

Teachers as critical text analysts: L2 literacies and teachers' work in the context of high-stakes school reform

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Abstract

The authors describe the professional development of L1 and L2 teachers from a comprehensive theoretical perspective that focuses on literacy as a critical social practice, the construction of student/teacher knowledge, and institutional forces that support and/or constrain the academic literacy development of L2 students in the United States. The authors begin with an articulation of the theoretical framework guiding this discussion. Next, they describe how this perspective was enacted in a graduate program designed to support K-12 teachers in developing an understanding of theories, research, and practices that form a critical approach to L2 academic literacy development. Last, following Hyland (2003, 2007), the authors reflect on the challenges, and ultimately the necessity, of critically reconceptualizing L1 and L2 teacher education to include greater attention to genre theory and genre-based pedagogies. This call for a reconceptualization of teacher education in the United States is warranted because of the combined impact of economic, demographic, and educational policies shaping the work of teachers and the literacy practices of L2 students.

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In their introductory remarks to a special edition of the *Journal of Second Language Writing* focusing on teacher education, Hirvela and Belcher (2007) maintain that many L2 writing scholars have not foregrounded the important role they play as “teachers of teachers of writing” (p. 125; see also Ramanathan, 2002a,b). Hirvela and Belcher argue that L2 literacy scholars need to attend to this important aspect of their work because their daily practices most likely involve supporting “pre- and in-service teachers in becoming familiar with theories, research, and

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practices that form the praxis of L2 writing instruction” (p. 125). In this same volume, Ken Hyland adds that teacher education programs, particularly in the United States, have tended to draw on insights from composition theory, cognitive psychology, or traditional grammars as opposed to a Hallidayan perspective of genre theory and genre-based pedagogy (see also Matsuda, 2003). As such, Hyland argues that many teacher education programs have not prepared teachers to be capable of showing their students how language operates within the genres of writing they are routinely asked to read and produce. In the United States, this drawback is an important one to address because current high-stakes educational policies are redefining the nature of teaching and learning in K-12 public schools, particularly for English language learners (ELLs) and their teachers. Specifically, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* legislation, in combination with rapid demographic shifts and the passage of anti-bilingual education mandates in many states have made it necessary for *all* teachers and teacher educators, not just L2 writing teachers and scholars, to become versed in ways of critically apprenticing L2 learners to using academic texts (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2007; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Schleppegrell, 2004, 2005; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Vollmer, 2007; Zeichner, 2005). The purpose of this article, therefore, is to respond to these pressing issues by describing a teacher education program that serves L1 and L2 pre- and in-service elementary and secondary teachers in the United States. This program attempts to apprentice these teachers to become critical text analysts and action-researchers who are able to analyze the linguistic features of their students’ emergent academic literacy practices and to implement responsive pedagogical practices. In what follows, we describe the theoretical perspective of a specific course in this program and how this perspective was enacted in praxis. Drawing on the work of Halliday and critical language scholars, this course introduced teachers to a critical instantiation of genre theory and genre-based pedagogies (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, 2000; Halliday, 1978, 1994; Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Luke, 1996; New London Group, 1996). While this perspective of literacy, teachers’ work, and social change is certainly not new and has been explored by a number of L2 literacy researchers working in international settings and at the tertiary level in the United States (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Christie, 2002; Benesch, 2001; Ramanathan, 2002a,b), few scholars have explored this perspective in the context of rapidly changing elementary and secondary schools in the United States (Tardy, 2006). We conclude by discussing the challenges, and ultimately the necessity, of reconceptualizing K-12 teacher education to include greater attention to genre theory and genre-based pedagogies given the strength of current school reforms shaping the academic literacy development of L2 students in the United States (Gebhard et al., 2007; Schleppegrell, 2004, 2005; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; for similar proposals in other contexts see Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, 2000; Johns, 2002; Mohan, Leung, & Davison, 2001; see Tardy, 2006, for a review of L1 and L2 genre studies).

Theoretical perspective: introducing teachers to an institutional perspective of literacy, learning, and social change

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the first author begins each semester by introducing teachers to an institutional perspective of L2 text-context dynamics. This perspective conceptually connects the textual practices of L2 academic literacy with the historical and political contexts of modern public schooling in the United States. Specifically, it suggests that the processes by which students and teachers make sense of and jointly produce texts through classroom interactions reflect and create knowledge, social relations, and associated material conditions (e.g., Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Gebhard, 1999, 2004, 2005; New London Group, 1996).

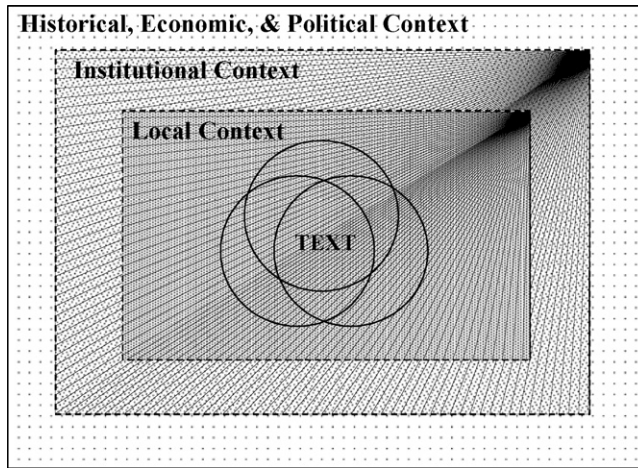


Fig. 1. An institutional perspective of L2 literacy (Gebhard, 1999, 2004).

Beginning at the center of Fig. 1, following the work of Fairclough (1989, 1992) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), the course introduces teachers to an encompassing definition of text as a way of illustrating how stretches of written or spoken language are used in combination with non-linguistic signs to make meaning. In an ESL classroom, for example, this understanding of text draws attention to how language learners and their teachers draw on multimodal semiotic systems such as gestures and drawings when they engage in the process of oral and written meaning production and interpretation. As such, this framework suggests that teachers can gain insights into the complexity of their students' literacy practices by asking questions regarding how students use talk, print, gestures, drawings, and other meaning-making tools in complementary and overlapping ways as they engage in classroom activities to achieve various kinds of social and academic goals. Drawing on the work of Halliday, the New London Group describes these multimodal processes of text production and interpretation using the metaphor of *available designs*. This metaphor captures how people actively and passively make choices from the semiotic resources available to them when communicating in particular contexts to achieve various purposes (Halliday, 1978; New London Group, 1996). In the field of L2 literacy, Kern (2000) has expanded the concept of available designs to include an analysis of how people draw on multiple, overlapping meaning-making systems associated with their first and subsequent languages when they produce and interpret texts in specific contexts (see also Lam, 2000).

Moving to the local context represented in Fig. 1, the first author attempts to make clear to L1 and L2 teachers that particular acts of reading and writing are always situated within local contexts. In the case of English language instruction, these practices are typically situated in classrooms that privilege dominant languages (e.g., English), context-specific interactional patterns (e.g., the initiation-response-evaluation speech act sequences), and discipline-specific textual practices (e.g., narratives in Language Arts Instruction). In discussing these aspects of classroom discourse with teachers, the first author tries to convey an understanding that recurring dominant classroom discourses and textual practices are implicated in how students not only negotiate meaning, and therefore acquire specific literacies (and not others), but also in how teachers and language learners are socialized into occupying particular kinds of social positions and displaying particular school identities (e.g., Gebhard, 2004; Ibrahim, 1999; Kramsch, 1985; Morgan, 2004; Olsen, 1997; Peirce, 1995; Ramanathan, 2002b; Toohey, 1998; Willett, 1995).

Continuing outward to the institutional contexts, Fig. 1 also suggests that high-frequency genres, associated participant roles, and constructed identities cannot be analyzed without reference to how institutions such as schools organize local contexts (Christie, 2002; Christie & Martin, 1997; Gebhard, 1999, 2004, 2005). With reference to L2 learners in the United States, the first author asks teachers to examine how institutionalized schooling practices have historically legitimated the assignment of ELLs to particular communities of practice in schools and to think about how students negotiate these placements in ways that influence the possible communities of practices to which they belong, the genres they learn to use, and the various school identities assigned to and taken up by them (Gebhard, 2004, 2005; Harklau, 1994a,b, 2000; Olsen, 1997; see Ibrahim, 1999, for a Canadian example). She also asks teachers to examine how ESL and bilingual educators are institutionally positioned and how this positioning mediates their access to institutional resources and the construction of their professional communities of practice and associated identities (Nieto, 2000; Ramanathan, 2002b; Morgan, 2004; see Johnston, 1997, for a discussion of EFL teachers internationally). Through seminar discussions such as these, guided by Fig. 1, the first author encourages teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse students in U.S. public schools to explore how they can gain access to classrooms that are not makeshift spaces (e.g., former storage rooms), provide their students with quality multilingual and multicultural curricular materials (e.g., literature), use new technologies to support powerful teaching and learning (e.g., computers and Web access), and negotiate current school reforms that may be at odds with the academic literacy development of their students (e.g., English-only mandates; uses of scripted curriculum packages; see Gutiérrez, Asato, & Baquedano-Lopez, 2000; Gutiérrez, Asato, & Santos, 2002; Stritikus, 2003).

Last, in regard to the connection between literacy practices and social change, the first author asks teachers to think about how the construction of classroom contexts and accompanying school identities is not simply a matter of common sense (Fairclough, 1992). Rather, she asks them to consider how the nature of U.S. schooling practices, and therefore academic literacy practices, have their origins as well as possible trajectories in the unpredictable convergence of past, present, and future political and economic struggles. For example, analysts of the transformation of educational practices in the United States have made convincing arguments that the nature of schooling today can be traced to the amalgamated forces of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration during the early 1900s (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Fass, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; Tyack, 1974). A sample of some of the enduring reforms that resulted from the merging of these three powerful forces include the conversion of the one-room schoolhouse into what we now associate with a modern public schooling system. This system typically strives for efficiency by grouping students by age or perceived ability; apprenticing students to differentiated literacy practices to prepare them to enter a differentiated workforce; and reinforcing curricular, instructional, and assessment practices based on modernist assumptions of language, learning, and what counts as evidence of knowing.

A full treatment of how these now commonplace innovations to compulsory education and commonsense ways of teaching ELLs have outlived their utility in a post-modern, information-driven economy is beyond the scope of this paper and has been treated by others in more detail (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Gebhard, 2004, 2005; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; New London Group, 1996). However, many analysts believe that in a post-industrial, technology-driven, and globalized economy, schooling must be reconceived to prepare non-dominant students to participate more fully in a very different kind of economic order than the one that existed when manufacturing jobs were plentiful. Namely, these analysts argue that for linguistically and culturally diverse students to negotiate their way through a post-industrial world of work, they must be able to engage

strategically and fluidly in the symbolic work of positioning and repositioning themselves through their use of multimodal texts (e.g., New London Group, 1996). These students are better able to accomplish this task when they are in command of many, often hybrid, literacy practices and associated ways of being (e.g., Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gebhard, 2005; Gee et al., 1996; Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; New London Group, 1996; Solsken, Willett, & Wilson-Keenan, 2000). Moreover, students are more likely to engage in this kind of strategic semiotic work if they have been in classrooms with teachers who have a critical awareness of language and know how to apprentice students to using high-stakes genres to accomplish cognitive, social, and political work they care about (Dyson, 1993; Gebhard et al., 2007).

The praxis

The first author attempted to make the above encompassing theoretical approach to analyzing text-context dynamics useful to L1 and L2 teachers in a number of ways. First, she introduced teachers to studies of classroom discourse analysis and the ways in which participant structures and participant roles are implicated in language learning, the construction of identities, and production and reproduction of social structures (e.g., Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997; Gutiérrez, Larson, & Kreuter, 1995; Gutiérrez, Rymes et al., 1995; Ibrahim, 1999; Kramsch, 1985; Solsken et al., 2000; Willett, 1995).

Second, she introduced teachers to the craft of conducting literacy case studies by assigning Dyson's *Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write* (1993). Dyson provides teachers with a model for researching the literacy practices of multilingual/multicultural learners from a critical sociocultural perspective. Significant among the contributions Dyson makes is the way she introduces teachers to qualitative data collection methods that can support teachers in using the tools of discourse analysis to see and re-see how acts of reading and writing are multimodal, highly social events.

Third, she assigned Rick Kern's *Literacy and Language Teaching* (2000). Kern also articulates a sociocultural perspective of literacy development, but his work is more grounded in second language studies and applied linguistics (e.g., English as second language instruction, English as foreign language instruction, and foreign language acquisition). She selected Kern's book because he contrasts a genre perspective of literacy development with other perspectives of second language learning and describes how second language literacy practices differ in important ways from first practices (see also Silva, 1993). He accomplishes this by drawing readers' attention to the linguistic features of the texts language learners read and write (see also Bhatia, 1993; Gibbons, 2002; Hedgcock, 2002; Johns, 2002; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Paltridge, 2001; Schleppegrell, 2004; Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007). For example, Kern highlights how language learners attempt to make sense of writing systems through their use of lexical items, syntactic structures, aspects of style, and genre conventions when they engage in particular acts of reading and writing. Moreover, he makes clear the ways in which these concrete textual features are implicated in how L2 readers and writers (and, we would add, their teachers) understand aspects of audience and purpose and simultaneously produce and reproduce context specific roles and broader societal relations.

Fourth, she provided teachers with an opportunity to read the case study research projects of senior colleagues in the master's program as a way of showing how pre- and in-service teachers like themselves have engaged in the process of conducting classroom-based research using Fig. 1, course readings, additional library research, and seminar discussions as a guide. In what follows, we describe one such case study.

Critical literacy case study research in second language teacher education

In presenting a synthesis of this case study, we are not making empirical claims about the data, nor are we claiming that an individual course caused lasting empirical changes in the teaching practices of the participants in the seminar. Rather, our purpose is to provide an example of how L1 and L2 teachers used a critical perspective of L2 literacy, as illustrated in Fig. 1, as a heuristic in a teacher education seminar. The data for this case study were collected and analyzed by two teachers, Jan Demers and Zoë Castillo-Rosenthal. Both were “mainstream” elementary classroom teachers who wanted to develop new ways of responding to the changing nature of their work in an elementary school with an increasingly diverse student population. The first author’s role was one of project director, question asker, and, for this particular iteration of their work, synthesizer. At the time they completed this project, Jan was a mainstream elementary school teacher with more than 25 years of teaching experience. Zoë was taking courses to become a Reading Specialist. She also was working as a classroom assistant at the same school as Jan, as part of a grant-funded project focusing on class size reduction. Jan and Zoë, as well as seven other members of the seminar including the first author, could be described as white and predominately English monolinguals. The other eight members of the seminar were highly proficient multilinguals from Asia and Latin America (e.g., international students from Korea, China, and Japan, and Puerto Rican bilinguals from the local community). Like many graduate courses in second language education, the participants had varied backgrounds and professional goals. Most were seeking K–12 teaching credentials in a variety of disciplines. Others worked or planned to work as foreign language educators, adult educators, college-level writing instructors, or in international contexts.

In describing what they hoped to learn as a result of taking this course, Jan and Zoë both talked about how changing demographics in their school necessitated that they develop a better understanding of how multilingual/multicultural students develop academic literacies. With this goal in mind, the question guiding their case study project focused on how a student’s proficiency in his or her first language might influence their learning of academic literacy practices in a second language. Based on previous professional development opportunities, both were familiar with concepts such as “basic interpersonal communication skills,” “cognitive academic language proficiency skills,” and the “threshold hypothesis” (Cummins, 1979). However, they wanted to examine L2 literacy practices from a context-sensitive perspective because of the structural changes Jan’s school had made to its ESL/bilingual program. Specifically, Jan’s school had restructured the ESL/bilingual program because a number of teachers had voiced concerns about the negative impact of ESL/bilingual students being pulled out of their mainstream classes to receive ESL and bilingual support. These teachers were worried that the pullout program might make it difficult for ESL/bilingual students to learn English and establish friendships with students outside of the ESL/bilingual program. As a result, the administration agreed to experiment with the idea of grouping Spanish–English bilinguals in grade-level cohorts. These cohorts were assigned to mainstream classrooms and supported by ESL and bilingual specialists who collaborated with mainstream teachers (see Hruska, 1999).

Focus student: Sara

After identifying their guiding research questions, Jan and Zoë selected a Spanish–English bilingual student named Sara (a pseudonym) for their case study. Sara had been assigned to a first

grade mainstream classroom taught by Mrs. Long (a pseudonym), a colleague of Zoë’s. There were 21 students in this classroom. Eight received ESL support from specialists who worked closely with Mrs. Long. Jan and Zoë selected Sara because they felt she was representative of a typical first grader in terms of cognitive, language, and social development. However, Mrs. Long, the ESL specialists, and the bilingual teachers had concerns because Sara “mixed Spanish and English” in her writing in ways they thought might “interfere” with her academic progress (Castillo-Rosenthal & Demers, unpublished manuscript).

Data collection

Jan and Zoë arranged to spend time in Mrs. Long’s classroom every week diagramming the physical arrangement of the classroom space, noting various classroom routines, recording and transcribing students’ interactions with one another and with other adults, and collecting samples of Sara’s writing. They also collected demographic data about the school and district as well as information about how the school and district programmatically approached ESL and bilingual instruction (e.g., student grouping and teacher assignment practices; conceptual stances regarding the teaching, learning, and assessment of English language learners; and information regarding the schools’ approach to teachers’ professional development). Last, Jan and Zoë conducted informal interviews with Sara regarding her schooling experiences and with Mrs. Long regarding her approach to second language literacy development and her knowledge of

Story Log

Name

Date _____

music

Characters

Setting

music

teacher

can sing

and dance

and cho...


the kids ja...


to sing

1

2

3








Fig. 2. Pre-writing worksheet.

Sara's family. Mrs. Long had made home visits to Sara's family earlier in the year, a practice she engaged in with all students.

Once they had a sense of the context broadly defined, Jan and Zoë selected the texts on which they wished to anchor their analysis of text-context dynamics. These texts are shown in Figs. 2–7 (see Appendices). Fig. 2 is a pre-writing worksheet that Mrs. Long assigned to all students in the class. This worksheet asked students to think about the characters, the setting, and plot of their stories. Figs. 3–7 are a subsequent draft of the story Sara wrote after she completed this worksheet. Next, similar to the way Dyson (1993) described the multimodal literacy practices of elementary students in her study, Jan and Zoë noted that as Sara produced the text shown in Figs. 3–7, she used talk, print, and images in overlapping ways. Moreover, depending on the peers with whom she was interacting, she orally moved in and out of Spanish as she wrote.

Text-context analysis

In discussing a preliminary analysis of Sara's first draft, Jan and Zoë talked about how difficult it was for them to understand what Sara was trying to communicate. Based on our seminar discussion of Fig. 1 and Kern's discussion of relevant text features, the first author encouraged them to start their analysis by describing Sara's text in as much detail as possible. In taking up this

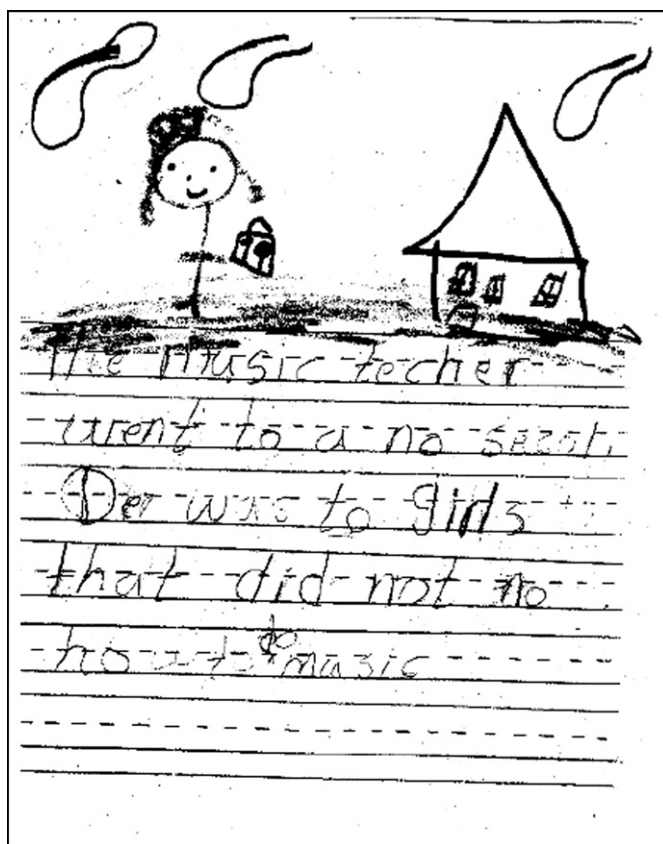


Fig. 3. Draft of story.

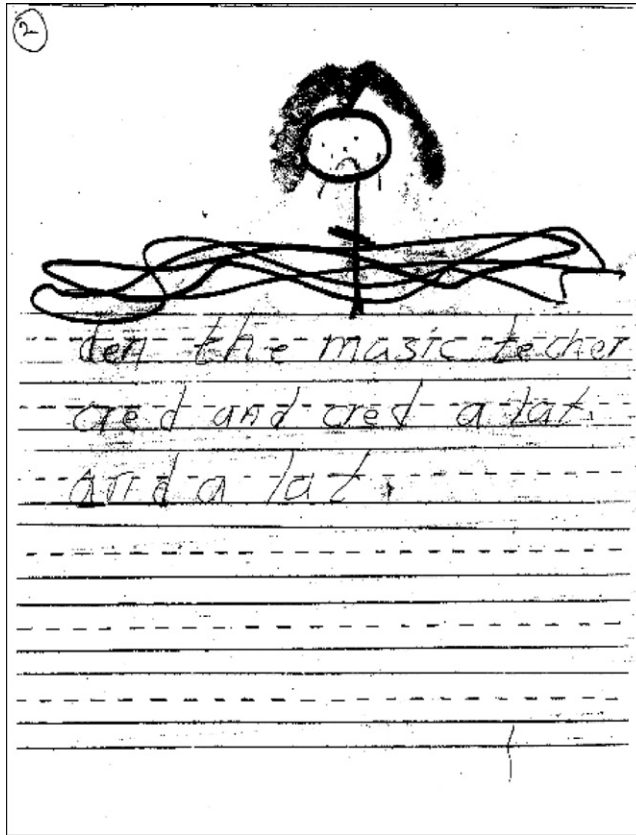


Fig. 4. Draft of story.

suggestion, they documented the school-based literacy practices that Sara displayed in expected ways. These practices include spacing letters appropriately and using capital letters and periods properly. In terms of syntax, with few exceptions, they noted that Sara used the narrative past correctly. Last, in terms of the genre moves, they remarked that Sara's story followed the expected, but not the universal form (e.g., [Kamberelis, 1999](#); [Michaels, 1981](#)). Specifically, Sara's story has a beginning orientation in which she introduced the characters—for example, "the music teacher" (music teacher) and "to girls" (two girls). The reader is also given information about the setting of the story. Namely, the story takes place in a "no secol" (new school). Moreover, Sara's narrative has a complicating action where the plot thickens and something specific happens. For example, the story has something do with the girls not knowing how to "do" music, the music teacher crying ("cred and cred"), and a "rat" in a bag. Finally, Sara provides the reader with what appears to be a happy ending, as evidenced by the smiling faces in the scene depicted in [Fig. 7](#). In their final paper Jan and Zoë analyzed this happy ending as an illustration of how Sara understood norms of behavior for students and teachers—roles and norms that are often at odds with those that are actually negotiated in classrooms where teachers and students co-construct resistant or oppositional stances to one another (see [Gutiérrez, Rymes et al., 1995](#)).

In analyzing the textual features of Sara's text, Jan and Zoë felt confident that Sara's ability to produce this expected story structure had much to do with Mrs. Long actively drawing students'

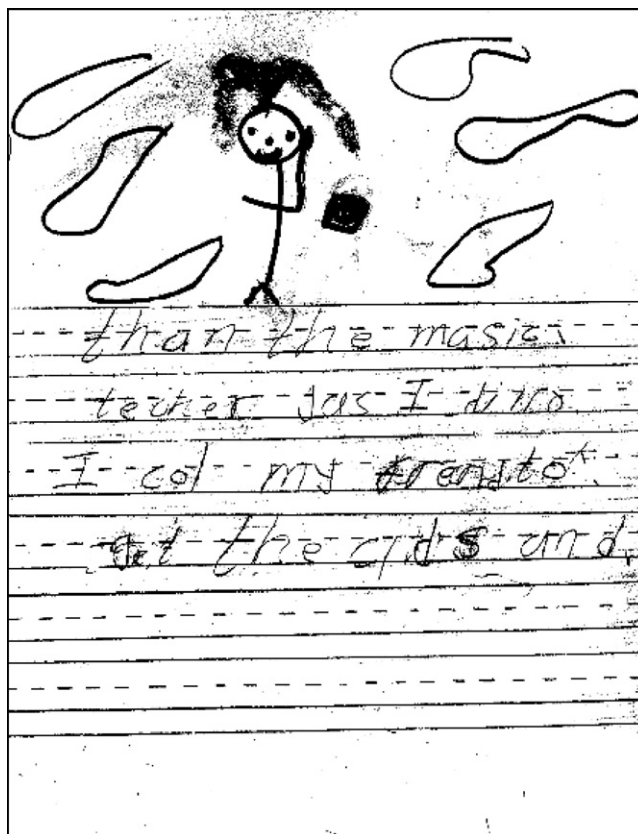


Fig. 5. Draft of story.

attention to the genre moves of canonical narratives and asking them to reproduce these moves as evidenced by the worksheet she assigned. Interestingly, they also noted that Sara did not allow herself to be constrained by the story structure mandated by the worksheet, but that she literally re-inscribed this structure by adding boxes to column 2 (see Fig. 2). Sara's improvisation allowed her to add more twists to the story, thus making her narrative less scripted and more representative of how she understood and wanted to represent events.

In analyzing Sara's ability to use the past tense in conversation and writing, Jan and Zoë felt that it stemmed from the opportunities she had in class to negotiate meaning with her English-speaking peers and from the access she had to one-on-one writing conferences with her teacher who provided explicit feedback regarding aspects of process and form. Jan and Zoë interpreted these features of Sara's text as possible evidence that the school's restructuring of the ESL/bilingual program had productively increased the likelihood of students like Sara interacting with English and Spanish peers in ways that supported the development of grade-level academic literacy abilities in English (see Gebhard, 2005; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997, for similar findings regarding positive implications of school restructuring).

Next, they turned their attention to aspects of Sara's text that were still difficult to interpret. They were able to make some headway by further exploring their knowledge of Spanish

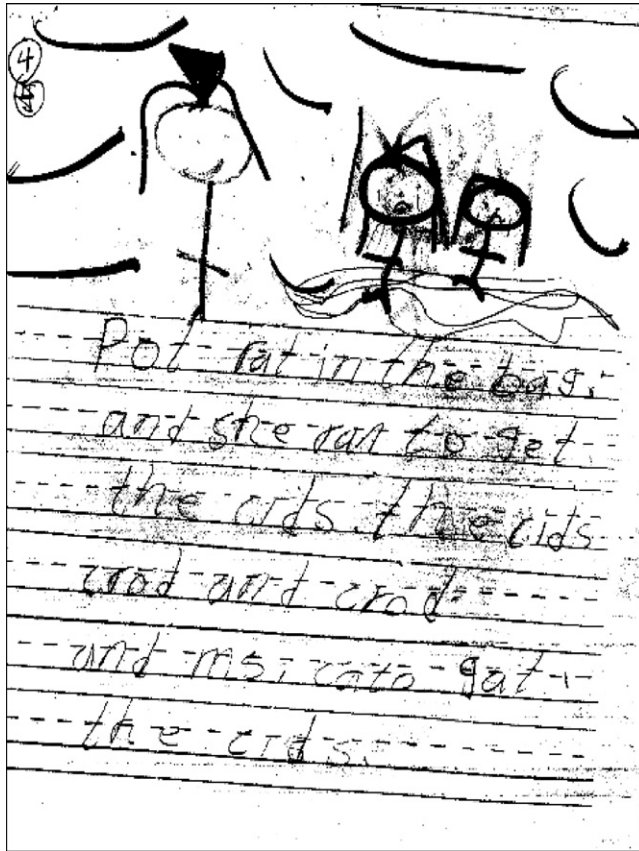


Fig. 6. Draft of story.

orthography and by having conversations with Spanish speakers in the seminar. Based on these interactions, Jan and Zoë began to see the logic of Sara's invented spellings by showing how Sara relied on Spanish sound-letter relationships (e.g., *Jas* for *Has*). After reviewing a number of Sara's other drafts kept on file by her teacher, Jan and Zoë felt it would be a helpful to produce "a conversion chart" to help teachers interpret certain spellings typically made by Spanish-English learners and to support Sara in mastering the differences between Spanish and English writing conventions (see Fig. 8, Castillo-Rosenthal & Demers, unpublished manuscript).

Still, Jan and Zoë noted that Sara's draft, like those of many emergent writers, lacked coherence. For example, in the absence of contextual support, Jan and Zoë were unsure how the "rat," "the friends," and "Mrs. Cato" related to other characters and events in the story as a whole. Eventually, Jan and Zoë were able to make sense of these textual features by getting a deeper understanding of the context in which Sara's narrative was produced. Specifically, they ventured that the "rat the bag" phrase was an intertextual link to the class's reading of the popular children's story, *Miss Nelson is Missing*, by James Marshall (see Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005; Harman, 2008, for a discussion of intertextuality in classroom literacy practices). In this story, Miss Nelson tricks her students into behaving appropriately by scaring them. Zoë and Jan thought that Sara might be drawing on her reading of Marshall's story in producing her own. They made this assumption because at the time

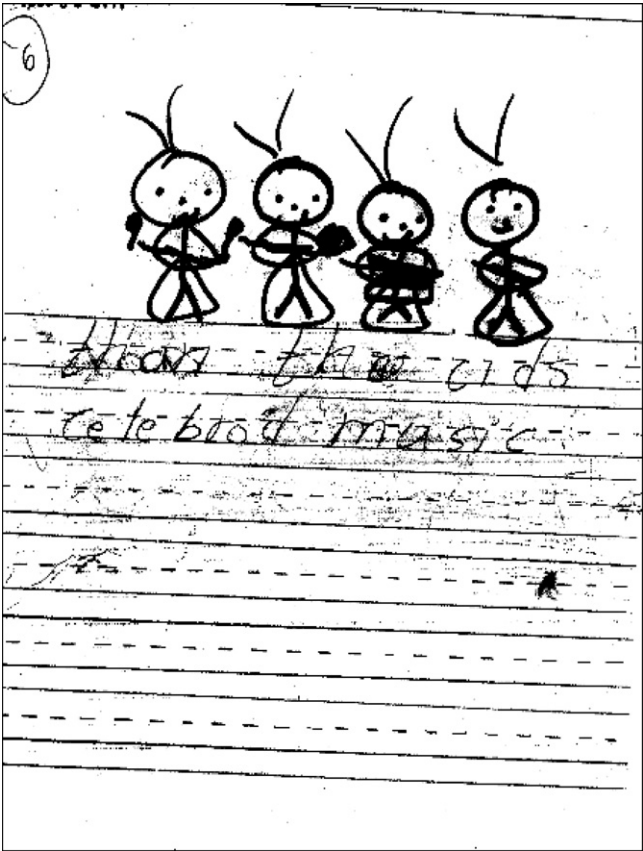


Fig. 7. Draft of story.

Spanish j	Spanish e	Spanish i	d for [th]	ll for [j]
for [h]	for [a]	for	r for [d]	ll for [y]
		[e]	c for [k]	
ja = how	dey = day	hi = he	den = then	llumpin =
ju = who	nem = name	picas =	dirint =	jumping
jem = him		because	didn't	I dillo =
jom = home		tichor =	cids = kids	idea ¹
jas = has		teacher		

Fig. 8. Spanish–English Orthography Guide, Castillo-Rosenthal and Demers (unpublished manuscript).

Sara produced this text, music was being taught by a student teacher who was having trouble fulfilling the role of teacher in expected ways (e.g., managing the behavior of students in a large music class) and that this new teacher’s real name was in fact Mrs. Catto. With this knowledge, Jan and Zoë translated Sara’s text to read as follows:

There was a music teacher named Mrs. Catto. The music teacher went to a new school. There were two girls who did not know how to do music because they were fooling around all the time. Then the music teacher cried and cried a lot and a lot. Then the music teacher had an idea. She called her friend. Her friend put a rat in a bag and scared the kids. The kids cried and cried. Then Ms. Catto rescued the kids and they all celebrated music.

This act of translating Sara's text into what Street (1984) would call a more autonomous narrative gave Jan and Zoë insights into the kind of instruction teachers need to provide to students like Sara. For example, Mrs. Long could have shown Sara and others how to use the word *because* to show causality; how to use temporal markers such as *then* or *in the end* to help readers follow the plot line of stories; and how to expand their linguistic repertoires to include words such as *rescued* or *saved* and expressions such as *fooling around*, *making trouble*, or *acting up* to assist readers in understanding not only what happened in the story, but also the nature of the relationships among the characters (e.g., troublemakers, tricksters, and heroes). In addition, explicitly teaching these conventions might also support Sara in displaying a student identity that could be characterized as an author and entertainer as opposed to a remedial student who "mixed her languages."

In their analysis of the historical, political, and economic aspects of Sara's text, Jan and Zoë began to challenge a number of widely held assumptions regarding bilingualism (Valdes, 1996) and to disrupt a number of long-standing norms regarding teachers' work (Lortie, 1975). Namely, they challenged the tenacious assumption that linguistic code-mixing is indicative of a cognitive deficit that can be attributed to families using their first language at home and thereby making the learning of English more difficult for their children. Second, they disrupted historically rooted roles and status differentials that typically are enacted between monolinguals and bilinguals, pre-service and in-service teachers, and L1 and L2 educators by working across these differences in their attempt to make sense of Sara's text. With these insights, which they could not have reached working alone, both described feeling more committed to taking up advocacy roles, not only for the bilingual students and their families, but for their ESL and bilingual colleagues whose work they now understood better. They did this by attending school committee meetings in which the school's ESL and bilingual programs were being reviewed. Naturally, given Jan and Zoë's collective experiences and activist dispositions, they most likely would have participated in these activities without having conducted this analysis or attending this seminar. However, they maintain that attending the seminar and engaging with linguistically and culturally diverse participants in the seminar provided them with a forum in which to analyze Sara's literacy practices and to connect these literacy practices to issues of teachers' professional development and school change.

Conclusion and implications

In sum, the institutional perspective of L2 literacy (see Fig. 1) enacted in this teacher education course assisted Jan and Zoë in literally seeing and re-seeing how a second language learner named Sara produced and interpreted assigned texts in a first grade mainstream classroom. This critical perspective also helped them to see and re-see how local school reforms supported and constrained the literacy development of bilingual students like Sara. As a result, both Jan and Zoë reported having a deeper understanding of the varied resources that emergent bilingual students bring to school literacy practices—resources that many educators often overlook or misinterpret as causing learning difficulties (e.g., use of students' home language in

school). In addition, using genre theory, Jan and Zoë also described developing new understandings about how “English works,” something that is often invisible to monolinguals who have not developed the kind of meta-linguistic awareness that comes from using or studying an additional language. This deeper understanding of “how English works” also helped them to think about what teachers can do very specifically to assist language learners in developing grade-level academic literacy (e.g., scaffolding genre structures; attending to cohesive devices like *because*; teaching needed vocabulary to convey a particular idea or relationship; and explicitly highlighting differences in Spanish and English spelling conventions). Last, they described how this project gave them an understanding of the value of monolingual teachers working with bilingual specialists when analyzing samples of bilingual learners’ work, because it is through this kind of collaboration that monolinguals develop knowledge of the resources bilingual students bring to their academic writing.

As productive as this project was, it is nonetheless challenging to implement a teacher education program using a critical perspective of genre theory that attends to the institutional context of public schooling. As the literature regarding teachers’ professional development makes clear, these challenges include the need to strike a balance between theoretical and practical concerns (e.g., Britzman, 1991; Hedgcock, 2002; Freeman & Johnson, 1998); the high-norms of privacy and autonomy that characterize teaching as a profession relative to other professions (e.g., Lortie, 1975); and weak institutional commitments to teachers’ professional development in regard to funding, time, and access to expertise and new technologies (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1995; Gebhard, 1998). These challenges are well documented and are certainly not specific to L2 teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Hedgcock, 2002; Johnson, 2006). However, current K-12 school reforms have provoked fundamentally new challenges in L1 and L2 teacher education that do have implications for scholars with expertise in L2 literacy development. Specifically, demographic changes in combination with *No Child Left Behind* Legislation and English-only mandates in U.S. schools have made it necessary for all mainstream, ESL, and bilingual teachers to develop a meta-awareness of the disciplinary genres their students are asked to read and write in school and to develop pedagogical practices that are supportive of these students’ academic literacy learning. Moreover, teachers need to develop a critical awareness of how school reform efforts position them and their students if they are to attempt to negotiate the unintended consequences of these reforms. In seminar discussions, teachers describe these consequences as: (1) language learners having little access to their home language and cultural resources in doing school work; (2) states taking action against schools that do not show improved test scores; (3) higher dropout rates for non-dominant students who do not pass mandated state exams; (4) instructional time reallocated to testing and test-preparation activities; and (5) teachers adhering closely to packaged curricular materials regardless of the appropriateness of these materials for their ELLs. In debating the implications of current school reforms in seminar discussions, both L1 and L2 teachers describe how new state and federal policies have focused much needed attention on the academic literacy development of the growing number of L2 students in their schools. They also talk about understanding (but not necessarily welcoming) the importance of working with their colleagues to articulate curriculum and instructional practices across different grade levels and content areas. In addition, even those with little background in linguistics talk about becoming more aware of the linguistic features of certain genres, particularly those their students are asked to reproduce on high-stakes exams. However, as one experienced teacher in an urban middle school put it, “I have an alarming sense that we are all being set up to fail, and fail big.” Many teachers shared this sentiment and readily acknowledge that analyzing and explicitly teaching the linguistic features of the genres they

routinely ask students to read and write in is an unfamiliar and difficult task, particularly at the secondary level.

In response to these pressing issues, a number of L2 literacy scholars in the United States have begun to explore the potential of genre theory and genre-based pedagogies to support the work of K-12 teachers and their students in U.S. schools (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2007; Gebhard et al., 2007; Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Godley, 2007; Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici, & Carpenter, 2006; Harman, 2008; Schleppegrell, 1998, 2003, 2004, 2005; Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteíza, 2004; Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; Shin, Gebhard, & Seger, *in press*; Vollmer, 2007). For example, Mary Schleppegrell and her colleagues have worked with teachers in California to analyze the state's mandated curricular frameworks and aligned high-stakes exams. Through this work, they identified the types of texts California teachers are required to teach and their students are required to read and write (e.g., narratives, responses to literature, summaries, descriptions, explanations, research reports, and analytic essays). In addition, they analyzed and made explicit the kinds of lexical, grammatical, and organizational choices students need to make if they are going to be able to read and write in discipline-specific ways. Similarly, in a large scale professional development program at the University of Massachusetts, teachers were asked to design curricular interventions that attend to students' investments and apprentice students to controlling disciplinary genres (Gebhard et al., 2007; Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Harman, 2008; Shin et al., *in press*). Teachers did this by: (1) identifying an authentic audience with whom students could communicate about a specific topic to accomplish a purpose students found compelling; (2) identifying an academic genre that was well suited to students achieving their purposes in writing about this topic for a specified audience; (3) analyzing the salient linguistic features of this genre with attention to specialized vocabulary choices, grammatical structures, rhetorical conventions, and other genre; (4) designing materials to support students in developing the ability to recognize and use genre-specific vocabulary, sentence structures, and rhetorical conventions (e.g., graphic organizers, guidelines for revision, assessment tools); (5) providing students with multiple models and explicit instruction in analyzing the linguistic features of specified genres; (6) providing opportunities for students to collaborate with each other and with teachers as they plan, draft, revise, and edit their texts; (7) tracking changes in students' use of targeted, genre-specific practices as a way of reflecting on and modifying instruction and assessing student linguistic and academic development; and last, (8) reflecting with students on the process of using academic language to attempt to enact social change (see also Macken, Martin, & Roherty's "Wheel Model of Genre Literacy Pedagogy" in Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p.11).

In sum, these examples of the use of genre theory and genre-based pedagogies in teacher education in U.S. public schools support Hyland's claim that a critical knowledge of genres may have important conscious-raising potential for teachers and therefore implications for their understanding of writing and their professional development. In Hyland's (2007) words:

By categorizing and analyzing the texts they ask their students to write, teachers become more attuned to the ways meanings are created and more sensitive to the specific communicative needs of their students. Teachers are thus in a better position to reflect on their own writing and that of their students, offering them a means to understand, deconstruct, and challenge texts. . . . A person who understands how texts are typically structured, understood, and used is in a better position to intervene successfully in the writing of his or her students, to provide more informed feedback on writing, to make decisions about the teaching methods and materials to use, and to approach current instructional paradigms with a more critical eye. (p.151)

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