students’ answer was “wrong,” but also seemed to blame on the
student for not being able to produce the answer she was looking for.

Again, Ms. Carol could have used many ways to validate Linda’s contributions and to help her to
expand her thoughts by saying, “tell me more about it or what about temperature we were testing?” But
she did not. In fact, if we look at the conversation between the teacher and Linda, we notice that the Linda
tried to offer another answer (“Water and alcohol”), but the teacher merely ignored her answer and posed
the question to another student, Anita, who just repeated Linda’s response, “Water and alcohol.” Ms.
Carol then probed, “What were we testing water and alcohol for?” Anita kept silent and seemed very
uncomfortable with the situation.

Writing as a punishment. The teacher also seemed to use writing as a mean to punish students,
which seemed to attach a negative connotation to literacy practices for her students. Frustrated with the
fact that most of the students in her classroom could not give the expected answer orally, Ms. Carol asked
the students to write down their answer. This attitude could also be very problematic because writing is
already a challenging task itself, even for native speakers of any language. Writing in a second language
under a frightening situation like the one described above can be even more challenging. Moreover, the
teacher’s reaction made me wonder: what was the point of having students write something that she
noticed or assumed that most of the students did not know? And if the teacher herself acknowledged that
the problem was not due to “language issues” like she said (insinuating that students could have said the
answer if they knew it) would displaying the ideas in writing change that situation? Anita, in moments of
tension like this, never said anything. Instead, Anita wrapped and weaved her fingers and twisted her hair
up tight, then, release it, and start all over, faster and faster. This type of attitude may generate in the
students’ mind a strong connection between this stressful feeling, the punishment, and writing tasks. This
teacher could be inadvertently attaching a very negative association to practices of writing. This same
approach was evident in the reading practices, which were also highly focused on outside features and
often used as a punishment. For example, if a student did not accomplish a homework assignment, they
were not allowed to participate in the classroom experiments or at that day’s lesson. They were told to sit
down at the back of the class and read silently while the rest of the class participated in the experiment.
This, once again, associated literacy practices with punishment.

Fear-based environment. Because the teacher’s attitudes as described above, the classroom
practices seemed to foster a fear-based environment. If it was the teacher’s intention to try to engage the
students and invite them to participate in the activities, she did not seem to be reaching these goals. Even if this ESL teacher did not intend to discourage participation by attacking and taunting the students’ comments and action, Ms. Carol’s comments made in front of the classroom, in a loud, clear, an abrasive voice, seemed to affect not only Olive’s, Linda’s or Anita’s mood (now embarrassed for getting a criticism in a spotlight position) but also seemed to affect the classroom climate and the way students participated in the rest of this lesson and in this classroom. The teacher could have used many other ways to try to guide Olive’s attention to the task, but instead the teacher reprimanded, “Olive, what is your problem with you? (...) Is that important right now? In the grand scheme of things, of you doing all the Science Lab right now, is that what's important to you?” The teacher’s statements also implied there was a “problem” with the student. With this attitude, Ms. Carol was preventing students from having a “deep engagement” with the concepts that teacher affirmed she aimed to offer her students during the interview. The teacher was also creating a climate that was not safe for these emergent bilinguals to take risks, to try out their language, or make mistakes. As with the example of writing as punishment, the fear-based classroom environment may have created, for the students, negative associations to participating and learning.

The lesson continued. The classroom was very quiet, full of uncertain eyes, and with an atmosphere of foreboding. Three minutes passed, and the teacher announced, “Pencils down.” The teacher started eliciting the student’s responses to check their answers: “Jennie, read what you wrote, please.”

Jennie: We were testing to see how hot or cold the water was.
Ms. Carol: No, we were not testing to see how hot or cold the water was. What do you have? (asking Nilo)
Put your pencils down. Seriously? (addressing another student who was trying to write something)

Nilo: In this experiment you see what expands better, water or alcohol, to see which one was inside the thermometer?

Ms. Carol: Great! The whole point in this experiment is to see what was in here. Was it water or alcohol? How many times did I say that, Olive? No, no, no. How many times did I say that? (...)

Ms. Carol turned to Anita next and asked the same question, “Anita, what did you write?” After pausing to think, Anita read her notes and said, “water and alcohol”, and then orally added, “to see which one was faster.” The teacher responded, “Not quite the answer, but I understand your thinking on that one. Like, you have the right thinking, but the way you wrote it wasn't quite right.” As noticed, Anita had written the same answer she had given the teacher orally earlier in the lesson. The teacher kept asking the student to read what they had written on their “exit slips and as she had said to Anita, her comments would be, “Kind of again you and Anita have the like, the right thinking but not quite exactly the right
answer,” or “Her thinking is right. Her sentence isn’t complete all the way,” or “But your thinking is right. That's not the right answer.” Ms. Carol seemed to be unable to build upon the students’ contributions and instead kept trying to find the right answer.

**Expecting compliance and similar results.** Although, during the interview, in describing her instruction, Ms. Carol spoke about characteristics such as inquiry-based instruction, a slower pace, and deep engagement with the concepts, in the classroom, inquiry was not as fluid as the teacher reported. Instead, the students were expected to comply with teachers’ requests and display “the right answer.” They were also expected to “move along” at the same pace.

**Focus on students’ limitations and on literacy for display.** In Ms. Carol’ classroom, students were always expected not only to give “the right answer,” but also to present their work in a “neat” way, and free from grammatical mistakes. The next passage is an example of that.

Anita and Allan were working in a project together. When giving feedback to Alan’s work, this teacher offered the following comments:

Ms. Carol: That is so messy. Fix it. That is so messy. You have like this huge amount of space and you decide to put your thing in this corner and cram it, what-, would you want me, Alan, to hang this up outside as YOUR work?

Alan: (silent)

Ms. Carol: Hmm? (Pause). Is that you want everyone to see-, that, this is the kind of work you do? (pause) (Another student approached Ms. Carol to ask a question)

Can you wait? Do you see, I am having a conversation here?

Ms. Carol: You are like the third person I talk to you about this. Take pride in your work, make it nice and neat. I am not gonna hang this outside the way it looks. You need to fix it. (Anita skimmed through her work and kept twisting her hair and untangling it, again and again).

As the above passage illustrates, the high focus on the outside-features and Ms. Carol’s attitude was communicating to Alan not only his grammar mistakes but also a sense of worthlessness and shame by highlighting his shortcomings in this task. Her approach to his work also reveals a heavy emphasis on literacy for display in ways that may seem relevant to the teacher but not necessarily to the student. This attitude also seemed to affect students’ identity as learners.

Anita, for example, seemed to be very concerned mainly about delivering good work. She was very careful with her assignments and took a long time to complete the tasks. According to Anita, she did not want to disappoint her teacher. Maybe that is the reason Anita was always really careful and slower while doing her assignments. It seems that Anita was always working hard to display a neat and a good final product for the teacher instead of herself. Those concerns seemed to contribute for Anita being a little slower than other students. That might also explain why the ESL teacher perceived and portrayed Anita as a “slow learner.”

**Not as positive to students’ linguistic backgrounds.** Although, during the interview, Ms. Carol
affirmed many times that student’s first language had a place in her classroom, she delivered a contradictory discourses about that during her classroom practices. At times, Ms. Carol allowed students to read books in their native language during classroom projects, however, in her classroom, Ms. Carol did not seem to respond positively to the use of students’ first language. For example, the students were not allowed to translate for one another in their native language to clarify instruction. When that happened, this teacher would say, “Stop. Listen (firm voice). That is not helpful. How to learn English when you are translating, like, constantly?” When students insisted, she would make clear, in a shrill and demanding voice, “okay, I will try this one more time. I have a Master’s degree in ESL I know how to talk to people who don't understand English very well and he actually understands more that you think. So stop doing that!” Ms. Carol explained that one of her Chinese students was constantly translating to one of the newcomers, Xonly, that “he [Xonly] has been enabled so much with other’s help that he doesn't really feel like he needs to work.” Ms. Carol further justified,

Ms. Carol: So, he's not new, new, but he has been enabled by his friends them translating for him so much and he's actually, to put it bluntly, he's lazy. I have to tell him all the time to pay attention. And he gets off track, and he's calling on himself and looking at the floor, picking things and then take things away from him for him to listen.

The example above clearly illustrates Ms. Carol’s inconsistency in discourse about having a place for the use of first language in her classroom. What the excerpt also illustrates is that, in fact, from the beginning, children were refrained from using their first language among themselves. The passage demonstrated that this teacher saw peers (who translate for other peers) as the ones interfering and preventing the learning of the second language. Ms. Carol also judged the students who tried to use their first language as a resource as “lazy.” These inconsistencies were also found in the ways the teacher spoke about her students’ funds of knowledge (See Moll et al., 1992, p.134).

The Literacy Practices of the Reading Log

Similar expectations were applied to the literacy practice of the Reading Log. As I illustrated earlier in this chapter, the Reading Log activities were judged by the teacher as very important for her students. As she explained, the Logs had two central roles: prompting reading time outside of school and encouraging parents to read to their children. In her classroom, Ms. Carol was very strict about the Reading Log assignments and very clear about its importance. She made sure the students knew what its expectations were and often reminded them and made them repeat it back, “How many minutes?” she asked. “30 minutes” the children answered back. Anita completed her Logs promptly and entirely. When Anita ran out of space, she used extra papers to do her entries as the next figure illustrated.
As the entries above illustrate, Anita seems to read only 30 minutes each time, enough to fulfill the assignment requirement.

**The no-excuse approach.** Additionally, Ms. Carol used a no-excuse approach for the Reading Log assignment and was very rigorous about controlling it. She explained,

Ms. Carol: I don't care if they [students] are gone for a week because of being sick or vacation. It's like well, if you're sick you're sitting in bed. So, you could just read a book. And if you're on vacation, you're parents need to help you find 30 minutes a day to not be spending out in front of the TV. So, unless they're like hiking all the time, they should have 30 minutes.

Ms. Carol’s rigorous approach to the Logs was demonstrated not only in the remarks above, but also in her nonverbal gestures used during her feedback to the students and in her tone of voice.

**Challenging authenticity of students work.** Ms. Carol would challenge the students about the authenticity of their completed assignments. This is well illustrated in the following conversation, which took place between Olive and Ms. Carol while Ms. Carol was checking the students’ Reading Logs assignments.

Ms. Carol: Why are you reading books in the middle? Why you're not reading the same book and finishing up? Is that like the book, why are you reading, like-, in the middle
of the book? This is the book that you're reading right now, right? That book was on the list? Are these actually books? Are those actually pages? (In a loud voice, tense mood, and using authoritarian gestures while pointed out the entries in the logs)

As is noticeable from the passage, when checking students’ Log entries, Ms. Carol questioned them about their book choices, number of pages read, and pace of reading, even suggesting that the student fabricated answers for the assignment. She expressed all of this in a loud tone of voice, with an authoritarian attitude towards the student. For Ms. Carol, the amount of time that the children spent recording their progress and reporting answers seemed more important than the amount of time she could offer them to discuss what they had thought about the reading.

In fact, during my observations I never saw her giving students a sharing-time to talk about their entries and, most importantly, to talk about the story they read in order to give them space to connect with it. I never saw this teacher using the Reading Log as a tool to learn about her students’ interests and ideas. She never used this assignment as door for creativity and imagination: for example, she never asked them to predict the rest of the narrative based upon what they had read thus far or to reimagine the story based on their own experiences. In other words, this teacher never seemed to focus on Inside-out features (the content of the books, how the children felt about reading the books, or whether they liked them), but rather highly reinforced the “Outside-in” features (number of pages, quantity of books, reading in linear order).

Approaching literacy practices like this can be very problematic mainly because the teacher is not only limiting the opportunities for learning to take place and intimidating students by reprimanding them, but also because the teacher might be attaching a bad connotation to the practices of reading literature book. These experiences in the fourth grade ESL classroom might be attaching a bad feeling to the reading practice (instead of reading for pleasure) and making the reading practice something very mechanical by taking all the creativity out of the children.

Socializing students into “Outside-in” practices. Additionally, approaching literacy practices like Ms. Carol did might implicitly teach the students or socialize them into views of what should matter when it comes to literacy practices: focusing on the mastery and display of skills over deeper meaning or context. Thus, she might be training her students to focus on the outside features of literacy practices, which do not seem to be that purposeful or relevant from the students’ point of view.

Missing teaching moments. In addition to relying on the “Outside-in” concept in her classroom practices, Ms. Carol seemed to miss opportunities to engage her students through the “Inside-out” concept. For instance, the children seemed to be very excited every time they returned from the library. They were enthusiastic about talking to their peers about the books they had checked out. However, it seemed that for Ms. Carol, these were disruptive practices. Since that was an activity to be done at home,
she explained, “You can't read and write the homework. Don't try to read in class. Do you understand? Put it away” (in an authoritative voice). Thus, even when opportunities arose to engage the students through a more “Inside-out” concept, the teacher perceived those moments as disruptive to her classroom rather than as teaching opportunities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I investigated the types of literacy practices the participating child, Anita, was experiencing in each one of the four different classrooms: third-grade mainstream and ESL classrooms as well as their fourth grade counterparts. The findings presented in this chapter reveal that even though the teachers’ practices varied within the school contexts, they all seemed to be more rooted in the “Outside-in” concept of teaching and learning. Even though many of the teachers expressed more student-centered intentions that reflected the “Inside-out” concept when discussing their teaching philosophies during the interview, the analysis of the data on observed classroom practices shows them to rely more on the “Outside-in” model that emphasizes compliance, similar results, and the students’ role as passive addressees of learning.

As I illustrated in this chapter, Anita experienced complex and unique ways of engaging with literacy. I also showed that the teachers’ perspectives on what was “culturally relevant” for the students not only varied significantly, but also shaped students’ practices in very different and complex ways. For example, in the third-grade mainstream classroom Anita experienced literacy practices that were delivered through teacher-centered lectures, requiring students to be focused, quiet, and “following the expectations.” There, Anita experienced practices that were somehow authentic (related to real life tasks), but lacking purposeful relevance for her. In addition, in this classroom, literacy practices were extremely controlling, based on the expectations and rules and on teacher’s expectations.

In the third-grade ESL classroom, Anita experienced literacy practices that were delivered through a behaviorist lens, highly centered around copying and repetition. The third-grade ESL classroom was highly mechanical. The content did not seem to be interesting for the participating child, but this classroom provided activities that were socially driven and scaffolded by peers. Also, in this ESL classroom Anita had the opportunity to explore familiar practices, which seemed to promote engagement and motivation for learning. In the fourth-grade mainstream classroom, lessons were built around the textbooks, handouts, and lots fill-in-the-back activities so students could make learning “permanent.” In this classroom, Anita experienced the “practice make it permanent” approach to learning. At times, the classroom was “fun” which contributed to a low anxiety environment where Anita was more willing to interact with friends. In the fourth-grade ESL classroom, Anita was provided with experiential learning and was exposed to multiple resources. In this classroom, the lessons were designed around projects-based and hands-on activities and projects. These methods alone, considered by many instructors’ best
practices, did not seem to guarantee meaningful instruction. A reason for that could be the extremely authoritarian, fear-based, highly focused on “outside features” approach used by the classroom teacher.

This chapter also highlights the fact that even though the school/district philosophy regarding Emergent Bilinguals was very positive and supportive, and teachers seemed to embrace it, in their classroom, teachers still struggled to align their philosophies and their instruction. It was also evident, through classroom description, that teachers who claimed to have experience working with bilingual ELL, received training in bilingual education, or even had the experience of being English learners themselves, seemed to have the harshest attitude about language and the least knowledge about how to effectively work with Emergent Bilinguals or, at least, to translate their knowledge into practice. In contrast, Ms. Cool, who was the school social worker, who had no pedagogical training, was doing the most relevant work that elicited implications in the children’s literacy in multiple ways. It is important to notice that the teachers and the social worker were in very different educational contexts: Ms. Cool was not burdened by political forces of enforced programs and assessments like the teachers were. This could have influenced how the teachers interpreted students’ cultural needs.

In other words, in these classroom settings, the children were being socialized into a culture that focused for the most part on what was relevant to the teacher or curriculum rather than what was relevant to the students. The home culture, on the other hand, focused more on the participating child’s needs, following the “Inside-out” concept of literacy and culturally relevant practices. These differing approaches created tension between the school and home practices while also drawing criticism from the parents towards the type of literacy practices their child was experiencing at school. At home, more focus was placed on the focal child’s interest and on educating the whole student, with much greater attention and emphasis on her socialization. Next, I will explore this home culture in more detail in chapter six.
CHAPTER 6
LITERACY PRACTICES WITHIN THE “INSIDE-OUT” CONCEPT

In this chapter, I describe the literacy practices that took place in the out-of-school contexts, which include literacy at home and in the neighborhood. I focus on answering the question: What types of literacy practices is the focal child experiencing in the out-of-school environments? And the following sub-questions:

a) What are the parents’ perspectives on their child’s literacy? How do the parents’ perspectives interplay to shape their child’s educational experiences?

b) What are the ways and the resources, if any, that the parents use to support and promote aspects of L1 and L2 literacy out of school?

c) How were parents socializing students into practices they believed to be relevant?

Throughout the chapter, I present examples of how these out-of-school literacy practices occurred within what I call the “Inside-out” concept of education. As I outlined earlier in chapter 4, the “Inside-out” concept is defined as the one that looks at literacy, “relevance,” and thus, culturally relevant practices as emerging from students’ “inside features” – their needs and aspirations. Individuals who embrace this concept start in the assumption of literacy as social practices. More specifically, the “Inside-out” concept embraces mainly the following:

• Looking at “relevance,” and thus, culturally relevant literacy practices, as emerging from the inside of learners (inner-needs of the child) and considering mostly the learner’s personal resources (e.g., culture, language, intrinsic motivation), as well as their emotional and sociocultural needs as a starting point for culturally relevant education to take place.

• Tending to pay close attention mainly to the How’s of practices: how individuals can assist learning and literacy practices the best, that is, in ways that are relevant from the child’s perspective. The goal is to make literacy purposeful, enjoyable, desirable, and significant for the child and from the child’s perspective.

• Paying close attention to the way children are being socialized into practices, meaning: What else beyond the “basics” the children are learning when certain literacy practices are employed.

By portraying literacy practices within the “Inside-out” concept, I offer details of how participants viewed and facilitated literacy practices, the features they emphasized during these literacy events at home or in the community, as well as how they engaged children in practices they consider “relevant.” I also highlight the resources and materials (e.g., artifacts, media, texts, popular culture) used
by participants when facilitating literacy practices. By doing so, I discuss how these participants seemed
to socialize children into practices they believe to be “relevant” when it comes to literacy. I also consider
how the approach embraced by the school (“Outside-in” concept) started interfering with the approach
embraced by parents (“Inside-out” concept). Then, I explore the critiques, concerns, and tensions that
arose from those experiences. The next subsection starts with the description of parents’ views on literacy
and literacy practices.

Parents Expectations and Perspectives on Literacy Teaching and Learning

As I briefly discussed in chapter 4, the culture represented by home was informal, based on a
caring relationship and dialogue, and very focused on the relevance of the literacy experiences. Literacy
practices at home allowed Anita the freedom to explore and construct her own experiences with literacy.
The notions of culturally relevant literacy that the parents held, to be illustrated in detail in this chapter,
are connected to the parents’ world views, their way of life, their cultures, their expectations, as well as to
the context where literacy took place and their local circumstances. The perspectives parents held about
literacy, learning, and education overall bring us their unique views of literacy, which included, but was
not limited to, the following:

- Education should include more humanitarian principles and aim for a better society
- Literacy as a means for deeper level of socialization
- Literacy practices involve freedom and a stimulating environment
- Literacy practices require critical dialogue, guidance and freedom of choice.
- Literacy practices involve the focus on the core of the children’s experiences and on
  the feeling that those experiences bring to them
- Literacy requires flexibility and focus on the process
- Literacy practices of today determine the choices of tomorrow

Education should include more humanitarian principles and aim for a better society. During
the interviews, the family emphasized the importance of offering to their children an education with
humanitarian principles. Sérgio, Anita’s father, shared this thoughts: “Aos meus filhos, a única
preocupação que eu tenho em relação a isso [educação], a única preocupação é que eles sejam boas
pessoas, então o processo educativo todo, seja em casa, seja na escola o que a gente procura é isso.”[For
my children the only concern I have about this [education], the only thing, is that they become good
people. Therefore, the full educational process, whether at home or in the school, that is what we are
looking for]. Sérgio talked about the need of “Uma escola também que ofereça educação mais humanista
nê, pra formar boas pessoas.”[A school that offers a more humanistic education, you know, to form good
people].

During the interview, Anita’s the parents shared that their decision to enroll Anita at Villa
America Elementary School was because of the school’s philosophies. As Anita’s father explained, the school proposed, “Uma educação multicultural mesmo, voltada pra essa realidade de acolher crianças de diferentes origens, diferentes países e respeitando essas culturas e valorizando essas culturas.” [A real multicultural education, with the goal of accommodating children from different backgrounds, different countries, and respecting these cultures and valuing these cultures]. That seemed to be something the family aspired to and valued very much.

**Literacy as a means for deeper level of socialization and the transformation.** One of the reasons that motivated the family to have this experience abroad was to provide Anita with a different socialization experience. However, Elisa explained the family aimed for a deep level of socialization, mainly at school. She said: “eu quero que Anita se socialize, é pra além desse contato cotidiano, sabe?” [I want Anita’s socialization to happen beyond of the every-day way of living]. She explained that their goals were that through her experiences at school and in the new country Anita could not only become aware of different worldviews, but also experience diversity. Elisa further explained her reasons, “Anita está numa escola de classe média, branca e religiosa, tu entendeste? Onde as pessoas se acham o centro do mundo, entendeste? Acham que são melhores do que as outras. Isso pra mim é inconcebível, um mundinho desse” [Anita is enrolled in a school that is for middle-class, predominately white, and religious families, you know. There people see themselves as the center of the world, you know. Because of that, they think they are better than others. This idea for me is unacceptable. It is unacceptable to live in a little world like that]. Therefore, even acknowledging the experience would not be easy for Anita, but Elisa still wanted to expose her daughter this experience. Elisa said she wanted to show Anita a different world, one that went beyond the frontiers of her school walls and the small town they lived in Brazil.

Elisa said, “Eu quero que ela veja que o mundo é multicultural, que mundo é diverso, que tem muitas línguas” [I want her to see that the world is multicultural, diverse, and that there are many languages]. Elisa seems to view literacy as a means to understand diversity and experience it, and this was something the parents valued as a part of Anita’s personal growth. Thus, this notion of literacy as a tool for gaining an understanding of a diverse world aligns with the “Inside-out” concept of literacy because it emphasizes the child’s needs rather than external, curricular demands.

**Literacy practices involve freedom and a stimulating environment.**

Elisa: Nunca fui de obrigar a ler. Eu vejo que-, tenho colegas que obrigam os filhos a ler, nunca fui de obrigar a ler, assim, eu sempre deixei tanto Lionel quanto Anita. E aí aprendi com a experiência do Lionel o que dava certo e acho que inconsciente repeti, assim, muito essa idéia que tem que ficar livre, mesmo: Se quiser ligar a televisão vai na televisão, se quiser pegar um livro, vai pegar um livro. Mas sempre deixar comprar muito assim, comprar muito assim, comprar livro entendeu, o Lionel e a Anita são crianças que se criaram muito, assim, na livraria, indo muito, na medida do possível, à biblioteca.
I’ve never forced anyone to read. I see that, I have colleagues that force their children to read, uhm, but I am not someone that imposes reading, uhm, I always allowed it to happen, for both of them, Lionel and Anita. And then, I learned from the experience, from what worked with Lionel, and I think, unconsciously, I repeated much of those ideas, uhm, the idea that one has to be really free: if you want to turn on the television, turn on the television; if you want to pick up a book, pick up a book. But I always let them purchase a lot, purchase a lot, uhm, a lot of books, you know? Lionel and Anita are children that grew up inside a bookstore, uhm, and, to the extent possible, going to libraries many times].

As Elisa’s remarks illustrated above, literacy requires freedom and stimulating environment surrounded by words. The statement also highlights Elisa’s strong belief in reading practices that come from the inner needs and curiosity of her children. She believed that as in any other activity in which children participate, it should not be imposed upon them, but rather the children should be encouraged to pursue their interest and engage in it. Her statements also show that Elisa believed that children should be provided with an environment surrounded by reading material, whether at the library, the bookstore, or the home. Many times during our conversation, Elisa defended the idea that one has to be really free to choose the type of activity that they engage in, be this activity reading or watching TV.

**Literacy practices require critical dialogue, guidance, and freedom of choice.** Sharing a similar view, Sérgio explained that their literacy practices also required humanistic approach and much dialogue. He explained that children should be involved in critical conversations about the content of books or literacy materials available for them. He also thought that children should be given freedom to choose the types of literacy they want to engage in. For example, he explained that his children were always allowed to choose what to read, what types of games they were interested in playing or what to watch on the television. However, Sérgio clarified that, even though their children were given the freedom to explore their choices, tastes, and favorite genre, sometimes, for guidance, it was necessary to discuss certain books or topics with them. According to him, discussions around book selection were necessary for three main reasons: first, to help their children select materials with more informative purposes; second, to help them be critical about certain content, and third, to help them avoid purely commercial books. The next passage illustrates Sérgio’s thoughts on the topic.

Sérgio: A gente sempre procura, sempre, sugerir uma leitura que tenha o mínimo de caráter informativo, de preferência. As leituras que tem o único objetivo de atender a um modismo da época, um livro que é sobre um personagem de desenho animado, que tem muito mais o objetivo de vender o bonequinho, o álbum, não. A não ser os que propriamente podem trazer algum conteúdo. Embora a Anita, por exemplo, tem muita posição, tem personalidade em relação a isso, embora em determinada circunstância ela diria, ‘Não mais eu quero esse livro,’ então tudo bem, aí o que a gente procura fazer depois, é fazê-la perceber que as vezes determinadas idéias que estão presentes ali no livro tem que ser relativizadas, em relação a consumo, e em relação a prática.
[We always try to-, always, try to suggest a reading that has at least an informative feature, preferably. The readings that only have the purpose of serving as a fad for the time, a book that is about a cartoon character and whose purpose is to sell the doll, or the album, no [we would not suggest it]. Unless these books bring some proper content. However, Anita, for example, takes a position, she has a personality about it. In certain circumstance she would say, ‘No, but I want that book’ then that is fine, but then what we try to do later is to have her realize that, sometimes, certain ideas that are present there, in the book, have to be understood in relation to the consumption, and in relation to the practice.

Additionally, dialogue in this family does not happen only around reading materials. According to Sérgio, conversation around TV programs or cartoons is also very common. Sérgio explained that knowing that Anita was a very curious and inquisitive girl, a simple commentary would spark her curiosity. It would generate an entire day of conversation. Sérgio explained that it was very common for him make general statements about certain books, TV programs, or cartoons of Anita’s interest and wait for her reaction. Sérgio would say, for example, “Pô mais esse menino aí não é muito legal, né? ” [Well, that boy, there, is not very nice, huh?], and leave the room. Minutes later, Anita would come after him, wanting to know why “that boy” was not very nice and the whole dialogue would start. Sérgio believed that dialogues like these were important because they became a common practice within the family for motivating and engaging Anita’s interest in these materials. More than that, according to Sérgio the inquiry went beyond the books, TV programs, and comic books. Dialogue was also applied to ideas from other situations, for example:

Sérgio: Quando ela lê ou vê alguma coisa fora de casa, seja na escola seja, ou em outro ambiente, ela me procura e me pergunta o que eu acho disso, ‘Porque que em determinado livro diz isso, ‘porque que naquele filme falaram aquilo.’ (…) [When she [Anita] reads or sees something outside of the home either at school or in another environment, she comes to me and asks what I think of it, ‘Because this particular book says this,’ ‘Because in that movie someone said that.’ (…)

**Literacy practices focus on the core of the children’s experiences and on the feelings that those experiences bring to them.** When it came to school practices, the parents showed more concern about the core of Anita’s experiences. As Elisa explained, the school content and the mastering the features of the curriculum were not the family’s primary concern at that moment. She said, “I do not care if Anita is learning about Egypt, if she will learn or not; do you understand? If she is learning about it, good, she is learning! But this is not a priority for us.” Elisa further explained,

Elisa: Então o conteúdo tá fora de questão pra mim. Ela faz tudo. A gente diz que ela tem que fazer a tarefa, ela tem que prestar atenção. Ela tem que fazer tudo que as professoras pedem, mais o conteúdo não está no meu universo em nenhum momento. Aí, no meu horizonte, a questão é ela se sentir bem, é ela se sentir segura, é ela se sentir tranquila, é ela se sentir feliz, é ela se sentir acolhida.
So, the content is out of the question for me. She [Anita] does everything. We tell her she has to do her homework and pay attention. She has to do everything that teachers ask for, but the content is not in my universe, in any moment. Thus, on my horizon, that is, what matters for me, is if she feels good, if she feels safe, if she feels peaceful, if she feels happy, if she feel supported.

This way of conceptualizing literacy experience is example of an “Inside-out” view to literacy practices. Elisa’s remarks above demonstrated, that for the family, what seemed to matter the most were Anita’s inner needs, tranquil state of mind, and thus a good experience with literacy. The importance was placed on how Anita was experiencing literacy practices: To feel good, safe, glad, and supported in school were the family’s priorities. These elements were, for the parents, more important than the content (e.g., Egypt – the content been learned in the third-grade) being worked into those practices as Elisa shared above.

That is not to say that Anita’s parents did not care about the school content: during the interviews, the family talked many times about the importance of their daughter doing well in school and getting good grades. However, Anita’s family wanted to make sure that her experience with literacy at school was not a negative one or a burden for Anita. That seemed to be the why the family focused more on the how’s of literacy—that is, on the way Anita was experiencing literacy practices—over the what’s of literacy (e.g., content).

**Literacy requires flexibility and focus on the process.** My analysis illustrates that the parents’ perceptions of what was “relevant” varied according to the sociocultural context where literacy was being learned. In that sense, parents saw the importance of being flexible, mainly when setting their goals. As the next passage shows, the goals the parents set for Anita “here,” referring to the United States, seemed to be different from the goals they would have for her if she were in their home country. For example, Sérgio, Anita’s father, highlighted many times during our conversations that the family’s expectations regarding Anita’s performance at school were mainly ones of “comunicação” [communication] and not too much in terms of school content:

Sérgio: A gente sempre procurou deixar claro pra ela o seguinte: nosso principal objetivo com ela na escola aqui é a comunicação. É ela ter, desenvolver a capacidade de se comunicar com as crianças, com os coleguinhas que estão ali, com os professores, e tal. E que os conteúdos escolares, como na matemática, com, sei lá, na ciência, aquele conteúdo mais escolar mesmo, isso era secundário. Se ela obtivesse um bom desempenho, uma boa avaliação, ótimo; mas se a avaliação formal, não fosse das melhores também não era importante.

[We have always tried to make clear to her [Anita] the following: our main goal for her in school, here, is communication. It is to see her having-, developing the ability to communicate with the children, with classmates, the teachers, and so on. The school content such as the mathematics, you know, science; those school subjects were secondary for us. If she had a good performance, a good evaluation, that would be great; but if the formal evaluation was not the best, that]
Based on the passage above and on many episodes of my fieldwork, it was noticeable the goals the parents set for Anita “here,” referring to the United States, seemed to be different from the goals they would have for her if she were in their home country. It seemed that the family had two main reasons for that. The first one was that they strongly saw learning as a process that progressed throughout the years. For them, the content lost at that time, could be revisited in another moment or in another context later in life. For instance, they explained she could come across certain inquiry that would prompt her curiosity toward certain topics. The parents also said that part of the school content Anita was learning at school in the United States, she had already studied in Brazil or would have to be review most of the content being studied in the U.S. once she returned to Brazil.

The parents also highlighted that their goals for Anita in that circumstance were mostly related to her development in terms of “desempenho, em termos de comportamento, de atitude, e de sociabilidade” [the performance, in terms of comportment, attitude, and sociability] because, as Sérgio explained, “O conteúdo é algo que vai sendo construído aos poucos” [The content is something that is built gradually]. Yet, Anita’s parents highlighted that there were some things that they hoped for regardless of the context and the educational experiences of Anita: the core of her experiences with literacy and her positive encounters with and attitude towards it.

**Literacy practices of today determine the choices of tomorrow.** During the interviews, Anita’s parents raised an interesting comparison: they spoke about their perceived impressions about what other children’s parents consider “relevant” when it comes to literacy and to the learning of the second language. Contrasting their to with those of other parents in their residential complex area with whom they had developed friendships, Anita’s parents explained the they felt these parents’ perspectives towards literacy differed from their own. While the neighbors placed heavy importance on reinforcing their children’s mastering of math and English language skills to prepare them to the competitive world, Anita’s parents saw the importance of focusing on a positive childhood experiences with school including literacy practices. Anita’s parents believed that Anita’s present experiences in school and with literacy practices would not only impact her performance and development at that time, but would also set up her affinities towards certain fields of studies and, later on, assist her in defining her choices in life.

Therefore, as the next passage shows, Anita’s family paid careful attention to Anita’s present experiences with schooling, her happiness, and the feelings to make sure her experiences were promoting positivity towards literacy practices, learning, and school as whole. Talking about her neighbors’ expectations and the desire and hopes she had for Anita, Elisa compared:

Elisa: Eles dão muito destaque assim pra ‘Tem que aprender Inglês. Tem que aprender bem o Inglês. Tem que ser fluente no inglês.’ Claro, eu também quero que a
Anita seja fluente no Inglês, mas eu acho que ela tem um tempo pra isso. Não precisa ser aqui e agora e tudo de uma vez só.” Entendeste? Escrever bem, ler bem, falar bem em Inglês e a matemática; eles enfatizam muito isso assim. Que a matemática aqui nos Estados Unidos não é suficiente forte, boa, uhm, que ela ainda é, comparada com, ela ainda é uma matemática mais fraca. (...) A grande amiga da Anita fez assim durante todo o summer aula de matemática, Kumom, entendeu; porque a perspectiva dos pais era que a matemática era fraca, não era suficiente.

[They [the neighbors] give so much emphasis to ‘You have to learn English. You have to learn English well. You must be fluent in English.’ Of course, I also want Anita to become fluent in English, but I think she has time for that. It does not need to be here and now and all at once, you know? Write well, read well, speak well in English and the Mathematics, they emphasize that very much. That the Math here in the United States is not strong enough, or good, uhm, and compared to- [other countries], it is still a weak math. (...) One of Anita’s best friends took, throughout the summer, a Math class, Kumon, you know, because her parents' perspective was that the [school’s] mathematics was weak, it was not enough.

As Elisa’s remarks above demonstrated that for some parents, the emphasis on the mastering of the English language and the heavy focus on math skills were particularly significant. Elisa explained that her impression was that for those parents, these skills were essential for participating in the competitive world and that the school was not offering enough math to meet that need. These parents, according to Elisa, felt they had to reinforce their children’s skills by enrolling them in extra activities.

Elisa offered her own perspectives on this topic and admitted: “Summer, eu jamais colocaria minha filha numa aula de matemática, entende? Porque, assim, o que que eu espero, é que ela brinque, que ela, sabe?” [During the summer, I would never enroll my daughter in a math class, you know. Because, uhm, what I hope is that she can play, that she-, you know?]. Elisa continued, “Então eu não sei se isso é coisa de brasileiro. Se isso é coisa muito específica da nossa cultura, entende?” [So, I don’t know if this is a Brazilian thing. If this is something very specific for our culture, you know?]. Elisa showed awareness about oversimplifying or generalizing these characteristics to the whole Brazilian population when she said: “É claro que não vamos fazer generalização, mas pensar que talvez nós tenhamos uma especificidade, ou que a família da Anita tem uma especificidade, entende? [Of course we cannot make the generalization, but we can think that in terms of our specificity, or Anita’s family’s specificity, you know?]?

Elisa also offered her own perspectives about the topic, in response she said:

Elisa: Eu não estou preocupada com a concorrência internacional, entende? Eu não tô preocupada com o trabalho do future. Essa é a minha perspectiva, entende? Eu não estou preocupada assim com o exce:nte desempenho. (...) Embora, é obvio que eu queira que estude, que ela tenha-, uhm, enfim, né! Mas acima de tudo que eu tenho me preocupado é que ela seja feliz, entende? Então a minha
ideia é o presente e o futuro, assim. Que ela seja feliz assim também.

[I'm not worried about international competition, you know? I am not worried about the future work. This is my perspective, you know? I'm not so concerned with an excellent performance (...) Although, it is obvious that I want her [Anita] to study, that she has-, uhm, anyway, uhm! But above of all I'm worried about her being happy, you know? So my concern is the present as well as the future. I hope she is also happy now.]

As the passage above illustrates, Elisa seemed to hold the belief that the experiences her children have in the present moment should also deserve attention mainly because these experiences would later contribute to and, in certain ways, help determine their lives and also career choices. The international competition, future career, and outstanding school performance was not what concerned Elisa the most in that context and at that time. As the passage shows, Elisa was concerned about Anita’s present experiences, happiness, and feeling worthwhile for participating in these unique educational experiences in a new country.

Sharing similar views, Sérgio also explained that what concerned the family the most was not to direct their children to certain career choices just because of their prestige or their financial rewards. Again, Sérgio emphasized that the family’s concerns went beyond that: “Que eles possam ser boas pessoas e atuar no melhoramento da sociedade, melhoramento do mundo. Então é pra isso que a gente procura preparar os filhos da gente, mesmo sabendo que isso vai implicar em algumas dificuldades pra eles depois.” ["We hope they become good people and work on improving the society, and improving the world. Therefore, that is how we try to prepare our children, even though this might result in some difficulties for them later."]

All these notions that the parents held about literacy, learning, and education altogether bring us a unique view of literacy and the “Inside-out” conceptualization of literacy and schooling. As I illustrated above, for Anita’s parents, literacy requires freedom, dialogue, enquiry, creativity, and a more humanistic approach. These parents were genuinely concerned with the core of the experiences Anita was being exposed to and to the feelings their daughter was associating with these experiences of literacy. They also seemed to consider and add another dimension to how to think about culturally relevant practices. That is, they make us reflect on the extent to which the experiences children are having in school today are contributing to the practices of literacy beyond the learning of the print and the content. In other words, they cogitated how certain literacy practices could foster even more Anita’s love and appreciation for literacy. Notions of culturally relevant literacy that the parents held, as illustrated in this section, were connected to the parents’ world view, they way of life, their cultures, their expectations, as well as to the context where literacy took place and their local circumstances. Their “Inside-out” way of looking at literacy and, thus, culturally relevant practices were directly reflected in the ways they enacted literacy.
practices in their everyday lives. I will discuss this in more detail throughout the next sections when I turn to the types of literacy practices Anita experienced in her community and at home.

**Literacy Practices in the Neighborhood**

*Changing countries, changing agendas.* The parents also reported that they noticed that Anita’s interest in engaging with certain practices also changed when she arrived in the United States. According to the parents, the new country brought Anita a very different agenda. They remembered that, while in Brazil a typical day at home included a certain routine and literacy events (e.g., doing homework or doing crafts), in the United States Anita’s schedule had more flexibility and possibility of participating in different literacy events around the community. For instance, Elisa shared that in Brazil, Anita used to spend her morning by herself at home. At home she used to draw, paint, and play with her toys while she watched some television. She also did her homework and also talked with the lady who worked for the family. Anita spent her afternoons at school, and she usually went to bed early. Anita’s mother also remembered that it was very common for Anita to spend her weekends in her friends’ house or have her friends to come and play, or to sleep over—a common weekend program for Anita and her friends, said Elisa. However, in the United States, that agenda changed.

In the United States, Anita went to school for most of her days and found herself very lonely and with no friends “E a gente também, na verdade né? Não é só ela” [“And to tell you the truth, so did we. She was not the only one”], admitted Elisa. Therefore, the television shows and the Internet were, at the beginning of the year, Anita’s companion. However, Anita’s father explained that while in Brazil, Anita’s interest was in watching programs considered by her parents for her age group and more educational; in the United States, her interests seemed to change to watch more trendy programs, mainly the ones related to the American popular culture. For example, Sérgio explained that in Brazil, Anita enjoyed watching, “A Incrível Casa de Eva [The Amazing Eve’s house], a program produced by Swedish television and presented by Eva Funck on TV Futura. The program host used simple language to explain to children what happens to the body when it has some type of diseases or problems and gave them tips about how they could deal with and treat those problems. In United States, however, Anita was more interested in programs such as *Wizards of Waverly Place* with Selena Gomez, *Lemonade Mouth*, and *Girls vs. Monster.*

The parents also reported that as a result of these changes, the family became closer together and more engaged in activities in the community in the United States than they were in Brazil. They explained that in their community, the family had the chance to experience many forms of literacy events and engage in several activities. For example, Anita and her family visited the libraries and children’s museums, went to book fairs, watched movies at the local theater, and participated in many activities in the neighborhood. Short trips to explore neighboring cities and to Disney world, were also some of the
activities cited by the parents as a family activity. All of these activities were inspired by Anita’s interest and curiosity about the new country and its culture.

Anita’s reading interests and her choices in books also seemed to change as a result of the new context and the friendship she made. I will come back to this topic later on in this chapter.

**Literacy, play, and friendship around the neighborhood.** When Anita arrived in the United States, what she wanted the most was to make friends with whom she could establish close relationships. At the local university-housing complex where Anita lived, she met Diva and Kate and eventually they became close friends. Diva was an eight-year-old girl from India who lived a couple of houses down from Anita. Diva shared that she liked playing with friends and reading science fiction, historical fiction, and chapter books. Diva also liked writing, as she explained, “to make up like stories and stuff for no reason.” That was how they spent their afternoon sometimes. Kate, originally from Taiwan, was around 10 years old and was in fifth grade. Kate returned to her country at the time I started my observations, and therefore I did not have a chance to observe her for too long. Diva and Anita were also part of the Ms. Cool’s Friendship Group which, according to Diva, was designed for the girls, “Because sh-, uhm, she [Ms. Cool] cares about them and she, uhm, she knows that girls need to have something like going on.” The Friendship Group was very significant in helping foster these children’s connections outside school walls and engage them in this social interaction and literacy practices around the community.

In the community, the activities Anita enjoyed participating in the most were the collaborative and social ones. Usually these activities had very little to do with the school’s official curriculum, but were still full of literacy moments. For instance, Anita and her friends spent many hours playing together inside the house. They pretended to be hosts of a radio talk show. The children would draft some of the news to be announced for the community—usually these news had to do with the events going on in their neighborhood or school—and then they would rehearse and announced them on their radio show. During these activities, they pretended to be famous pop star artists, performing their songs and pretending to be interviewed. During these events Anita learned many vocabulary words introduced by her friends.

**Literacy: engaging, authentic and relevant.** Anita and her friends also spent time playing around the apartment complex. They frequently played tag, hide-and-seek, and hunted for butterflies. Many of these activities around the neighborhood became a self-motivated learning opportunity for Anita. By joining her friends in this adventures, Anita learned names of little insects, and the names of many other little creatures such as spider, butterfly, fly, owl, esquire, ladybug, and hawk. She also added to her vocabulary many verbs and adjectives her friends used in order to describe these creatures and tell their stories.

Anita and her friends also took the same bus to school. Diva remembered, “She [Anita] was feeling a little bit, like-, scared because, like, she didn’t know anything around her.” “Every day in the
bus, we [Diva and Kate] try to help her and talk to her.” Diva explained that sometimes when Anita would not understand some words and they would tell her what the meaning was. “We helped her to learn the sound of the words and what they mean,” said Diva. Kate and Diva shared that little by little they became best friends with Anita. Anita confirmed by saying the following about Diva:

Anita: Ela me ajudou assim, a saber o que fazer nas horas que eu não sabia o que fazer. Tipo no ônibus, coisa assim. Eu não sabia o que fazer nada. Nada, nada, nada, nada... Um pouco, quando eu não sabia o que uma palavra dizia ela fazia gestos.”

[She helped me like-, you know, teaching me what to do at times I did not know what to do, like on the bus, things like that. I knew how to do nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing ... a little, when I did not know what a word meant she used gestures.]

Elisa was a great supporter of these friendships and activities, mainly because she believed that these relationships “ajuda muito” [help a lot] to improve Anita’s English and also helped her “A sair da solidão” [get out of that loneliness]. Anita seemed to agree when she admitted more than once that she learned English by playing with the girls. In one instance, Elisa recalled that Anita was very upset about having to copy five times a list of words and sentences for her the third-grade ESL homework and Elisa was trying to convince Anita to do the homework by saying, “Você tem que copiar cinco vezes por que aprende, aprende o inglês, aprende as palavras (said ironically) ["You have to copy it five times because that way you might learn, learn English, learn the words (said ironically)].” Then Anita said, ‘Mas nem foi assim que eu aprendi a falar [but that was not the way I learned how to speak English].” Then, Elisa asked, “Então como é que tu aprendeu a falar?” [So, how did you learn how to speak?], Anita replied, “Aprendi a falar brincando com as meninas” [I learned how to speak playing with the girls]. Elisa noticed that it was during the summer when Anita made more friends and started playing with them that her social language vocabulary seemed to increase. Such social practices with her friends seemed to support and enhance Anita’s second-language learning.

Elisa remembered, for example, that there were two Chinese girls that Anita used to play with a lot at the afterschool program and that one of them was teaching Chinese to Anita. Elisa told me that one of the girls, “deu uma tarefa pra ela copiar, cinco palavras em Chinês [gave Anita some homework, to copy five times the Chinese words].” Here the children were replicating the learning structures they had been exposed to in school, but they did so through play and friendship, making the process more engaging for Anita. Elisa also spoke positively and with care about Kate, another student from the fifth grade who became friends with Anita. According to Elisa, Kate was a girl who embraced Anita’s friendship and was the first to invite Anita to play and to join her at the Youngsters’ Club. The participation in these social worlds seemed to make Anita very motivated and eager to learn and to use English in these authentic and
Literacy: Oral, written and companionship. In the community, Anita also enjoyed a wide variety of locally offered literacy events and children’s programs, including those at the public libraries. Most of the language literacy events were oral. For example, Anita often participated in storytelling events, including the Spanish story-telling time. Anita liked to listen the stories in Spanish because according to her, she could understand Spanish better than English. As Anita improved her language and listening skills in English, she also started attending English story telling time.

At the library, Anita also participated in many literacy activities, which included poetry reading and in special occasions the reading for dogs and mini horses, for instance. The Reading to the Dogs and Hoofing it for Reading were activities Anita enjoyed very much. She was so motivated about them that the activities earned a place in her wall calendar as a memorable activity: “um dia que eu li pra cachorro” [the day I read for a dog]. Besides reading for these unusual friends, during these literacy events Anita also had the opportunity to color a picture or write a letter for the animals. While for Anita these were “fun” activities, her parents recognized another purpose and the value in them: the feelings of pleasure and building attachment to the act of reading. It seems that, for Elisa, literacy practices like this one taught Anita and other children that reading could teach someone much more than just the printed words. Literacy could be a companion, and could make another person feel good and happy. Anita’s parents valued these types of literacy deeply. These types of literacy emphasized how reading can evoke emotion, build relationships, and encourage thinking.

Anita and her parents also participated in a Portuguese Playgroup for children. The playgroup was organized by mothers from the community. There, Anita was able play with other Brazilian children and communicate with them in her first language. Anita liked the fact that she could “take care” of the little children, but she did not seem too excited about the Portuguese Playgroup, mainly because most of the children were not from her age group.

Literacy in the afterschool program. The Youngsters’ Club was a free after-school program supported by the local university and offered for the residents of the university housing-complex where Anita lived. The club offered many opportunities for kids to engage with literacy and play. The Club was open Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 5:30 pm for children aged five to ten. The program was directed by Ms. Sally, the children's programming coordinator.

Ms. Sally was American, born and raised in a small town in the Midwest of the United States. She was in her fifties and had a bachelor’s degree in music. She began her career working with children in high school when she was very young. Her passion for teaching grew during college. She said she wanted to be a music teacher but when she worked with preschool children in college she “really fell in love with it.” For her, her background in music and teaching as a career was “like a good fit.”
Similar to Anita’s parents, Ms. Sally also embraced the “Inside-out” view of literacy and practicing it. For her, culturally relevant practices seemed to encompass the following: Literacy learning involves concrete experiences, choice-making, and social interaction; literacy practices should be enjoyable and memorable; it includes a co-constructed cultural instance and respect to the childhood experiences; literacy practices are comprised by many dimensions.

**Literacy learning involves concrete experiences, choice-making, and social interaction.** Ms. Sally also believed in power of learning by doing and the choice-making opportunities. She trusted that “children learn from doing. It is freedom within structure. You have a structured environment but the children have choice.” Beyond that, at the center children from all ages could interact with each other, “the older children help the younger and the younger children learn from the older kids and uumm we're all learning together,” explained Ms. Sally. During the interview, Ms. Sally spoke very passionately about the importance of being open to these ideas and diversity. She said:

Ms. Sally: I just can't imagine where I've had such an experience having met people from all over the world… It's just-, I love it, and it just opened me. I'm glad that I've been opened to global and diversity … it's a whole different mindset. And it's ahh it's-, you want everybody to be open to it.

Ms. Sally also acknowledged that “there's a mixed, a lot of different kind of emotions” emerging among the children, and she highlighted the importance of helping children develop friendships: “I think it helps them succeed better if they have friends because everybody needs to have friendships and develop relationships and you know they just they love talking about their experiences.” As Ms. Sally reminded me, when Anita arrived at the Youngsters’ Club, she looked “very, very, sad and very frightened and just felt very alone.” However, according to Ms. Sally, Anita showed a change in her behavior in a short period of time. Ms. Sally attributed that change to the environment and to the friends Anita made. Ms. Sally said, “we were very lucky to have a couple of girls that she just clicked with when she started.” She also added, “I think being in that loving environment, it's safe and it was constant.”

**Literacy practices are enjoyable and memorable.** During our conversation, Ms. Sally made sure to highlight the importance of providing children with activities they enjoy and can recall as something good in their life. Explaining what she hoped that the children would learn at the Club, Ms. Sally said, “I just hope they have a good-, they've have a good experience, they have good memories. Just to have enjoyed that time for what it was at that time to take back with them.” Ms. Sally’s remarks illustrate that, like Anita’s parents, she hoped that the children that attended the club could take with them more than just learning their ABCs. For her, the aspects of pleasure and memory-making also mattered. Ms. Sally explained, “I think kids learn, retain more if it's fun. You know, make learning fun.”

**Literacy practices include a co-constructed cultural instance and respect to the childhood experiences.** Talking about the emergent bilinguals enrolled in the Youngsters’ Club, Ms. Sally
emphasized the importance of not only thinking about children in terms of their individual cultures but also in terms of the childhood culture they co-constructed together. She said, “I just try to see everyone just as a child, you know, and the age they're at and, you know, what they're going through. I don't always think only about the culture where they're from.” For her, looking at the children as children and knowing about their needs and experiences throughout the process was also fundamental. During our conversation, Ms. Sally also affirmed that she understood the importance of homework, but according to her, “kids need to be kids and they need to play and relax” and “learn from one another.”

**Literacy practices comprise many dimensions.** Ms. Sally seemed to be aware that literacy practices contain many dimensions, but require the education of the whole student. The cognitive dimension was one of them, but there were many other dimensions the seemed to be for Ms. Sally a very important part of it. For example, she showed concern over students’ needs and highlighted the significance of looking at the children’s experiences not only as part of being an apprentice but as part of being a whole human. She explained, “I understand the basics of the literacy: reading and writing. But my whole philosophy about, in general is that, uhm, if kids really-, they need to have self-confidence.” She added, “They have to feel safe and secure,” “They really, they gotta have self-esteem,” “I just want to them to feel safe and happy and relaxed.” During the interview, Ms. Sally not only underscored the importance of these features, but also saw them as the starting point for meaningful learning. She explained,

Ms. Sally: If you don’t have the basics of like self-esteem and your freedom, and, and, how you feel about yourself, you’re not going to learn anything really good. I mean you are going to learn okay but I think children that have confidence and feel good about themselves and they don’t have to worry.

Ms. Sally also talked about the importance for children to know they have someone to count on and that “going to be there every day” for them. She said, “A child who lives in fear is not going to learn… Mh-hmm and they gotta feel love, you know.” Ms. Sally concluded by saying that teaching and learning “it’s about what’s in their heart.”

**Literacy practices at the youngsters’ club: an organized mess.** Unlike the school context, the after-school program provided Anita with lively, creative, energetic, and very engaging activities. At the Youngsters’ Club, Anita found the “Inside-out” way of looking at literacy and practicing it, which seemed to be aligned with Anita’s own ways and purposes of using literacy. A typical day at the afterschool program started around 3:30 pm when the school bus dropped off the children. Prior to their arrival, the staff made sure they had the room arranged and the children’s nametags ready. As the children walked into the facility, the staff reminded the children to put away their things and take a seat in the entry hall for their daily meeting. Ms. Sally explained that the staff called it daily meeting because “the older children don't like circle time anymore (laughter). They're too old for circle time.” During the meeting,
the children talked about events in their communities and the staff reminded the children of the Club’s expectations. This was also a time to introduce someone new, play some type of warm-up game, and sing happy birthday songs for friends.

After the meeting, the children received their snacks and then chose what type of activity they wanted to engage in. Some children chose to have fun outside in the playground or play a board game (e.g., Bingo, Monopoly, Scrabble, Yatzi, Twister, Checkers, Chess, Cards, Memory Games and Guess Who) with friends. Other children chose to get messy playing with clay or some type of art activity. Some children just wanted to sit quietly in a corner and read a book or listen to storytelling, while others preferred to chat with friends. There were also those children whose parents requested that they use that time in the Club to do their homework.

These spontaneous activities fostered opportunities for Anita and her friends to actively participate in many forms of literacy practices. Arts and crafts were among the most popular activities in the afterschool program and also among Anita’s favorites. At the center, Anita and the other children kept busy with the colorful sheets, crayons, and paint that they used to write labels for their marquees. Literacy practices at the Club were not restricted to reading and writing activities. The children were very creative manipulating the old cardboard tubes and pieces of fabric, and combining them with their writing experiences. I was amazed by what they could do with paper, stickers, tape, and clay. They helped each other with the spelling of certain words and with the construction of their art. The Youngsters’ Club was an organized mess, something that is difficult to describe. There were voices, laughter, giggles, dancing, singing, and talking. There were children reading silently or doing their school assignments, all happening at the same time. However, the children continually had not only their hands busy but also their minds focused on their tasks. They did not seem to be bothered by the noise around them. Anita really enjoyed the atmosphere and the activities the program provided.

However, Ms. Sally explained that the dynamism and flexibility observed in the program was something implemented when she started working there. She explained, “When I came to the job, it seem like they had a lot of policies and procedures.” She continued, “The program used to be really structured, very much educational; it was kind of like an extension of school,” she said. Ms. Sally also remembered that the staff had a lot of problems with discipline. Ms. Sally attributed that problem to the strictness of the structure and made clear that she embraced a different philosophy: “I feel that the children need to have choice, especially after having structure all day. They need some free time; it's after school.”

**Literacy practices embracing students’ resources.** At the Youngsters’ Club, children were also invited to bring their cultural and linguistic resources with them. Language was one of them. During literacy practices, the children were welcomed to use the language they felt most comfortable with. Ms. Sally explained that at school, children are already required to speak English and at the Club “I let them
talk to their friends in Chinese and whatever country’s language. I want them to be relaxed, you know.” Ms. Sally emphasized that Anita’s English language proficiency started out very low but that it did not take long for her to see some improvements, mainly because “She [Anita] was open to it” and her parents were both very helpful and supportive of her.” During literacy events, when Anita did not know a word, she could say it in her native language. Sometimes other friends who spoke Spanish would scaffold for her or explain to Ms. Sally. Other times, when the facilitators were not around, Ms. Sally would encourage Anita to express herself and would try to figure out what Anita was trying to say. As Ms. Sally explained, situations like that, “it's like a game and we make it fun.”

It was in this supportive environment of the after-school program, much like at her home, that Anita found opportunity to experience literacy through an “Inside-out” manner and to let her positive identity as a successful learner to develop and to be noticed. Anita was able to talk with friends, draw, play, and use her linguistic resources (English, Portuguese, Spanish) to communicate with her friends, and to facilitate the transition of other Brazilian children who joined the club later in the year. At the club, Anita was allowed to be communicative, expressive, and playful just as she was at home. She was given the power to have control over her learning and the activities she participated. Additionally, the literacy practices at the club were authentic, fun, and purposefully relevant from her perspective. The literacy practices at the club were also very connected with the context of use (e.g., her interest of the cultural activities in the community), which seemed to serve as motivation for more learning, which I explore next.

Current events inspiring literacy practices of reading. The Youngsters’ Club and the members from the housing complex where Anita lived also promoted many parties or activities to celebrate. Baking class, Halloween, Christmas celebration, planting a tree, and watching a movie were some activities in which Anita and her family participated. Because Anita was very interested in events like these, it was very common to find her reading material related to these events. For example, many times, when I arrived at Anita’s home, she was skimming through flyers or asking her parents to read newsletters with announcements of activities that she judged “fun and cool.” She frequently asked her parents for assistance in pronouncing certain words, finding out their meanings and asking for confirmation of her understanding of the content these flyers brought. These types of literacy practices were also constant in Anita’s life.

Next, I turn to the types of literacy practices Anita experienced at home. I illustrate how the parents engaged their child in practices they considered “relevant” and how these literacy practices occurred within the “Inside-out” concept. I offer details of types of activities and resources (e.g., artifacts, language, texts, popular culture) used by the parents when mediating literacy events. Additionally, I investigate the ways Anita’s parents socialized her into activities they believed to be crucial for literacy
learning and development.

**Literacy Practices at Home**

During the time I spent with this family, at home and in the community, it was evident that literacy happened, mostly, to engage Anita in enjoyable and meaningful practices and to fulfill Anita’s own needs and purposes for literacy. The “Inside-out” way of viewing literacy had a strong presence in Anita’s life and in the literacy practices learned at home. Whether in school, in the after-school program or in extra activities around the community, the parents seemed to be very attentive to the core of experiences of Anita. They cared deeply about what type of literacy practices Anita was exposed to, how these practices were being facilitated by individuals in the various contexts where Anita experienced literacy, and mainly how these practices were contributing to Anita literacy socialization.

**Literacy-rich surroundings.** Anita’s parents’ cultural and social capital provided her the opportunity to explore many environments that encouraged literacy and provided her the access to resources that supported her participation in many forms of literacy practices. For example, Anita’s parents not only provided her with access to many books and resources at home, but also consistently invested time in creating activities around reading something enjoyable and spontaneous. Activities involving literacy in Anita’s home were not regulated or mandatory; in Elisa’s words, they “just happened.” At home, the parents themselves spontaneously engaged in reading and writing for a variety of purposes, from social networking to doing their jobs as university professors. In the next passage, Sérgio commented on that:

Sérgio: A gente, por natureza da própria profissão, a gente tem livros em casa, e a gente sempre procurou mantê-los em contato com os livros. Os nossos filhos nunca destruíram um livro em casa. Nossos, que nos temos e que sempre estiveram ao alcance deles. Nós procuramos sempre proporcionar pra eles o acesso aos livros, mesmo quando ainda não liam, material com figuras e tal. Então eles sempre tiveram os seus livros, tiveram acesso.”

[We, because of the nature of our profession, we have books at home, and we always tried to keep them [the children] in contact with the books. Our children never destroyed a book at home. Our books have always been within their reach. We always try to provide them access to books, even when they could not read yet, materials with pictures and such. So they always had books and had access].

This idea of providing their children with access to books did not change during their time in the United States. As I witnessed, Anita often came home with her arms full of books she bought at the bookstores, book fairs, or at the library sales. Visits to the library and literature fairs were also part of the family’s activities together. At the end of our conversation, Elisa also shared what seemed the result of this way of approaching literacy practices at home: “Lionel é apaixonado por livros. Carrega livros pra cima e pra baixo, a Anita já tem aqui quase quarenta livros. A gente tava fazendo a conta essa semana.
Em cinco meses!” [Lionel is passionate about books. He carries books up and down. Anita, here, already has nearly forty books. We were counting them this week. That is only in five months!”]. The parents’ attitude reinforced the central concept in this chapter, the “Inside-out concept,” in the sense that Anita’s interests and motivations are central starting points.

**Drawings and writing in beginning composing practices.** During the time I spent with Anita, I noticed that her literacy practices involved for the most part drawing and labeling. In the living room and on the kitchen walls there were several textual artifacts. Although her English was very limited, Anita was not afraid of taking risks and trying it out. At the beginning of this study, most of her writings used Portuguese or a mix of Portuguese and English. Anita used drawings not only to express herself, but also as a support feature to help her to expand and improve her vocabulary in the second language (English). Slowly, these drawings gained voices, colors, and actions. The characters became alive with words, sentences, and bilingual stories. With time, the English written forms became more common in Anita’s compositions and began to replace her drawings. The next figures capture these assertions:

*Figure 19.* “Artwork,” “Sun and Moon,” “The Lady’s White Dress” (from the left top corner).

In addition drawing and writing were combined in more sophisticated ways in composing comics books. In her out-of-school free time, Anita invested a lot of time in creating characters and the script of their stories. Anita would spend hours concentrating on her drawings and narratives, as illustrated below.
Figure 20. “The Dog Story.”
According to Anita, the creation of the story happened during a dream. When she woke up, she had in mind the characters, their names, and their stories. Anita spoke in great detail and with certain pride about the characters, personalities, characteristics, and their roles in her narratives. She explained “É que eu invento, (Inaud) dai eu escrevo historinhas pra eles.” [I created [the characters] them, then I create stories for them.” The illustration below is the story of “Lililuca’s Folks” and captures some of the aforementioned descriptions:

*Figure 21. “Lililuca’s Folks.”*
Writing for personal reasons and real purposes. At home, for the most part, literacy practices of writing were connected to Anita’s personal interests, related to something authentic and purposefully relevant (from Anita’s perspective). Anita wrote for personal reasons and for real purposes, and usually had real audiences. For example, she wrote to friends back in Brazil to share her experiences in America. Anita also wrote letters to some of her favorite American Idols and bands such as R5 band (an American pop rock band based in Los Angeles) and Katy Perry (American singer). Below is the card Anita received from the R5 band in response to her letter:

![Figure 22. R5 band’s postcard.]

When I asked Anita what she wrote in her letter, she said she wrote the following: “Que eu gosto muito da banda deles. Que é uma banda muito boa e se eles estão aqui, e melhor, eu falei que se eles tâo tendo fun (inaud). [That, I liked their band very much. And that the band is very good and asked if they were here [USA], and better I asked if they were having fun (inaud)]”. I also asked Anita how she found the band’s contact information. According to Anita, she found it on the Internet. Anita’s mother explained that Anita not only wrote the letter to her idols by herself, but also filled out the envelope with the necessary information (the address including street, town, state, postal code), and posted it in the mailbox.

To express her personal feelings, Anita kept a diary where she registered some of her experiences, challenges, and adventures in the United States. Some of the writings she shared with me, but some pieces were, according to Anita, too personal to share. It was evident from my fieldwork that letter-writing literacy was a common practice for Anita.

Anita also used wrote little warning notes in English, like the one illustrated in the next figure. The note was written in English and was inside of the refrigerator by a Brigadeiro (a Brazilian candy made from sweetened condensed milk and chocolate that looks like little truffle balls). The note said, “Warning: My Brigadeiro. Do not eat it!”
Literacy practices to personalize her own space. Among Anita’s artifacts, I found many pieces of poems, song lyrics, and written notes for friends. At her home, I also found postcards she wrote, posters she collected, diaries, calendars, books, board games, and pages printed from the Internet. In addition to that, there were piles of books on the shelf in Anita’s bedroom. Anita used some of these literacy supplies to personalize her room. For instance, on her bedroom wall, Anita created a literacy gallery display. The first item she added was a calendar where she kept some notes about school, assignments and important dates. For example, she had marked down the day she arrived in the United States, the day she got a prize at school, important people’s birthday celebrations, and when she stopped crying at school. She also made note of the American Holidays, how many days were left until the summer vacation, and the last day of class. Anita also had on her wall the school pledge, which she recited by heart, proudly.

Figure 23. Warning: My brigadeiro.

Figure 24. Bedroom wall in the first month of fieldwork.
As is evident from the images above, Anita used literacy pieces, pictures, flyers of popular culture, celebrities, and printed-media materials and her interest in artwork to personalize her own space at home. Additionally, the images above illustrate Anita’s creativity and artistic talents. They also seem to reflect Anita’s intense enjoyment and satisfaction of literacy and highlight the importance of visual literacy elements.

The literacy practices of reading literature books: a story of a passionate reader. During my initial observation of Anita at home, there was something about Anita that really got my attention: her passion for reading. Reading was always among the items on her list of “enjoyable things to do” in her free time. As illustrated in the next figure, her hunger for words and histories, in addition to playing with her friends and watching TV, often registered in her compositions:

![Figure 26. Things I like doing.](image)

Anita’s parents also portrayed her as “uma leitora apaixonada” [a passionate reader]. Elisa elaborated on that:

Elisa: Sempre ela gostou muito disso, assim, brincar com a palavra falada, né, com a oralidade, com a escrita, assim, ela sempre gostou muito disso. Tanto fazer muito trocadilho, de fazer muita piadinha, de fazer muito pegadinha, ela adora isso. Ela tem livros em casa.
[She has always enjoyed, very much, uh, the idea of playing with the spoken words, uh; with-, with oral language, and with writing, uh, she always liked that very much. She likes to tell little jokes and to make little tricks; she loves that. She has books at home]

Similar to the literacy practices of writing, the literacy practices of reading were usually very connected to Anita’s personal interests and to the context in which they needed to be used. At home, Anita read books to enjoy the imaginary possibilities they brought for her. She always spoke with excitement about the stories she was reading and wondered about how they would conclude. She was interested in reading of many types of books including science fiction, historical fiction, chapter books, popular culture comic books, and cartoons. Her relationship with books seemed very personal and spontaneous.

Additionally, Anita seemed very interested in conveying her learning of a second language to real-life use. Therefore, literacy practices of reading was not only limited to book reading, but also about reading texts to learn about events taking place in the community. Besides related to Anita’s interests, these events were also related to something authentic and relevant (e.g., she had to read to get information about an activity that was of interest). It was clear from my observations that Anita’s home was a place where words, books, and knowledge were very welcome. Home was a place where Anita could find support and inspiration for her appetite for words, mainly from her parents.

Talking about literacy and living it. Anita’s appetite for books and her ability to talk about them were admirable. For example, when introducing me to some of the books she had in her “personal” library at home, (at that time, the books were Portuguese ones she brought from Brazil), Anita offered not only a detailed description of the story, but also some comments on the book’s author. Anita also displayed great knowledge about the prizes the book received, and she would say things like, “Esse autor é ótimo” [This author is great] or “Eu amo a coleção dele” [I love his collections], when referring to certain author.

When describing her books, Anita’s focus was almost always on the content of story, the feelings the book brought, and the experiences the book invited her to participate in. During our conversations, Anita often said something like “This is a sad book”, “Esse é engraçado” [This is funny], and “Esse é bonitinho” [This is cute] (referring to the images of the book). When describing her books, Anita also added voices to the characters, music to the background, and sounds to complement her performances of the text. The next excerpts are illustrations of that. These conversations took place at the beginning of this study, around April and May, during one of my first visits to Anita’s home. Anita invited me to see her books. There were three piles of books on the shelf by her bed. Anita took a book from the pile, and one-by-one she introduced them to me:

*Book: Bruxa, Bruxa Venha à Minha Festa (Druce, 2007).*
Anita: “Essa aqui é o Bruxa Bruxa à Minha Festa. (...) Ela é meio doidinha assim, assim, Ela é de uma menina. Acho que era de uma pessoa lá. Daí ela dizia tam tam tam por favor venha a minha festa. Daí as pessoas falavam assim, ‘obrigado,’ mas precisamos convidar outras pessoas. Daí, assim ôh, a bruxa queria convidar o gato, o gato queria convidar o espantalho, o espantalho queria convidar a coruja, a coruja queria convidar a árvore, a árvore queria convidar o duende o duende queria convidar o dragão o dragão queria convidar o pato o pato queria convidar o tubarão o tubarão queria convidar a cobre, a cobre queria convidar o unicórnio o unicórnio queria convidar o fantasma o fantasma queria convidar, o fantasma queria convidar o babuino, o babuino queria convidar o lobo da chapeuzinho vermelho o lobo da chapeuzinho vermelho queria convidar a chapeuzinho vermelho queria convidar as crianças.

Vivian: ahh, então todo mundo foi pra festa?
Anita: sim

[This here is the book ‘Witch, Witch Come to My Party.” (...) She is kind of crazy. She belonged to a girl. I think she belonged to someone there. Then, she said “Tam, tam, tam, please come to my party.” Then the guest would say, “Thank you, but we need to invite other people.” Then, “Oh well, the witch wanted to invite the cat; the cat wanted to invite the scarecrow, the scarecrow wanted to invite the owl; the owl wanted to invite the tree; the tree wanted to invite the elf; the elf wanted to invite the dragon; the dragon wanted to invite the duck; the duck wanted to invite the shark; the shark wanted to invite the snake; the snake wanted to invite the unicorn; the unicorn wanted to invite the ghost; the ghost wanted to invite the-, (pause), the ghost wanted to invite the baboon; the baboon wanted to invite the wolf from the Little Red Riding Hood; the wolf from the Little Red Riding Hood wanted to invite Little Red Riding Hood who wanted to invite the children.

Vivian: [ahh, So everybody went to the party?]
Anita: [yes]


Anita: Eva Furnari. Eu a::doro! “Você troca?” Você toca um gato contente por um pato com dente? Você troca um canguru de pijama por um urubu na cama? Você troca um coelho de chinelo por um joelho de cogumelo? Então, olha só, você troca um leão sem dente por um dragão obediente? (reading) Sabe, rima!

[Eva Furnari. I lo:::ve it! "Would you exchange?" Would you exchange a happy cat for a sick duck? Would you exchange a kangaroo in pajamas for a scavenger under the blanket? Would you exchange a bunny with flip-flops for a mushroom’s knee? Then look here, you exchange a toothless lion for an obedient dragon? You know, it rhymes!] (The literal translation does not capture the rhymes of the original Portuguese phrasing)


Anita: Mico Maneco, Ana Maria machado. Eu vou ter que ver esse daqui, é quase o melhor do mundo!
Mico Maneco, Ana Maria machado. I'll have to see this one; it is almost the best [book] in the world!.

Vivian: Esse é o que?
What is it?

Anita: Mico Maneco.

Vivian: Ah::, o melhor do mundo?

[Ah::, The best in the world?]

Anita: Ah, Eu acho!

[Ah, I think so!]

Vivian: Ah entendi.

[I got it.]


[Maneco is the male monkey. Moná is the female monkey. So he asked for a Bananada [a soft, sweet, Brazilian dessert made with bananas], then he began to play with the Bananada. Then, he was in a car accident while holding the Bananada. Moná asked him to give her cup back and he hit Moná on the head with the cup. And here, look, Mico Maneco, got a little tap on the head [from her]? ‘No. No tap on the head’ (reading). Then, she eats the Bananada with a huge bump on her head. Then, they both ate the Bananada.]

In this way, Anita named many books from the pile, and told me their stories one-by-one. The narratives seemed to come from her mouth very naturally and full of joy. Anita also named many authors, among them, very well known Brazilian’s ones. Among Anita’s favorite authors and books were Bruxa, Bruxa: Venha a Minha Festa (Druce, 1995), Você troca? (Furnari, 2003/2011), Assim Assado (Eva Furnari, 1991), A Cinderela das Bonecas (Rocha, 1998), Mico Maneco (Machado, 2011), and Os Dez Amigos (Ziraldo, 1987/2001).

Participating in literacy practices of literature book in a second language. Another interesting fact to emerge from data analysis was Anita’s seeming consistency in the way she approached reading in Portuguese and in English. Her performative ways of telling stories and the practices involved in describing the books in Portuguese seemed to transfer to the practices in English. For example, when talking about the books she read in English, Anita would often offer detailed descriptions of the books, their stories, awards, and details of the writers’ styles. When talking about the book Library Mouse: A Friend’s Tale (Kirk, 2010), she described it, offering her comments about the content of the book:

Anita: Esse aqui é muito bonitinho. Era de um rato que ele era muito-, ele, o nome dele era, uhmm me esqueci o nome dele (pausa), o nome dele é Sam. Ele era muito, assim, ele tinha muita vergonha de tudo, daí ele não tinha nenhum amigo, mas nessa história ele fez uma amigo. Library Mouse.

[This one is very cute. This was the story of a little mouse who was very-, he, his name was, uhmm I forgot his name (pause). His name is Sam. He was very, uhm, he was very embarrassed with everything. Then he had no friends, but in this story he made a friend.
This was Library Mouse.

When talking about another book, *I Broke my Trunk* (Willems, 2011), Anita explained, “Essa aqui é muito boa. Muito boa!” [This one is very good, very good]. When talking about the book *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!* (Willems, 2004) Anita made sure to add, “Esse aqui é premiado” [This one got an award]. Anita also talked about Dr. Seuss and other Mo Willems’ books. She affirmed loving Willems’s books because he was an author who wrote “histórias muito engraçadas” “very funny stories.”

According to Elisa, Anita was introduced to the Mo Willems collection during an “Elephant and Pig Party” in one of the local public libraries events, and she loved it. The librarian suggested the Mo Willems collection to Anita because it was a good book for beginner reading. According to Elisa, the book rhymed and was funny. Elisa was determined to buy most of the books from that collection to bring back to Brazil.

Anita also had many other books. Among the literature Anita had at home were the following: *The Cat In The Hat* (Dr. Seuss, 1957), *Lorax Pop-Up* (Dr. Seuss, 2012), *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever* (Kinney, 2011), *Princess Matilda* (Montanari, 2010); *We are in a Book* (Willems, 2010), *I Broke my Trunk* (Willems, 2011), *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!* (Mo Willems, 2004), *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* (Mo Willems, 2003), *Don’t Let the Pigeon stay up late!* (Willems, 2006), *Sleepy Bears* (Fox & Argent, 1999), *Me With You* (Dempsey & Denise, 2009), *Sponge Bob Attack Of The Zombies!* (Harvey, Moore, Alexander, Mitchell, Banks, & Hillenburg, 2011), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Twain & Ingpen, 2010), *Library Mouse: A Friend's Tale* (Daniel Kirk, 2010), *Adventures of Biscuit: Five Stories of Everyone's Favorite Puppy* (Capucilli, 2005), *Dick and Jane Fun Wherever We Are* (2000), *On the Day I Died: Stories From the Grave* (Fleming, 2012), *Uncle Martin's big heart* (Watkins, 2010) and many others. According to Elisa, Anita’s mother, Anita had more than 50 books at that time. Anita was introduced to most of these books (e.g., the collection by Moll Willems) at the local public library. Some of these books Anita purchased during her visits to a used booked fair or at the bookstores around her town.

When I asked Anita about her favorite book, she promptly pointed to *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever* (Kinney, 2011), and emphasized the number of pages in the book, “Esse aqui, tem duzentas e poucas páginas” [This one here has two hundred and something pages]. Surprised, I asked her, “Are you going to read all that?” Anita said a “Yes” with lots of conviction. Then, I asked Anita how often she read that book. She said, “Quase todo dia, eu já estou na página quarenta e pouco.” [Almost every day, I'm already on page forty-something]. What time do you usually read? I asked. Anita said, “Eu leio na escola, eu leio quando eu chego.” [I read it at school and I read it when I get home]. As illustrated from above, reading was part of Anita’s everyday life. Diferentelly from school, she did not have to keep records of the amount of pages she had or to be monitored to read. She was very passionate about it and
very motivated to spend some time reading for fun and enjoyment.

At home, Anita’s library kept growing daily, mainly after her frequent visits to the bookstores, book fairs, and library book sales. It is interesting to note that, at home, Anita not only enjoyed reading books but also liked to write about them. She kept some records of most of the stories she read, a type of summary or an annotated bibliography of the stories accompanied by beautiful images to illustrate the story. The image below, collected in late May, shows an example of such writing.

![Image of two journals](image)

*Figure 27. The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog journal and Going to the Fire House journal.*

As the pictures and the descriptions of the literacy events described above illustrate, Anita’s criteria for participation in literacy practices of reading seemed to be very different from the school one. At school the participation in the literacy practices of reading, and, thus, in the Reading Log, had to do with following certain scripted routine, registering information, and focused on the frequency and quantity of reading materials read; at home, Anita’s criteria for participation in the literacy practices of reading included various kinds of practices which involved storytelling, performance, detailed descriptions of the book content, and particularities of the authors’ styles and so on. Additionally, her home Logs included elaborate summaries of the stories supplemented by beautiful illustrations.

**Popular culture interest and American celebrations as literacy resources.** Like many children her age, Anita enjoyed popular culture. The Harry Potter film series and *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (Howard, 2000) were among her favorite movies. According
to Anita’s father, she watched some of the Harry Potter movies more than twice. Throughout the year, Anita also displayed a high level of interest in the content of the American popular TV shows. Her favorite Disney characters, movies, cartoons, and her general interest in popular culture were reflected in her reading choices and also functioned as powerful learning tool. For example, because of her interest in some characters, Anita was often inquiring about new words or expressions from the book. She was also very interested in reading their stories. She also purchased many books related to popular culture at the local library sales. She had thirteen books from the Hannah Montana collection, which included Rock the Waves (Harper, 2008), Keeping Secrets (Beechwood, 2006), and Greetings from Brazil (King, 2009) and many others from that series. Similarly, Anita was also very curious about American culture and costumes; therefore, among her favorites were readings related to American holidays. She constantly checked out books related to these holidays from the library.

**Friendship and literacy.** The analysis of the artifacts also revealed that towards the end of the data collection period in October and November, Anita started checking out books from the school library whose main characters were African Americans, something she had not done at the beginning of the study. These books included, Callie Ann and Mistah Bear (San & Daily, 1999) and The Slumber Party Payback books (Barnes & Newton, 2008). While these books probably did not reflect Anita’s ethnic community, I would argue that based on the friendships she established with the African-American children in her classroom sparked Anita interests in books that portrayed their experiences. This also means that the diversity, which at the beginning of the school year was unfamiliar to Anita, had become part of her life and a source of curiosity and explorations.

**Family literacy encouraging and critical dialogue.** During my observations, I very often noticed that Anita and her parents would engage in long conversations about the books, their characters, or historic facts. These conversations and the oral stories parents shared with Anita about certain historical figures in the United States also seemed to motivate Anita to want to read books and to learn more about those figures and their lives. For example, Anita enjoyed reading biographies and diaries of figures from American History. Among her favorite books brought home from the library I found: the biography of Helen Keller (Davidson & Watson, 1967); Dear America The Journey to the New World: The Diary of Remember Patience Whipple: Mayflower/Plymouth Colony, 1620 (Lasky, 2000); and a biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Bader & Wolf, 2008). Conversations about these biographies would often take place similarly to the one below:

Anita and her parents and I were in the living room talking about books. Anita grabbed the Martin Luther King biography book, and said:
Anita: Martin Luther King biography (reading). This is his biography. I have not read it yet. But I know how he died. Let's see if he (her father) knows this one: What year was Martin Luther King born? (Anita asked to her father).

Sérgio: What year was Martin Luther King born? (pause) I do not know.

Elisa: But I know, because I’m reading the biography.

Anita: aahah ahhahah (laughing)


Anita: This one he will know: ‘In what state was he born?’

Sérgio: Georgia.

Anita: I told you! Look here. (Showing the book)

Elisa: And what was his major? (Asked to Sérgio)

Anita: What was his major? (Repeated the question to her father)

Sérgio: I do not know.

Elisa: hahhahahahha

Anita: ‘Oh, I do not know, oh , I do not know , oh , I do not know , (funny voice/ making fun of her father).

Sérgio: He was a pastor, but I do not know what his major was.

Elisa: There we go! He studied theology at the University of Connecticut.

Anita: I have a degree in everything (playful voice).

Elisa: This book is delightful to read. It is a delight to read! But what surprised me was the story of the woman.

Anita: I will tell it. My father told me.

Vivian: Which woman?

Anita: Rosa, Rosa Parks.

Elisa: You know who she is?

Vivian: No. You have to give me more details, as you would give it to someone who knows nothing about it.

Elisa: It is important.

Anita stood up and started performing the story of Rosa Parks:

Anita: A woman that, chegou no ônibus, do trabalho. Um branco mandou que ela desse o lugar: ‘Me dá o lugar!’ and the lady said ‘Não,’ ‘Me dá o lugar!’
‘Não;’ ‘Me dá o lugar;’ ‘Não.’ (Voice volume increased). Daí ele chamou a polícia e ela foi presa.

Elisa: And what does this story have to do with Martin Luther King?

Anita: Uhm, I do not know (pause) . Was that because she was also fighting for something?

Elisa: Yes, it was at the same time. She also took part in it (history). Then, Martin Luther King met her. She helped in the fight.]

After this conversation, Elisa explained that Anita had bought that book when the family went to the bookstore that week. According to Elisa, when Anita saw the biography, she grabbed it and immediately ran towards her father. Surprised, Elisa asked Anita, “How do you know him [Martin Luther King, Jr.], Anita? “My father told me about him,” Anita said.

The above event illustrated not only one of the many conversations about the books Anita’s family had, but also the common practices around book reading in their home. From the interaction above we can notice the role the parents played in Anita’s taste for reading and in the construction of literacy practices at home. The interaction also shows how the conversations and the oral stories her parents sometimes shared at home influenced Anita’s decisions in choosing books, reading biographies, and, thus, learning about figures and important facts of American history. It illustrated how the parents made the content in the book something provoking, interesting, and fun to talk about. The event above also displayed how Anita not only talked about the stories in the books, but could also find specific pages within illustrations she wanted to share as well as searched for factual information as she challenged her parents with questions about the book. During her narratives, Anita was also able to perform the story, and mix whatever resources she had, such as the mix of Portuguese and English languages.

Building confidence by highlighting the literacy strength. Another point to consider in this case was the way parents facilitated literacy, mainly when approaching Anita’s mistakes. Anita’s parents often offered compliments to her for the work she had done. When participating in literacy practices of writing, Anita’s parents hardly stopped to correct Anita’s pronunciation, except in some cases when Anita found herself stuck in her thoughts and needed help. Anita’s parents’ intension was to keep her connected with the conversation and try to keep her curious about the topic being discussed. When participating in literacy practices of writing with Anita, her parents avoided highlighting Anita’s spelling mistakes. Instead, they used questioning skills or techniques that helped Anita to identify the mistake herself. But, when the parents had to point out some mistakes in Anita’s written or spoken forms, they would do so in a very natural way and very informally. And, sometimes, simple conversations about spelling became
opportunities for teachable moments, which included deep discussions of certain topics or the learning of English grammar features. The next two passages are examples of that.

Anita and her mother were in the living room. Anita was writing some ‘Goodbye cards’ for her teachers and friends when a question about spelling and grammar came out. Elisa looked at one of the cards and said,

Elisa: Tá maravilho!
[It’s wonderful!]
Anita: Mãe como é que escreve “always” de novo?
[Mom, how do I spell “always” again?]
Elisa: a-l-w-a-y-s. (in Portuguese)

Minutes later, Anita raised another question to Elisa. Pointing to the card, Anita asked,

Anita: mas este ‘knew’, assim, existe ‘knew’? de, do, calma aí, daquele k-n-e-w?
[but this ‘knew’, like-, does this word exist, “knew”? for-, for-, wait a minute, that one k-n-e-w?]
Elisa: sabia, o passado de sei?
[Knew, Do you mean the past tense of know?]
Anita: É
[yes]
[yes. The past of this one, ‘I know’ is ‘I knew’]
Anita: É?
[really?]  
(...)  
Elisa: ‘I didn’t knew,’ dai não pode, é dois, é dois, é dois passado.
[‘I didn’t knew’ that is not possible; it has two, it has two past tense]
Vivian: É. ‘I didn’t know’
[yes. ‘I didn’t know’]
Elisa: é ‘I didn’t’ know, ou knew se for no afirmativo.
[yes, use ‘I didn’t know,’ or ‘knew’ if it is in an affirmative form.
Anita: A:::h, então é-, então ‘I didn’t know’ pro passado, pode ser?
[A:::h,Then it is, then I use ‘I didn’t know’ for the past, is that right?]
Elisa: É que o passado já tá no ‘didn’t.’
[Yes, the past tense idea is already in the ‘didn’t’]
(...)  
Anita: Eu não sabia. Eu não sabia.
[I didn’t know. I didn’t know].  

It is worth noting here that the lesson is coming from Anita herself; she is producing and articulating the question and continuing to discuss it even after her mother has told her the correct form. This incident illustrates how using the “Inside-out” view of learning encouraged Anita to think about what she was learning beyond just arriving at the correct answer.

Engaging in multimodal literacy practices. For the most part, activities at Anita’s home were really engaging. Anita sang, drew, read, wrote, played with friends, watched TV, and danced—all things
that she said she loved doing. Anita admitted, “eu adoro dançar,” [I love dancing] and for Elisa that was something that “dá uma alegria na casa” [It brings happiness to the house]. At home, Anita and her mother engaged in a very enjoyable conversation about their favorite songs. They sang together and laughed and had a good time talking about them. At home, literacy practices also happened around many board games available such as Candy Land and jigsaws.

Anita also surfed on the Internet. Among the online resources was Anita’s favorite website: The Club Penguin Disney. According to the website description the Club Penguin Disney is “an ever-changing world where the possibilities to create, socialize, and play are literally endless” (http://www.clubpenguin.com). In Anita’s words, “Ah, é-, é tudo sobre o pinguim. Eu faço esse pinguim coloco o que eu quero nele.”[Ah, it is-, it’s all about the penguin. I make this penguin add whatever I want on it]. Users could access the website in five different languages: Portuguese, French, Spanish, Dutch, and English. When browsing this website, Anita preferred the Portuguese language as the default, but sometimes she would switch it to English. Anita already knew about this website before coming the United States. According to her it was like a “febre!” [a fever!] in Brazil, meaning that most of her friends were a part of it.

Anita also enjoyed navigating at a website called the StarSue, where she could engage in a series of activities related to coloring, makeovers, cooking, puzzles, skills, adventure, hairdressing, and dressing up her beloved characters in their favorite fashions. Zuzulândia, Jogos de Meninas, and FunBrain were also among Anita’s favorite websites. These websites provided Anita with easy tools and motivation to engage with literacy and various practices of writing and reading skills. For example, she was able to personalize her profile and her pages, create her own avatar, add written information about them, and share them with her friends via Internet. When engaged in these types of literacy practices, Anita was also allowed to switch between languages at any time.

All the aforementioned forms of literacy practices had an important role in Anita’s language learning. They not only enhanced her participation in literacy practices that she already loved, but also gave her agency to chose from multimodal resources— colors, movement, sounds, animation, oral and printed literacy— to personalize her experiences according to her taste and preference. Additionally, Anita’s participation in these activities became a form of self-motivated learning about her interests and also about English language. According to Anita, she enjoyed participating in those activities very much and considered them fun and helpful in learning English. Indeed, these popular culture media materials played a significant role in Anita’s engagement, interest, and in the construction of her literacy practices.

**Tensions, Critiques, and Concerns that Arose from School Models of Literacy Practices**

At home, literacy also revolved around Anita’s schoolwork. As expected, literacy learning in a second language and the schooling experience as a whole brought Anita many challenges. Some of them
were the ways the in-school practices began to alter how the participating child experienced literacy at home, and how these practices, in certain way, challenged the parents’ notions of literacy. The discrepancies between in-school practices (focused on “Outside-in” features) and out-of-school practices (focused on “Inside-out” concept) produced tensions for the child and for the family. Next, I explore some of the critiques, concerns, and tensions that arose from those experiences.

**Feeling discouraged and overwhelmed by the school literacy demands.** For parents, the tension began when they noticed that Anita started experiencing certain anxiety around the school assignments. The transition between the third and fourth grades did not seem to happen smoothly for Anita. In fourth grade, the school workload increased significantly and the literacy practices also became more structured and challenging, according to the parents. Anita’s parents seemed to be supportive of the ways teachers decided to frame their lessons as long as Anita did not have a bad experience with the excessive copying and rewrites, explained Elisa. However, with time, the school models of literacy practices began to enter the participating family’s home and appeared to impact how Anita experienced literacy practices in the out-of-school settings, the types of activities she engaged in, and her attitude towards schoolwork, all of which worried her parents.

Towards the end of that year, parents reported perceiving that Anita was less motivated to be in school. They also noticed that she started feeling more overwhelmed with the workload of school assignments and crying became more constant around homework. Not only that, my analysis shows that the personal journals, letters to friends, and the cartoon projects that Anita used to create at home were slowly replaced by the school assignments, which were for, the most part, fill-in-the-blank type of activities. In what follows, I focus on three literacy events that seemed to demonstrate these assertions in different situations at home: math literacy, and literacy practices of school reading.

**Math literacy: beyond knowing numbers and transferring math concepts.** The parents noticed that even mathematics, which they thought would be an easy subject for Anita, was challenging for her. It was noticeable that math literacy practices involved more than just knowing numbers and transferring mathematical knowledge to solve English problems. For instance, Sérgio explained that the math Anita had studied previously in second grade in Brazil went beyond the math she was studying in the United States. However, Anita was still having difficulties with math. For Sérgio, acknowledged that Anita “esbarrou não só no problema da língua, …do enunciado da atividade, né?” [ran into not only trouble with the language… as well as the enunciation of the activity], but affirmed that the main problem seemed to be in “na mecânica das atividades” [the mechanics of the activities].

Anita’s parents observed, for instance, that the way teachers solved certain math problems was different from the way Anita had been taught in Brazil, which made the learning of math very challenging not only for Anita but also for the family. Talking about his experience Sérgio said,
Sérgio: Era uma situação, assim, até complicada pra mim, porque a lógica das atividades, das tarefas, aqui são diferentes. Então a maneira, por exemplo, como são abordados conteúdos da matemática é diferente do Brasil, até o processo, por exemplo, de contagem de contínuas.

[It was a challenging situation for myself. uhm, because the logic of the activities and homework here are different. For example, the way the content is covered in mathematics here is different from how it is in Brazil, even the process of counting during math, for example].

These differences and the need to display the step-by-step scripted ways of showing knowledge for school purposes made the parents think about and reconsider the ways of helping Anita with her assignments. For that reason, Sérgio admitted that helping with homework required much patience and determination mainly because the parents could not just give the answer to certain math problems but they also had to show how the activities were being carried out in the way the teachers had demonstrated in the classroom. This, as I discuss next, was a challenge for the parents and for their child.

For example, I remember one instance when Anita was doing her Math homework with the help of her father, Sérgio. They were working on some homework assignments. The homework booklet had mixed problems to be solved (addition, subtraction, rounding numbers, fractions) and Anita had only two activities left to do. Anita seemed very anxious and overwhelmed. Suddenly, Anita began to fidget and appeared to grow more anxious, saying, “uhm, pai isso aqui não é fácil não, tu não sabes como não é fácil isso,” [Uhm, father this here is not easy, you do not know how this is not easy] and tears ran down Anita’s face. Sérgio said, “tu não sabe fazer minha filha?  Tá não precisa chorar, vem aqui, vamos lá conversar.” [Don’t you know how to do it, my daughter? Ok, there is no need to cry, come here, let’s talk]. Sérgio brought the case to Elisa who came to the room and read the description of the activity and said,

Elisa: É pra circular, circular. (Reading the text on the handout)
[you have to circle that, circle] (Reading the text on the handout)
Sérgio: Acho que nesse caso não significa circular, eu to achando que é pra arendondar.
[I think in this case it does not mean to circle, I'm thinking it means rounding]
Vivian: Arredondar o número?
[rounding the numbers? ]
Sérgio: É arredondar cada numero para o próximo.
[It is rounding each number to the next]
Vivian: o notebook dela não está ai?
[Isn’t her notebook here?]
Elisa: ahm?
Vivian: O notebook dela não esta ai?
[Isn’t her notebook here?]
Elisa: Ela não traz nada pra casa (inaud)
[She brings nothing home (inaud)]

Sérgio turned on his computer to find YouTube videos about how Americans teachers would teach
rounding numbers for fourth-grade children. After watching some videos he chose one to show to Anita. After watching the video, Sérgio concluded “É que tudo isso que tu fez aqui minha filha, não precisava ter feito assim, era muito mais fácil.” [Yeah, my daughter, all this [activity] here that you did, you did not have to do like this. It was much easier]. Anita was not happy to hear that. That meant that she had to solve each of the math problems again. Even after watching the video, Anita was still unsure about the procedures she should take to solve the problems. Elisa and Sérgio sat next to her in order to help her to understand the math problem, and, at the same time, tried to gauge what Anita could do by herself.

During these explanations, the parents used Portuguese language because, according to Sérgio, Anita would “entender melhor,” [understand it better]. They also allowed Anita to respond in the language she felt comfortable using. The parents also modeled, simplified their language, and carefully chose the words they used so Anita could follow their rationale. Additionally, the parents asked questions and gave time for Anita to think about the information being presented. They gave her time to respond to the explanations and also asked Anita to do other the activities after their explanation to see if she could do another problem without their assistance. After the parents finished modeling one activity, Anita looked at the handout on the table, and noticing that all of the activity needed to be redone, she started crying again. Elisa then asked, “Mais agora que achou a solução porque está chorando? [but now that we have found the solution, why are you crying?]” Crying very intensely, Anita went to her room.

Referring to Anita’s attitude, Elisa commented “É, junta o cansaço e o sentimento de incapacidade. É, a gente faz, the best, né? E as vezes não encheram isso! Isso que é bom home literacy (inaude)?” [uhm, it is the tiredness and the feelings of incompetence. Uhm, we do our best, right? And sometimes they [the school] don’t see that! Is that what they consider good home literacy (inaude)?] Very upset about the situation, Elisa explained to me, “Porque que às vezes não é preguiça da criança nem, nem é um descaso da família, que é o primeiro discurso que vem a tona, né? Mas é dificuldade mesmo, né? Concreta.” [Because sometimes, it is not the child’s laziness nor negligence of the family, which is the first discourse that comes up, right? But it is difficulty, right? It’s a concrete [difficulty].

Elisa affirmed that this was not the first time that a situation like that happened. The parents talked about the challenges that these practices brought to them. For example, Elisa said, “Aí não tem o caderno pra referência, não tem outro exercício pra referência, não tem um modelo, entendeu?” [there is no notebook that could be used as a reference, there is no model, you know? ] and “É que a gente se vira, vai atrás, Sérgio pesquisa na internet as coisas, bota vídeo,. Agora isso é um sobre esforço, né. Pra nós e pra ela, né. [ We find ways to help, we look for ways, Sérgio searches things on the internet, shows videos. But all of this is a struggle of us, right? For us and for her, right?]}. Anita’s mother also disclosed, “Eu fico muito chateada vendo ela chorar por causa de atividade porque ela nunca chorou pra fazer atividade. Eu vi que já ta sendo o limite, do cansaço e da dedicação” [I get very upset about seeing her
[Anita] cry because of an activity, because she had never cried about doing an activity before. I saw that this is her limit, her limit of exhaustion and dedication.

**Changing the literacy practice of reading: from the passion for words to the fulfillment of the task.** Another point of tension for the parents was when they noticed that Anita started changing her attitude towards the literacy practice of reading. Specifically, the way Anita started to interact with the readings of literature books at home, in particular with the Reading Log — an activity the school considered extremely relevant for children. The Reading Log was a daily school assignment given by teachers which required the children to register the name of the book they read, the number of pages they read, and the amount of time they spent reading. It also required a parent’s signature verifying the accomplishment of the task. On the weekends, there were additional questions about the book and an assignment to summarize the main points of the book. If the Reading Log was completed, the teachers would stamp it.

While teachers thought the Reading Log brought to the families an important literacy practice (e.g., having kids reading every day at home), the family saw that type of practice not as applicable for Anita, mainly when the fulfillment of a task seemed to be replacing the reading for pleasure and attaching some negatives feeling to reading practice. The parents reported that Anita became very tense every time she had to do her Reading Log activities and started experiencing certain boredom with reading practice. Elisa rationalized, “Muitas vezes eu vejo que ela pega o livro rapidamente a noite assim: preciso fazer Reading Log, preciso fazer Reading Log, então, né, nervosa com o cumprimento da tarefa e não [focada] com o ato da leitura. [I often see that she takes a book quickly at night: I have to do the Reading Log, I have to do the Reading Log. Then, you know, she feels nervous about the fulfillment of the task and not [focused] on the act of the reading].

**Elisa:** E ai pega o primeiro livro que aparece pra fazer o registro e não pra fazer a leitura, entende? E eu quero que a minha filha faça leitura como ela sempre fez: na hora de dormir, por prazer, satisfação.”

[And then she picks up the first book that appears in front of her to do the record and not to do the reading, understand? And I want my daughter to do the reading as she has always done: at bedtime, for pleasure, or for satisfaction.”

While school focus in the “Outside-in” feature of reading, implicitly teaching children that the focus should be given to the fulfillment of task — which entails the focus on frequency, quantity of reading, at home the focus in on the quality of reading and on the experience the text might bring to the participant child.

Besides talking about the “cobrança diária e exagerada” [the exaggerated daily burden] and the various ways the school used to control the student’s accomplishment by being “punido ou premiada” [punished or rewarded], the parents also called into question the features being emphasized during the
literacy practice of the Reading Log. Elisa noticed, for example, that when checking the Reading Log, the teachers seemed to place great importance on the number of pages the children read, if they started and finished reading the same book, and if they filled out the Reading Log worksheet. That, according to Elisa, was not the type of practice that she believed a passionate reader would engage in.

A passionate reader, in Elisa’s opinion, “Escolhe, às vezes descarta, às vezes lê metade, às vezes começa e não tem fim, às vezes lê duas vezes, três vezes, né? …. Já conhece o autor, já conhece, enfim, o estilo. [chooses [a book], sometimes discards it, sometimes reads half of it, sometimes begins reading and reads until the end, sometimes reads twice, three times, you know, a passionate reader does that, right? They already know the author, already know the style]. The Reading Log was not encouraging children to do that. In addition, these practice could be taking away the literacy practices the family believed to be relevant for their child: reading for pleasure, for the content, and for fun.

Additionally, Elisa explained that if the teacher considered Anita’s cultural practices of literacy at home, they would realize that the practices they were delegating as homework were irrelevant for her daughter, mainly because they would notice that, “Anita é uma criança que desde pequena lê por prazer, lê por satisfação.” [Anita is a girl that, since she was a little kid, reads for pleasure, reads for enjoyment.]. Elisa explained that Anita read every day and that is something she loved. For Anita, reading, “Não é uma prática escolar é uma pratica de vida entendas?” [It is not a school-practice but a life practice, do you understand?]. Elisa thought that teachers should know more about their students’ experiences before establishing mandatory assignments like these. She said,

Elisa: "Então, eu acho que as professoras tem que conhecer mais a vida das crianças, mais as práticas culturais das crianças, e não partir do pressuposto de que é porque a criança não lê, né, que a criança não se interessa, que a criança não tem prática ou hábito de leitura. [So I think that the teachers have to know more about the lives of children, and their cultural practices, and not assume that a child does not read, you know, that a child is not interested, nor assume that a child does not have [literacy] practices or practice of reading].

Elisa concluded:

“Eu ficaria muito triste de vim prum país que eu considero que é um país que leva a, a, a, leitura muito a serio, né, que tem tantas políticas de leitura e que as crianças tem tanto acesso a livros e biblioteca, justamente aqui a minha filha tivesse ou desenvolvesse um desgosto, pela leitura né. Pra mim seria muito triste ver isso assim” [I would be very sad to come to a country, a country I think that takes uhm, uhm, uhm, reading very seriously, uhm, and that has so many reading policies, and where children have so much access to books and libraries, and right here my daughter had or developed a aversion for reading, right. It would be very sad for me to see something like that happen]
Another reason why Elisa saw the Reading Log as unnecessary was that these practices could have “efeito contrário” [the opposite effect] and could change Anita’s perspectives on the role of reading and its purpose. Elisa explained,

Elisa: Ela pode ter o efeito contrário porque daqui a pouco a minha filha, que é uma leitora e que gosta, que é apaixonada por isso, pode achar muito chato, pode achar desagradável, vira uma tarefa escolar, sem sentido. E eu gostaria muito que a professora cuidasse isso.

[It can have the opposite effect because, soon, my daughter who is a reader who likes it, who is passionate about books might find them very boring, she may find it unpleasant, and it [reading] turns into a school assignment, meaningless, and I would like it very much that teacher cared about that]

As the excerpt above illustrates, the parents thought the pressure and the focus on the registering of the information was teaching Anita that “reading was boring” and making reading practices a mere “official” school activity, and that was a concern for the parents. The passage also shows that parents cared not only about the type of practices their child was experiencing at school, but also about the feelings these practices were generating (e.g., negative feelings or experiences associated with reading). Parents saw enjoyment and engagement as a very important component of literacy. In other words, the parents cared deeply about the ways teachers were socializing their child into certain practices of literacy, and expressed concern about the effects of those practices on their child.

During the interview, Elisa affirmed she was not against the idea of having children keep a Reading Log and complete the activity. She explained that she understood that the teacher’s role was to assign homework and to make sure that the children read at home, but she thought that teachers needed to be conscious about “o nível dessa cobranças, as formas dessa cobrança, e acima de tudo ela tem fazer cobranças pautadas na história da criança, né?” [The level of their requirements, the way they do it, and above of all, make those requirements based on the history of the child, right?]. Here Anita’s mother articulated her belief in the “Inside-out” view of literacy as she explained the importance of considering each student’s personal experiences and background when assigning reading.

Anita’s reading assignments did not reflect her history as a reader. The teacher did not reach out to the parents to learn about her literacy practices were home. Elisa said, “Niguém nunca me perguntou nada sobre a Anita” [Nobody ever asked me anything about Anita]. While Elisa said she would have liked to tell the school about her daughter’s practices at home, she could not do so because of her limited English proficiency. Very upset, Elisa also described that the school’s attitude towards homework could be understood in terms of bias; she said, “Eu posso partir do pressuposto que é preconceito né? Porque se é uma criança que vem do Brazil, terceiro mundo, não lê, não tem acesso a livro, não gosta, as famílias não se interessam, sabe?” [I can assume that it is bias, right? Because it is a child who comes from Brazil,
a third world, does not read, or has no access to the book, or dislikes it, or that the families do not care, you know.” Elisa’s sense of “bias” reveals her experience of common American assumptions and lack of knowledge about literacy practices in other cultures.

This conversation prompted Elisa to get a book (Readers’ Response Notebook) from her shelf. This book was a present to Anita from her friend Kate who had left for Taiwan. Holding the book in her hands, Elisa said, “esse aqui eu acho que tem mais valor que o reading log pra mim.” [I believe that this one here has more value than the reading log. She explained that when Anita received that present, she had spontaneously started engaging in reading and writing activities, reading more stories and rewriting them. “Então ela fez, uma, duas, três, quatro, cinco, seis, sete, oito, nove, ... Dez estórias que ela leu em casa recontou, assim, fez um parágrafo e desenhou.” [So she [Anita] did one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ... Ten stories that she read at home, recounted, uhm, wrote a paragraph and drew them].

These experiences also illustrate how the parents conceptualize literacy (Inside-out concept) and how their goals and purposes for engaging Anita in literacy practices differed from those of the school (which is for the most part focused on the “Outside-in”). The examples presented in this chapter reflect the parents’ “Inside-out” perspectives and expectations on literacy and education.

Conclusion

In this chapter we were able to learn, about parents’ cultural capital and how they were enacted in everyday literacy practices and life. It has also shown how the parents mediated and facilitated literacy practices and led Anita to many rich literacy activities at home and around the community that they deemed to be relevant for learning. The findings reveled that in the out-of-school contexts (e.g., home and the after school program), individuals’ notions of “relevance” were at the root of the “Inside-out concepts.” For example, the family of the participating child, Anita, was concerned with the core of Anita’s experiences. For them, the priority was that Anita had positive experiences with language and literacy and developed positive feelings about literacy and learning experiences. The family believed that with positive experiences and positive feelings, learning content and language would inevitably happen as Anita progressed in school. Anita’s parents also placed a high importance on the literacy events Anita participated and on the way these events were facilitated by individuals involved in Anita’s experiences with literacy. It illustrated the challenges that the participating child and her family experienced when the school forms of literacy started influencing the forms of literacy the family believed significant and relevant for their child. Next, I engage in the discussion on the major findings and offer implications of this study.
CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I highlighted the critical issue of a Brazilian emergent bilingual’s literacy learning in and out of school context. This study aims to understand the complexity of culturally relevant literacy practices and literacy learning in a second language setting. I designed a qualitative case study and observed literacy practices taking place in the school, at home, and in the community and asked: What types of the literacy practices and resources were considered culturally relevant for supporting the second language literacy learning of the Brazilian emergent bilingual child participating in this study? My study also developed around the following subquestions: What type of literacy practices was the participating child, Anita, experiencing in the school environment? What types of literacy practices was the focal child experiencing in the out-of-school environment? Across in and out of school contexts, how did culturally relevant practices and resources figure into the everyday practices of the participants?

Using these questions to organize this chapter, I present next a summary and discussion of the major findings, using the main themes of each chapter. I argue that the “Inside-out” concept of literacy can be a starting point for critical understanding of the culturally relevant literacy practices for children. I also argue that is essential to take into consideration individuals’ conceptualizations of literacy and, thus, “relevance” mainly because the concepts individuals hold about literacy and “relevance” undergird the ways they experience and facilitate literacy, and most importantly, the ways they socialize children into practices they judge to be relevant. Throughout this chapter, I also reinforce the importance of understanding the children’s social worlds and their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992). I end this chapter by presenting the implications of this study and my thoughts about future research.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the intention of my study was not to provide scripted ideas of activities and practices for all the Brazilian children enrolled in elementary schools in the US. My intention was to offer a portrayal of the different ways the participating child, her teachers, and parents conceptualized and enacted literacy. I wanted to learn with their stories. Therefore, this case study was about understanding literacy as it was practiced within home and school and reveal the complexity of promoting culturally relevant education for culturally diverse children.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

To answer the question regarding the type of literacy practices the participating child experienced in the school environment, I discuss the findings from chapters four and five.

In chapter 4, I illustrated the two major research findings of this study: the “Inside-out” and “Outside-in” concepts, which seemed to undergird participants’ notions of “relevance,” literacy, and,
thus, culturally relevant practices. Using the ideological model of literacy introduced by Street (2000), the sociocultural perspective on literacy (e.g., Hymes, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978) and Freire’s (1972) positions that children should actively take part in the pedagogical and instructional decisions in school, I framed what I called the “Inside-out” concept. This concept looks at “relevance,” and thus, culturally relevant practices, as emerging from learners’ needs and presumes a sociocultural view of education. That is, the participants who embraced an “Inside-out” stance considered mostly the learners’ sociocultural needs as well as their emotional and personal resources (e.g., culture, language, motivation, values) as a starting point for meaningful and relevant educational experiences.

Additionally, I discussed what I called the “Outside-in” concept as the one that sees “relevance,” and thus, culturally relevant practices, as emerging from “outside” features (e.g., language skills, vocabulary, grammar, content), mostly connected with the school’s demands instead of allied with the child’s resources. I used the autonomous model of literacy presented by Street (2000) to reflect on the “Outside-in” concept that, similarly to Street’s model, seems to adopt a “neutral and universal” (p.7) view of literacy and relevance and often reflects what Freire (1972) describes as the banking approach form of education. In this sense, ‘relevance’ is not considered to be coming from the children, but rather from those specialists who, for most part, decide how, when, and what to do with those learners. Anita negotiated these concepts—“Inside-out” and “Outside-in”—between different contexts within her school and home environments.

The findings presented in chapters four and five, within the school context lead us to three major themes: literacy and social practices; philosophy of teaching and literacy practices at school; and socialization and identity.

**Literacy as Embedded in Children’s Social Practices**

This case reveals that literacy, and thus, culturally relevant pedagogy is rooted in the children’s social practices of literacy (Heath, 1982, 1983; Hymes, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978) and starts from the “Inside-out.” This research made visible that reading and writing, and second language learning, was embedded in the sociocultural practices of Anita’s literacy—or literacies—and also inseparable from the discourses that surround her (Gee, 1991). When Anita entered school, her first intention seemed to be to socialize, to make friends, and to feel good about herself. She wanted to share her worldview with friends and explore the meanings of the new social context. Slowly, through participation in this new social environment, she made friends; broadened her networks, exchanged cultural and linguistics resources, and combined experiences with her peers to construct many other forms of participation in practices that were relevant for them. Together, and through social interaction, the children shaped their language abilities, their culture, and also their identities as learners.

As I illustrated in chapter four, when Anita entered school she brought with her not only her
social practices of literacy, but also her notion of literacy and relevance. For example, from her
perspective, literacy practices that appeared to be “relevant” involved trust, caring, and close relationships
(with teacher, peers, and parents). Anita also saw relevance in literacy activities that were multimodal and
allowed her to exploit familiar practices and make use of her cultural and linguistic resources (e.g.,
language). Anita saw relevance in practices that were more socially driven and ones usually scaffolded by
friends. The literacy practices that were authentic, fun, and purposefully relevant for her were usually
connected with the context of use (e.g., her interest in experiencing the culturally situated experiences in
America and learning about other people’s culture and way of life). The aforementioned components
were embedded in what I called the “Inside-out” concept to literacy practices, and thus, in culturally
relevant practices, in the sense that they highlight features (inside features) that were essential from
Anita’s perspective to grow as a child and as a learner. The “Inside-out” concept undergirded Anita’s
notions of literacy and “relevance.” Additionally, for Anita, culturally relevant instruction did not seem to
depend exclusively on “what” teachers were doing in their classrooms, but on ‘how’ they were facilitating
their practices.

However, as illustrated in chapter four, not all the participants in the school setting seemed to
either understand Anita’s needs or approach literacy as she did, except for Ms. Cool, the school social
worker, who had a very important role in understanding and pursuing Anita’s “Inside-out” needs. Ms.
Cool seemed to recognize and support the elements Anita tended to value and prioritize (e.g.,
relationships, enjoyment, connections to her interests). Therefore, through a Friendship Group project—a
group created to promote friendship among the girls with similar challenges and to integrate them into the
new school community—Ms. Cool was able to create an empowering environment where Anita felt safe
to share her experiences, take risks, and make her learning more relevant from her perspective. The
activities that took place during the Friendship Group were collaborative and social in nature, involved
group work, and were for most part scaffolded by friends. Because she strongly believed in the
importance for having the students “dream about the future” and set plans and goals in life, Ms. Cool
encouraged the children to draw their dreams in their assignment so they could look back to it later in life
and remember what they had wished for. Ms. Cool also reached out to Anita’s parents and tried to learn
with them how she could be helpful in assisting Anita and thus make her experiences meaningful. In other
words, Ms. Cool relied on the parents’ and Anita’s funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) as a powerful
resource to provide her with a meaningful schooling experience. Ms. Cool was one of those educators
who create possibilities for their students to reflect on their experiences and transform their social realities
(Freire, 1972). It also illustrated how pedagogical practices and attitudes can validate, support, and
empower the students to do well in school (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Anita’s parents not only recognized
Ms. Cool’s significance in Anita’s learning experience, but also attributed Anita’s motivation and
engagement in literacy events at school to Ms. Cool.

**Philosophy of Teaching and Literacy Practices at School**

The findings presented in chapter five made visible how the ways teachers conceptualized their literacy practices and the ways they enacted their lessons in the classroom were different from one another. Contrary to Ladson-Billings’ (1994) study that found teachers’ concepts of literacy reflected in their practices, the findings of this study revealed that the participating teachers displayed knowledge of some tenets of culturally relevant literacy instruction, but in their classroom, their ideas about relevant literacy practices were strongly determined by school demands and their own cultural models, beliefs, which seem to include their own school socialization.

Throughout their lessons the participant teachers operated through a cognitive instruction orientation (see Chomsky, 1972). Therefore, since literacy practices in their classrooms aimed to meet the school’s agenda and to meet each teacher’s notions of what was “relevant” to know, these practices had little to do with the particularities of the students or what was purposeful for them. Hence, in school the participating child experienced many forms of literacies that were constantly challenging and seemed to lack relevance from her point of view. This case also illustrated that it is hard for children to see relevance in learning when the literacy practices they experience are scripted and regulated, and if “the meaning intended by their worlds” (Dyson, 1989, p. 255) was not taken into consideration. However, despite their differences, the teachers seemed to have some things in common: the way they approached literacy instruction—from an “Outside-in” stance—and the way they seemed to socialize children into literacy practices.

**Approaching literacy instruction from the “Outside-in” stance.** As I explored in detail through chapter five, the “Inside-out” concept did not seem to be displayed often by the teachers, who for the most part, seemed to operate in an “Outside-in” stance. That is, for these teachers the school’s notions of literacy and “relevance,” as well as their emphasis during instruction usually had to do with the specifics of the scripted curriculum, which was perceived as the primary necessary knowledge for the children. Additionally, not all teachers’ practices seemed to reflect aspects of the culturally relevant pedagogy proposed by researchers such as Ladson-Billings (1994) and Gay (2000). The teachers’ instruction focused, for the most part, on teaching the “skills” and on delivering the content students should know. And these features seemed to be the priority even if teaching was delivered through activities that were deliberately authoritarian (e.g., fourth-grade ESL classroom), drill-based (e.g., fourth-grade mainstream classroom), disconnected from the students’ background knowledge (e.g., third-grade mainstream classroom), and lacking purposeful relevance from the students’ perspective (e.g., third-grade ESL classroom). In other words, the teachers tended to emphasize the autonomous models of literacy (Street, 2000) and their practices reflected, for the most part, the banking concept of literacy learning.
That is not to say that the participating teachers did not display awareness of an “Inside-out” concept of literacy and pedagogy or that they did not have “Inside-out” moments in their classroom. They did. During the interview, the teachers also emphasized the importance of using teaching strategies in their classroom such as small group work, pair work, experiments, hands-on, field trips as well as resources that could facilitate students learning (e.g., realia, charts, videos, language) and make their instruction more meaningful for their students. The teachers seemed to have vibrant ideas of teaching and learning, and good intentions. For instance, Ms. Nat reported that literacy practices involved enjoyment, love, and engagement. She talked about the importance of differentiating instruction, using visual aids and gestures to engage students, and pushing them towards comprehension. Inspired by her own experiences with second language learning, Ms. Rose spoke about the importance of being aware of how to work with bilingual children in order to avoid biased assumptions. She also emphasized the significance of having the students be “creative thinkers” and to have their emotional needs addressed. Ms. Tina talked about the importance of understanding students’ needs and making instruction “fun.” Ms. Carol spoke about the significance of exploring topics through inquiry, differentiating instruction, experiential learning, using techniques such as slower pace, and playing the role of the facilitator. However, these teachers’ pedagogies frequently involved literacy activities focused on conditioning and repetition (see Skinner, 1953). Thus, language learning and literacy activities, for the most part, emphasized linguistic competence, implied cognition and highlighted behavioristic models.

**Socialization and Identity**

Besides their similar ways of approaching literacy instruction from the “Outside-in” concept, another commonality among the participating teachers was the way they were socializing children into literacy practices they found relevant. Inside each of these four classrooms, Anita and her classmates were being socialized into forms of literacy that were, for the most part, very regulated, teacher-centered, and separated from the context in which young children use them. These children were socialized to follow the teacher’s expectations and to be focused, quiet, and thus, dispassionate and compliant. The literacy events these children were invited to experience in the classroom were oriented towards activities that were focused on the demonstration of their literacy skills which included correcting their work, fixing it, making it neat, and performing well in tests.

The children were also being socialized to perform in similar ways in these classrooms. When engaged with reading and writing activities, they were being “trained” to place importance, for the most part, on “Outside-in” features of literacy and on finding the “right answer.” At school, children were being trained that, when reading (e.g., Reading Log), they should place importance on frequency of reading, amount of pages, fluency, and length of reading time. They were also learning that what matters...
the most in their writings is the way they display their written messages—free from grammar mistakes—instead of the idea they are trying to convey.

These practices and their subsequent ways of socialization came to represent, in a way, a set of standards that are taken as “ideal” forms of literacy, which the students were asked to follow and which the parents were asked to support. Hence, setting standards and socializing children from an “Outside-in” stance—without knowing the students’ various funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), and the many cultural tools that children possess (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Vygotsky 1978)—might bring students more harm than good: It might affect classroom practices in ways not intended, it might affect students’ identity formation in negative ways; and it might interfere and conflict with what parents see as “relevant” literacy practices.

**Affecting classroom’s practices in ways not intended.** When school socialization comes to represent a set of standards that are taken as “ideal” forms of literacy, it may affect teachers’ practices in ways that are not intended. For example, the instructors might teach to address the standards and to what they see as ideal, ignoring other forms of literacy. Beyond that, it may perpetuate hegemonic views of what is “ideal” and relevant when it comes to literacy practices of children. That might constrain not only what teachers can bring to their lessons, but also what the students can bring to the classroom.

Additionally, as this study made visible, literacy activities that the teachers designed to be “ideal” did not always turn out to be that ideal for the students. For example, as I illustrated in chapter four, the fourth-grade ESL teacher who focused on hands-on and experiential learning and activities, all seemingly ideal methods of teaching, still could not make her instruction meaningful for the students due to her demands, expectations, and authoritarian figure. On the other hand, literacy practices like the third-grade ESL classroom’s copying and repetition, which did not seem that effective for students as general methods, ended up providing more opportunity to be engaging and involved, and thus relevant from the students’ perspective when the students were allowed to work in groups and facilitate each other’s work. Therefore, attention should be given not only to what to do in the classroom, but also how we do it.

**Affecting students’ identity in negative ways.** When a set of standards is taken as “ideal” forms of literacy, it might affect students’ identity in negative ways. As chapters four and five illustrate, when the focus is on the “Outside-in” features and on the “ideal” forms of literacy, teachers seem to be left with little space to focus on what should be the heart of their concerns and their teaching: the students. As a result, the students may feel invisible, fearful, and lost as Anita felt, which impacted her identity as a learner.

While in Brazil and outside of school walls, Anita held the status of a good student and at home the status of a “passionate reader;” at Villa America Elementary School she had the status of a slow learner and failing student highlighted. Her disappointment with the lower test performance, the
participation in some of the classroom activities (e.g., fourth-grade ESL classroom) in which she was asked to write the exit slips without having developed the decoding skills in English, or her involvement in reading and writing activities used as a form of punishment for not knowing “the right answer” made Anita very anxious and her self-esteem as learner seemed very low.

The only person at school that seemed to reinforce Anita’s positive identity as a learner was Ms. Cool who focused on Anita’s strengths instead of her weaknesses. By doing so, she was able to promote and emphasize the diversity of resources Anita was bringing to school and, thus, engage her in a meaningful schooling experience.

Affecting the sociocultural practices of the family’s literacy. When a set of standards are taken as “ideal” forms of literacy, it might dismiss many other rich literacy forms and resources that the learners experience outside of the school. It might also interfere with the family sociocultural practices of literacy. As illustrated in chapter five, in each classroom Anita found ways to enact the literacy expected and promoted by the teachers. For example, she understood that in the fourth-grade ESL classroom she had to present neat and mistake-free work, and therefore she spent a long time completing her assignments. Anita knew that what seemed to matter the most for her teacher was the amount of pages she read and the frequency and number of books she added to her Reading Log. Therefore, she made sure to complete the assignments and recordkeeping of her Logs precisely. She also made sure to include in her Logs mainly books that were in agreement with the teachers’ tastes and expectations instead of choosing something she enjoyed reading. In the third-grade ESL classroom, although she did not seem to agree with the copying methods used by her teacher, she worked hard to copy the words five times each, just as was expected. Anita also devoted much of her playtime outside of school—time which used be dedicated to the creation of her comic books and stories—to finish her homework. She also made sure to keep silent and follow the expectations in the third-grade mainstream classroom—all this in order to please her teachers and do what was relevant for them in addition to getting some extra points to guarantee good grades.

With time, these school practices started entering Anita’s home and impacting her rich-literacy practices as well as challenging what Anita’s parents judged “relevant” forms of literacy. As I illustrated in chapter six, the in-school practices began to modify how the participating child experienced literacy at home and mainly how she engaged with and felt about literacy. I will explore this topic in more detail in the next subsection.

Types of Literacy Practices in the Out-of-School Environment

To answer the question regarding the type of literacy practices the participating child experienced in the out-of-school environment, I discuss the findings from chapter six which lead to three major themes to be discussed next: Beyond the basic: the parents’ philosophy of learning and literacy practices; out-of-
school practices comprised by many dimensions, modes, and connected to childhood culture and interest; and crossing borders: “outside-in” entering home.

**Beyond the basic: The parents’ philosophy of learning and literacy practices.** The findings in chapter six reflected the Anita’s parents’ “Inside-out” perspectives and expectations on literacy and education. The “Inside-out” concept and approaches to literacy learning involved the parents’ effort in providing Anita with an education that went beyond the acquiring of linguistic capital. They hoped to provide her with an education with humanitarian principles so she could be prepared to understand and respect diversity, appreciate differences, and to contribute to a better society. Anita’s parents trusted that literacy required flexibility and focus on the process. The findings presented in chapter six show that Anita’s family had plentiful knowledge and personal experience with literacy. Similar to the studies by Delgado-Gaitan (1992), Purcell-Gates (1996), Orellana et al. (2003), Anita’s family engaged her in a diverse and relevant set of practices at home and in the community. And, similar to the parents in Volk and De Acosta’s (2001) and Valdés’ (1996) studies, Anita’s parents also supported Anita’s literacy learning using a variety of resources and engaged in many other non school-related activities. They supported Anita’s engagement with popular culture, including comic book reading, pictures, movies, and online resources. The family also read print-media materials and flyers from the community events, and supported Anita’s interest in writing to celebrities and using artwork to personalize her bedroom. All these practices were very powerful learning tools for Anita.

Her family also drew from her personal, family, and community resources to support Anita’s literacy learning in the first and second languages. The first language was also used as a resource to facilitate the learning of English. Anita also transferred her literacy practices (e.g., reading literature books) from Portuguese to English. She explained that she did not understand all the English words in the literature books but she would read for the “context.” Besides providing Anita with rich-literacy surroundings, the parents also engaged her in a variety of culturally relevant practices that involved literacy in the community and traveling around the country.

Anita’s parents also believed that literacy practices should involve freedom of choice, guidance, and a stimulating environment where children could get involved in critical dialogue with the read materials or written text. For Anita’s parents, literacy practices should involve the focus on the children and on the core of their experiences as well as on the feeling that those experiences bring to the children, mainly because they understood that the literacy practices that children experience today would determine the choices of tomorrow. Therefore, Anita’s parents understood literacy as a means for transformation, consciousness, and deeper level of socialization, which aligns with the ideas “Concientização,” transformation, and the social change proposed by Freire (1972).

As illustrated in chapter six, for Anita’s family the focus on the “Inside-out” concept was
something that happened without a designed or deliberate structure. There was no prescribed and controlling way of dealing with the literacy events around home. The “Inside-out” concept was really connected with the family’s way of living and culture. For instance, as the findings illustrated, the culture represented by home and in other contexts out of school (e.g., The Youngsters’ Club) was easy-going, engaging, connected with the participating child’s interests and very focused on making the focal child’s experience enjoyable. Anita’s family’s “Inside-out” vision of literacy and relevance aligned with what many researchers (Freire, 1972; Gay 2000, 2002; Ladson-Billing, 1992, 1994, 1995; Nieto, 2010a) have envisioned as a culturally and linguistically relevant schooling. That is, literacy practices should be engaging, participatory, meaningful, multidimensional, validating, caring, liberating, empowering, and transformative. Anita’s parents’ viewpoints and everyday practices seemed to reflect most of these elements.

**Out-of-school practices comprised by many dimensions, modes, and connected to childhood culture and interest.** For the most part, literacy practices in the out-of-school contexts allowed the participating child the freedom to explore, create, choose, and construct her own experiences with literacy. Literacy practices in these settings were usually socially constructed and mediated by a caring relationship. In addition, literacy practices were also scaffolded by many people in many different domains (e.g., home, friends, community members, after school program) in ways that seemed to make learning relevant to the participating child. This study aligns with the one by Volk and De Acosta (2001) in that children engage in many co-constructed literacy activities.

Anita’s parents were also great supporters of many other activities in the community: the storytelling events, the Portuguese playgroup, and The Youngsters’ Club, the afterschool program. The club seemed to operate through a similar concept as Anita’s parents (“Inside-out” stance). As for Anita’s parents, for Ms. Sally literacy was comprised of many dimensions. Literacy practices should be enjoyable and memorable. It should also be a co-constructed, as well as respectful of the childhood experiences. With that in mind, Ms. Sally was able to embrace Anita’s needs and to create a space for Anita to use cultural and linguistic resources. At the club, Anita engaged in inspiring literacy events, which were usually connected with current activities around the community, and thus, related to Anita’s interests. Anita also had opportunities to experience things that all children like to experience: to be playful, to make friends, and to be free to be simply a kid.

Anita’s parents were continuously considering what those literacies were bringing to Anita’s life besides learning English language or certain features of the curriculum. The parents emphasized the importance of having Anita engage with experiences that would not only expose her to a variety of written forms (e.g., literature books) but also strengthen her enthusiasm for reading. Therefore, the family cared about providing Anita not only with the opportunity to read for herself, but also with the
opportunity for her to read to others and through that action to understand that reading can convey meaning beyond the text. That is, reading can make someone feel good, cheer up, or change his or her mood, and that brings a rewarding experience not only for the listener but also for the reader. For all these reasons, the parents were great supporters of many other activities in the community.

Crossing borders: “Outside-in” entering the home. Anita’s case illustrates how literacy practices considered relevant by some individuals might not have the same relevance for others. Therefore, literacy practices we design for the students and not with them end up resulting in outcomes not expected. The findings also suggest that even highly educated parents struggle with understanding and assisting their child with school assignments. As illustrated in chapter six, when school literacy intersected with the literacy practices from home, it brought many challenges to the participating family. Despite the parents’ efforts and rich cultural capital, the inconsistencies between in-school practices (focused on “Outside-in” features) and out-of-school practices (focused on “Inside-out” concept) produced tensions for the child and for the family. Similar to Delgado-Gaitan’s (1992) study, this case revealed that the participating family engaged in many types of literacy events until the amount of work assigned by the school created a burden for the parents. In this case, it was not because parents were unfamiliar with the nature or content of the assignments like in Delgado-Gaitan’s study, but because of the way the parents and the child were asked to display the activities and the different goals and ways of socialization school and parents had.

For example, Anita started experiencing anxiety around the school assignments and felt discouraged and overwhelmed by the school demands. The parents also felt overwhelmed with the amount of assignments they had to engage in and with the mechanics of some of the math activities which required them to display the step-by-step scripted ways of showing knowledge and with which they were not familiar. Anita’s parents also noticed that Anita started changing her attitude towards the literacy practice of reading literature books at home. The parents perceived this attitude as being linked to the way Anita was been socialized into the literacy practices of the school Reading Log. The Reading Log, an activity that was highly recommended by the school and considered extremely relevant for children, ended up not meeting that purpose for Anita who began experiencing boredom with reading practice because of the fulfillment of the Logs. According to the parents, the Logs seemed to be replacing reading for pleasure with reading for obligation, and reading with focus on the possibilities it brought to her was replaced with reading for the purpose of registering information on the slip. Therefore, this school practice was attaching some negative feelings to reading activities. This case highlights the danger in assigning activities to the students based on the assumption that children do not engage in literacy events outside the school. This case also calls for a better understanding of the types of activities and knowledge about literacy practices in which diverse populations engage.
Literacy at Home and School

To answer the question regarding how culturally relevant practices and resources figured into the everyday practices of the participants in and out of school, I considered and compared the findings from the chapters four through six. In comparing how participants who enacted literacy practices in similar ways across sites, I discuss how these commonalities reveal a shared sense of culturally relevant literacy practices.

This case indicated that literacy events within home and school context were somehow similar, but their practices varied and had different meaning for different participants. For some participants, notions of literacy, “relevance”, and, thus, culturally relevant practices had emerged from the “Inside-out” concept, while other participants relied, for the most part, on the “Outside-in” concepts. When we look at the findings from these participants across settings, it is possible to compare the following. On the one hand, for the participants who enacted literacy from an “Inside-out” approach, cultural relevance involved educating the whole student. That means that their notions of culturally relevant practices went beyond providing the students with relevance in order to comprehend the curricular items and to succeed academically. Their visions reflected their hope to educate the students to their full capacity so they could succeed academically, personally, and in life. Therefore, they considered the social and emotional aspects of education in addition to the cognitive aspects of learning as well as incorporated more humanistic approaches in their literacy practices. They perceived learning as flexible, inclusive, and an ongoing process, and saw the importance of building assurance by often highlighting the students’ strengths and accomplishments. The participants who enacted literacy from an “Inside-out” approach seemed to conceptualize culturally relevant literacy practices involving freedom and a stimulating environment where children could feel secure and accountable. They recognized the importance of school assignments, but also emphasized the importance of the childhood experience by highlighting the idea that “children needed to be children.” In addition to placing the child as the subject of learning (Freire, 1972), they served as models instead of “trainers.” They promoted learning by doing and by being passionate. That means they followed the child’s interest and promoted learning as connected to the context in which it was being used. These participants surrounded the students with resources that were meaningful for them as learners. These individuals cared for the students’ satisfaction and, thus, promoted literacy for enjoyment, focusing on the meaning and on process of language and literacy learning as opposed to focusing solely on its final product.

The participants who enacted the “Inside-out” concept in this study encouraged inquiry and creativity, and were very focused on the essence of the experiences children engaged with and on the feelings that those experiences were bringing to them. They allowed learning to emerge from the students and often allowed them to have agency over their own learning. For these participants, culturally relevant
literacy practices had to do with socializing the students into an education with more humanitarian and social principles. They also seemed to expect the children to see the value of literacy beyond the “basics” and hoped to form diverse-minded learners that could contribute in positive ways for a better society.

On the other hand, when we look at the commonalities among the participants who enacted literacy from an “Outside-in” approach, it is possible to affirm that their sense of culturally relevant literacy practices reflected a different image from the one portrayed above. The participants who enacted literacy from an “Outside-in” approach seemed to be concerned with educating not the whole student but rather a student in a role—being passive, following the schools demands, and complying with them. They focused for the most part on the cognitive dimension of learning and relied on behavioristic models to deliver teaching. Thus, they placed the learning of a second language into rigid steps, promoted learning by drilling, and placed the child in passive roles which made literacy practices very controlling at times and uninteresting from the student perspective.

These individuals saw relevance in surrounding the children with resources, but they did not always consider whether these resources were meaningful for their students. They delivered the lessons, for the most part, by “training” students instead of facilitating instruction. For them, cultural relevance came into play only in order to deliver the content of the curriculum, which was often detached from its context of use and from the students’ interest.

The participants who enacted literacy from an “Outside-in” approach cared about results, focused on the product, and seemed to expect forming alike students. They often taught literacy for the skills, promoted literacy for display, and focused on concrete rewards (e.g., grades, points, tests). The students had little say in these activities. They expected a linear thinking and similar answers and outcomes. These individuals not only saw relevance in teaching children the basics, but also expected the children to see the value of that learning. By doing so these individuals lost opportunities to have the participating child show her strength. In fact, their attitudes and approaches towards literacy contributed to the participating child’s feeling of worthlessness because they often highlighted her weakness and limitations. Often the childhood experiences were overloaded with practices that were relevant for the most part only for the adults who planned the activities. The expectations of the participants who enacted literacy from an “Outside-in” approach seemed to be confined within the school walls, and culturally relevant education seemed to involve more private principles and individualistic goals for the students, which was also limited to schooling. The sense of culturally relevant literacy practices reflected in the practices of participants across sites can be summarized as following.
“Cultural Relevance” Reflected in the Practices of Participants Across Sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSIDE-OUT</th>
<th>OUTSIDE- IN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Educate the whole student</td>
<td>1. Educate student in a role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Focus on the core of the experiences children engage in and on the feelings that these experiences bring to them [focus on the how’s of literacy]</td>
<td>2. Focus on the types of activities children engage in and on the concrete experiences these activities bring to them [focus on the what’s of literacy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Care for satisfaction and focus on the process</td>
<td>3. Care for results and focus on the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promote learning by doing and by being passionate</td>
<td>4. Promote learning by drilling and being passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Promote literacy for enjoyment</td>
<td>5. Promote literacy for display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Promote inquiry and creativity</td>
<td>6. Promote linear thinking and acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Embrace a humanistic approach and recognize the cognitive, emotional, and social, dimension of learning</td>
<td>7. Embrace behavioristic models and focus solely the cognitive dimension of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Embrace the childhood experience – the idea that children need to be children</td>
<td>8. Overloaded the childhood experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teach by modeling and for meaning</td>
<td>9. Teach by training and for skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Follow the child’s interest</td>
<td>10. Follow the schools’ demands (learning as connected to the content of curriculum, usually defragmented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Surround the child with resources that are meaningful for them</td>
<td>11. Surround the children with resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Expect children to see the value of literacy beyond learning only the basics</td>
<td>12. Expect the child to see the value of learning the basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Expect to form diverse-minded students</td>
<td>13. Expect to form alike students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Expect outcome for a better society</td>
<td>14. Expect outcomes for the benchmarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After learning about the literacy practices Anita experienced in and out of school, it was difficult to ignore Street’s (2000) ideas on the ideological view of literacy and the “autonomous model” of literacy. It was also difficult to ignore the idea that learning and language development is rooted in the social and cultural practices of participants (Vygotsky, 1978) and very influenced by their ideologies (Street, 1984). Similar to Street’s (1984) study, this case also illustrates the participants’ different ideological stances undergirding the ways they saw literacy and language learning development as well as guiding the way they facilitated practices.

Witnessing the literacy practices Anita experienced in school and at home resonates with Freire’s philosophy that instruction should place children at the heart of the instructional decisions in school and should consider their histories, values, and their dialog with the world (Freire, 1972). Additionally, it was hard not to think about Freire’s assertions that for literacy to be meaningful, learners need to be provided
with meaningful experiences with words and to be encouraged to make connections between literacy to their meaning in the world.

Learning about Anita’s experiences in different contexts made me think about the ways socialization is transmitted through individuals’ values and practices, and thus, strongly connected to their culture and their identity (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). As this case illustrated, the ways participants spoke about literacy was connected to their identity and cultural models, but not always reflected in their practices (e.g., the classroom teachers). Hence, it is important to understand the teachers within the political and power relations to which they are exposed in the school (Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1988). That is, it is important to situate the teachers within institutional settings and to address the broad societal and institutional influences that undergird and control teachers’ practices and the decisions they make in the classroom. The teachers operate under set rules, scripted agendas, and assessments that are imposed on them and used to not only to evaluate the students, but also their teachers and, thus, the school performance, as in NCLB (No Child Left Behind). Additionally, these elements do not seem to guarantee or assist the teachers in providing culturally relevant literacy experience for their students.

Implications

Through this dissertation, I explored in detail the case of Anita, a Brazilian emergent bilingual studying in the United States. I portrayed her experiences with literacy in and out of school. The case presented in this study is unique, but there are many students like Anita seated in public schools across the United States. I also believe that the “Outside-in” process also undergirds the construction of culturally relevant practices in many schools around the world. This case reinforces the need of finding new ways of looking at literacy, its meanings, and the reasons we want to offer culturally relevant literacy practices for the diverse population existing in schools.

Everybody talks about meeting students’ needs. However, how do we do that? Where do the notions of students’ needs come from? What is the foundation, which we build upon to develop “culturally relevant” curricula? All teachers have a notion of where they are going and what the objectives are. But, to borrow from Clay (1998), not all children take the same path towards literacy, and the right path needs to be built on and motivated by what the child knows. Clay makes the case that the paths children choose to take can change the idea of what the outcomes should be. As Anita’s case illustrated, when literacy practices excessively focus on autonomous skills, the outcome might be discouragement and boredom. When literacy includes a sense of joy, action, involvement, and agency in regarding the literacy practices, it becomes more engaging and inspiring and more likely to promote positive outcomes.

Therefore, similar to Freire (2005), I would suggest that when thinking about literacy, and thus culturally relevant literacy practices, it is extremely important to ask, “What? Why? How? To what end? For whom? Against whom? By whom? And in favor of what” (p. xii) is literacy being developed? It is
crucial to think about what types of activities we are promoting at school and engaging students in, and most importantly, how we are socializing children into what really should matter when it comes to literacy. It is important to be aware of the challenging experiences that children who are growing bilingually, biculturally, biliterally might face and the implications this experience might bring not only for students’ learning and language development, but also on their literacy development and identity (Jiménez, 2000).

**Implications for School, Parents, and Policymakers**

When teachers and children operate under a system that requires lots of monitoring and strict testing and progress, then these factors influence the curriculum. That is, all of these have an impact on teachers’ agency and their opportunities to revamp their curriculum and to respond to the children’s needs. The examples in the study illustrate that education is not only a matter of teachers’ pedagogy. Policies also have to change, mainly because teachers’ pedagogy happens in most part in response to certain kinds of institutional and societal demands. Therefore, changes need to be broader than only the curriculum itself and include space for teachers’ and schools’ consciousness.

In addition, it is critical to have teachers be aware of the students’ socio-cultural practices, and to welcome their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992) to their classrooms. They need to develop awareness of the literacy practices students are engaging in out-of-school context, but also take these practices into consideration when designing their lessons. Teachers need to reflect on their own classroom practices and align their philosophy with those practices and to consider what type of feelings they are attaching to the practices of reading and writing they enact during instruction.

It important for teachers to develop alternative reading and writing culture: Reading culture that promotes a more inclusive approach and that changes its focuses from habits, frequency and amount of reading to one that focuses on the meanings students are bring to the texts they read, to their purposes, and contexts of use. It is essential to promote writing culture that is less focused on the display and more focused on the ideas the children are trying to convey and their intentions to use their skill to accomplish something meaningful for them. As Dyson (1989) reminds us, “In the end, what matters about writing in school is not simply the quality of the texts children produce but the quality of life they experience at school and beyond” (p. xvii).

Teachers and schools need to develop “Concientização” (Freire, 1972) of the hegemonic views and practices that operate behind the “relevant” curriculum they teach or the materials they receive to use. It is essential for teachers to pay more attention to the ways they facilitate practices (on the how’s of practices instead only to the what’s). A more humanitarian approach is needed in school. Teachers should consider more than only language and content objectives. They should include not only content objectives, but also life connection goals. By developing conciousness, teacher might be able to meet
students’ needs and interest and involving them into a much more enjoyable journey to learning.

Additionally, it is crucial that the teachers learn with, validate, and embrace the ways parents live literacy as well as their purposes for having children use literacy and, thus consider what they (parents) see as “relevant” for their children. This might create a space for the students to show their strengths. It crucial to provide teachers not only with resources, but also with resources that are meaningful for the children they have in their classroom. The teachers need to make a space for students to show not only what they know, but also who they are, and by doing so; teachers might help students to reach their potential.

The findings also have important implications for parents. Parents should be aware that schools have their own philosophies and assumptions regarding what might be relevant and what are good practices of literacy. However, these practices might not be relevant for their children. The parents should understand that they also have various literacy practices that are more valuable than the ones schools are proposing or imposing through mandatory “contracts.” In Anita’s case we found a family who were highly educated and with rich cultural capital. They voiced their fears and concerns, knew how to support their child’s literacy, and did their best to resist and question the school practices. I wonder what happens with parents who do not have the same cultural capital to question the types of activities the school is sending home; they might endorse these activities without knowing their potential consequences on their children’s literacy learning, literacy development, and perception of school as a whole. I wonder what happens with parents who do not recognize the value of their own social practices at home and might simply accept the school socialization as “ideal” and relevant for their children. If the school wants relevant literacy practices to enter children’s home, they will first have to create a space for children’s home literacy to enter their classroom.

The findings from this study also have important implications for policymakers. Educational leaders, when setting their standards, should consider the children they are thinking about when they make policies. It is important for them to consider that when they think about creating a curriculum only in terms of content they forget that content has some purpose or plays a role in children’s lives and that children have other concerns which are contextualized and connected with their interests. Therefore, when setting their standards, educational leaders should acknowledge and include a variety of cultural learning models and consider diverse perspectives as a form of praxis, and thus, the transformation proposed by Freire (1972). Gaining insights and exploring alternative perspectives on what constitutes culturally relevance literacy practices for people from other cultural and linguistic communities is critical to providing a more diverse curriculum and literacy practices that are culturally relevant for children they teach.

We have to remember that the large political forces of these times and school accountability are
pushing teachers into the “Outside-in” approaches. With so much emphasis on the demands of the school, there is an urgent need for school and teachers to operate more from this “Inside-out” stance in order to address students’ academic and personal needs. That might be because the political forces that surround education lack in supporting teachers’ development of the Freire’s (1972) concept of “Concientização” (consciousness), in order to identify ways into students’ needs and to address them. It is important to think about public policy that supports and encourages educators to think less narrowly and see the big picture instead.

**Future Research**

"Experiences and practices can be neither exported nor imported. It follows that it is impossible to fulfill someone's request to import practices from other contexts" (Freire, 1987, p.132). As Freire’s remarks illustrate, literacy practices are unique and vary among contexts. Thus, literacy practices cannot be “reproduced”—in the sense we cannot generalize or export/import models to a different setting without taking in consideration many other variables the context itself brings or creates. I hope that my future projects can highlight the many forms of literacy practices that exist among families from diverse cultures and backgrounds in many different scenarios and contexts to understand how other unique communities perceive and live literacy. By doing so, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon and use that understanding to increase awareness of the multiple forms of literacy that exist and that children engage.

Additionally, I would like to investigate how many of the schools and private and governmental agencies that are importing literacy program models (scripted models) across countries in order to improve their educational systems or making it more aligned with “relevant” literacy instructions, are implementing literacy models in unique contexts. I am interested in investigating the process of implementation and what types of outcomes their might have, considering that they do not always think about the local contexts where certain models are being implemented nor the participants’ experiences.

I also have an interest in the socio-cultural processes of teaching and literacy learning in and out of school, and I would like to do further work with teachers and parents. Through professional staff development with teachers and working in the community with parents, I am interested in assisting teachers by engaging them in reflections about their own beliefs and practices. I could also work with parents to explore non-conventional types of activities they participate in at home and in the community and use that knowledge to inform the school and to promote more meaningful home-school collaboration (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). By doing so, I aim to establish a fair balance between what schools see as relevant to teach and what and how parents see as relevant for their children to learn.
Conclusion

I framed this study based on sociocultural views of learning and teaching (Freire, 1972; Street, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). The analysis of the data shows that participants conceptualized literacy, and culturally relevant literacy practices, from mainly two perspectives: “Inside-out,” that is, from children’s social worlds and needs; and “Outside-In,” emerging from “outside” features of the institution and its demands. Based on these perspectives, parents and teachers facilitate literacy practices and determine which literacy practices are relevant or not. Discrepancies between these practices produced certain tensions for the child and for the family.

The case portrayed in this study offers a different way of looking at literacy, relevance, and thus, culturally relevant literacy practices: undertaking a literacy that stems from the inside out and is concerned not only with “relevance” in terms of delivering to the students what curriculum requires or what students “need” to succeed in school assignments, but also with the core of experiences and ways of socialization students are exposed to and how these experiences can cause positive impact beyond the classroom’s walls so students can carry them to life in a ways that are meaningful for them.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A
CHILDREN’S LITERATURE


Dick and Jane: *Fun wherever we are.* (2000). New York: Grosset & Dunlap.


Sample Conversation Starters:
*Follow-up questions will be based on the responses.*

**Interview 1**
**Teachers’ background**
What grade do you teach?
Nationality:
Age:
What was the last level of education that you completed? (e.g., Postgraduate, Graduate)
If you have completed a university education, please specify the name of the degree you received:
In which contexts have you taught (you may choose more than one)? (e.g., university, high school, elementary school)
Which type of courses do you teach?
How long have you been a teacher?
Tell me about your formal literacy training.
Tell me about your teaching career. Tell me how you decided to become a literacy teacher. Why?
How did this training prepare you for teaching children?

**Interview 2**
**Teachers’ educational philosophy/Their view of literacy**
Could you explain what the best thing about being a literacy teacher is?
Tell me more about your literacy experiences.
How do you define literacy?
Do you think your language learning experience affected the way you approach the literacy instruction?
How teacher used to teach literacy in the past compared to today? Could you compare and contrast the two (past and present literacy instruction).
What kinds of changes have you seen in literacy instruction pedagogy since you started your career?
Tell me about your beliefs of how children learn best.

**Literacy practices at School**
Tell me about your teaching: How would you describe a typical literacy day?
What types of activities do you do in your literacy instruction? Why?
Where the ideas for literacy activities come from? / Who design activities to be used in your class?
Tell me about the materials/resources do you like using in your literacy instruction
Do you think students like using these materials/resources?
Tell me about your goals for the literacy instruction: What were you hoping the students would learn from your class?
How pleased are you with the outcome of your instruction? Why/why not?
What are students’ favorite topics when it comes to reading and writing activities?
What are your thoughts about curriculum?
Do you feel the curriculum influence your teaching? How?
If you could, would you change something about the curriculum?
If you were given a choice, would you teach differently? Why?
In your opinion, is there anything challenging about being a literacy teacher? If yes, what is it?
What current tendency in public education literacy practices pleases you? Displease you?
**Literacy instruction of English Language Learners/ Brazilian students**
Tell me more about your literacy experiences with your emergent bilinguals
Tell me about your beliefs of how Emergent bilinguals learn.
Tell me how you see literacy instruction for Emergent bilinguals.
How different or similar is literacy instruction for Native Speakers and emergent bilinguals?
In your opinion, is there anything challenging about being a literacy teacher of emergent bilinguals students? If yes, what is it?

**Students/ Community**
Tell me about your students. Who are they?
Tell me about the parent participation in school.
Tell me about the parent participation in their children literacy development.
Tell me about the cultural component of the school.
How do you feel the students do overall in your literacy classroom?
How did you assess their literacy learning?
Do you feel they face any challenges? What are they? Why do you thing that happens?
How would you describe the community you work at?
Tell me about your involvement with the community and students’ family.
Tell me about the school environment.

**Interview 3 (Observation Follow-up)**
This second interview focus on specifics classroom episodes or literacy events I observed in your classroom. I want to talk about some of the literacy practices observed in your classroom and understanding how and why you planned your lesson.
Tell me about the lesson you prepared this week. What were you trying to accomplish?

During the class I observed, ___________ during your literacy instruction.
Tell me about it. Why did you ____________?

Would you like to share any other information that they might think it is related to this study?
Sample Conversation Starters:
Follow-up questions will be based on the responses.

Interview 1
In this first interview, we will talk about your the background information (origin, professions, language, culture, educational background) and about your own experiences with literacy.

Country of Origin:
Countries you have lived or visited: ______________ Period:______________ Age:
Language(s) spoken:
(If applies) Why did you learn a second language?
What are the reasons you are living abroad?
For how long you intend to stay in this country.
How often do you go back to your native country?
How do you identify yourself in terms of culture (e.g., Brazilian, American, Brazilian-American, etc)?
What is your profession?
For how long have you been working in this field?
What was the last level of education that you completed? (e.g., Postgraduate, Graduate, Undergraduate)
If you have completed a university education, please specify the name of the degree you received:
Where did you complete your elementary schooling? (Public or private institution) Could you tell me about your experiences?
Do you think your elementary education had prepared you for a career? Why? Why not?
What grade is your daughter now?
What type of program is she attending?
Who chose this type of program for your child/ children? Why?
Tell me about the school environment.

Interview 2
In this second interview, we will talk about your view of literacy and about practices at home and at school, as well as resources/material available for literacy at home.

Tell me about your beliefs of how children learn to read and to write (literacy).
Tell me more about your literacy experiences.
Do you think your language learning experience affected the way you approach the Literacy instruction?
What can you say about literacy instruction in Brazil and in the US?
How many languages can your child speak?
What language do you speak at home? Why?
How do you describe literacy?
What are your child’s favorite things to do at home after school or in his or her free time?
What language do they speak when playing? Does your child play with friends? What are their nationalities?
What types of literacy activities does your child do at home?
Does child like reading? Do you read for fun? What type of reading does your child like to do at home?
What are the topics does your child like reading?
Do they read in Portuguese, English, or both?
Do you read for your child? Could you talk about it?
Do you participate in any other form of activities with your child at home?
What are your child’s favorite games (TV or media games)? How often do you play with it? What is the
language used in the game?
How does your child do his or her homework at home? (e.g., alone, with assistance of someone)
How much are you involved with your child’s education (e.g., school meeting, visits)?
Tell me about the cultural component of the school. Is teachers/school aware of the cultural and linguistic background of your child?
Overall, how do you feel your child does in his/her literacy classroom? why? Why not?

**Material and Resources**
Tell me about the materials/resources in your native language (Portuguese) do you have available at home.
Tell me about the materials/resources available that you are aware of exits in the community (e.g., library, etc.)
What other materials/resources does your child like using (e.g., internet)?
Do you think students like using materials/resources?
Tell me about your goals for the literacy instruction of your child?
What are your thoughts about curriculum?
If you were given a choice, would you change something about your child education? Why?
In your opinion, is there anything challenges about being a parent of a child learning two languages at the same time?

**Interview 3**
In this interview, we are going to talk about some literacy events and resources available for your child at home. You will be invited to reflect on literacy events taking place at home. We will talk about specific literacy events (the ones observed by the researcher during the visits).

This week at home you participate in the following literacy events __________. Tell me more about it. Why did you ________________?
Sample Conversation Starters:
*Follow-up questions were also based on the participant’s responses.*

**Interview 1**
First let’s talk about your school experiences in Brazil:

**School**
- Can you describe your school experiences in Brazil?
- What are your favorite things you do in school?
- Tell me about your classmates.
- Tell me about your literacy class.
- What types of activities do you do in the class?
- Do you like reading?
- What type of things do you like to do at school?
- During recess playtime at school what do like playing?
- What are your favorite games? How often do you play with it?
- Tell me about your homework. Does the teacher give you homework? What are they?
- How do you do your homework at home?
- Does anyone help you with homework?
- Do you read for fun? What type of reading do you like to do at home?
- Can you write something for me? Anything you want to write.

**Home**
- At home, what is your favorite thing to do?
- During playtime at home/ neighborhood what do like playing?
- What games do you play with?
- Do you read books in at home? What are they?
- When teacher asks you to share something with the class about your culture, what do you usually share?
- Do you play games at home? What are they?
- Do you watch TV? What is your favorite TV show/ program? Why?

**Now, let’s talk about your school experiences in the US:**
Can you describe to me what your school in the United Stated look like?
- What are your favorite things you do in school?
- Tell me about your classmates.
- Tell me about your literacy class.
- What types of activities do you do in the class?
- What type of things do you like to do at school?
- Tell me about reading.
- During recess/ playtime at school what do like playing?
- What are your favorite games? How often do you play with it?
- Tell me about your homework. Does the teacher give you homework? What are they?
- How do you do your homework at home?
- Does anyone help you with homework?
- Do you read for fun? What type of reading do you like to do at home?
- Can you write something for me? Anything you want to write.
**Home**
At home, what is your favorite thing to do?  
During playtime at home/ neighborhood what do like playing?  
What games do you play with?  
Do you read books in English or in Portuguese? What are they?  
When teacher asks you to share something with the class about your culture, what do you usually share?  
Do you play games in Portuguese at home? What are they?  
Do you watch TV? What is your favorite TV show/ program? Why?  
Which language do you speak at home?  

* Sample Weekly Interview Starters:  
*Follow-up questions will be based on the responses.*

This week at school you participate in the____________ literacy events observed at school. Tell me about it. Why did you ______________?  
This week at home you participate in the following literacy events __________. Tell me about it. Why did you ______________?