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Reading under the Common Core: Latinx Students' Agency and Meaning-Making Practices in Peer Discussions about Text

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

María José Aragón

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December 2018

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Reading under the Common Core: Latinx Students' Agency and Meaning-Making Practices in Peer Discussions about Text

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by
María José Aragón

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ABSTRACT

Reading under the Common Core: Latinx Students' Agency and Meaning-Making Practices in Peer Discussions about Text

by
María José Aragón

The widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), since 2010, has led to a growing concern among education scholars and practitioners about how the new standards will impact the educational trajectories of students from minoritized linguistic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds (Bunch, Walqui, & Pearson, 2014; Hakuta, Santos, & Fang, 2013; Lee, Quinn, & Valdés, 2013). In the area of English Language Arts (ELA), the close reading of texts, particularly informational texts, is identified as one of the primary reading skills students are expected to acquire, and is presented as central to students' academic success in school and beyond. The CCSS narrowly define close reading as the practice of extracting knowledge and evidence from texts, paying limited attention to students' broader learning contexts and existing funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

The CCSS's conceptualization of close reading contrasts with a sociocultural orientation to literacy (Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, & Green, 2001; Hull & Moje, 2012) in which students' language and literacy practices are viewed as socially situated and constructed. Drawing on the latter perspective, as well as on Neo-Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Rogoff, 1990) and a sociocultural linguistic framework (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), the present study examines student interactions within and across instructional activities designed to support the acquisition of literacy skills required for close reading and analysis of complex texts. This dissertation presents a discourse analysis of classroom interaction in a 6th grade public school classroom in Southern California that was documented over the

course of five months using video and audio recordings, participant observation, field notes, and samples of students' work. The observations and analysis focus on peer discussions involving emergent bilinguals (García, 2009) from Latinx immigrant backgrounds, several of whom had been recently transitioned out of the school's English Language Development (ELD) program.

Findings suggest that students fluidly employed a range of linguistic and cultural resources, such as the use of their funds of knowledge and various linguistic registers, to make meaning and co-construct their understanding of texts with others. Students often used academic language as part of these interactions and demonstrated strong awareness of their language choices—particularly how they were connected to discourses about "standard" and "academic" language. Lastly, students' engagement in different literacy tasks was locally constructed and influenced by factors such as the characteristics of specific texts and students' affective responses to those texts. These finding have implications for how teaching practices associated with reading can be designed to leverage students' knowledge and interests and expand learning opportunities for linguistically and racially marginalized students. Based on the findings, I propose an integrative and dynamic sociocultural approach to conceptualizing, teaching, and assessing students' literacy practices in the classroom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction 1

II. Literature Review 5
A. Reading under the Common Core 5
1. The Language demands of the CCSS 6
2. "Close Reading" under the CCSS 13
B. Literacy from a Sociocultural Perspective 14
1. Redefining "Academic Language" 16
2. Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogies 20
C. Research Questions 29
III. Theoretical Framework 31
A. How is Language Learned 31
1. Sociocultural Learning Theories 31
2. Language as Action 33
3. Language Socialization 33
3. Language as Dialogic 35
B. Literacy and Identity 36
C. Chapter Conclusion 39

IV. Methods 41
A. Classroom Context 42
1. Setting 42
2. Participants 44
3. Activities 49
B. Positionality 51
C. Data Production 52
D. Data Analysis 57

V. Agency and Identity in Students' Reading Group Discussions 61
A. Reading as a Social Practice 62
B. Close Reading in Room 6A 64
C. Chapter Conclusion 88

VI. The Role of Academic Language in Students' Discussions about Text 91
A. Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature 94
B. Academic Language in Room 6A 96
C. Chapter Conclusion 113

VII.The Social Construction of Reader Engagement 116
A. Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature. 118
B. Pushing Back Against the "Struggling Reader" Narrative 121
C. Communicating Engagement. 129
1. Students as Active Constructors of Knowledge 129
2. Affective Responses to Text 133
3. Confusion as Engagement 135
D. Chapter Conclusion. 138

VIII. Conclusion 140

A. Summary of Findings....................140
B. Limitations and Future Research....................142
C. Implications for Theory and Practice....................143
References....................147
Appendices....................162

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Participant Profiles 45
Figure 5.1 Definition of close reading 65
Figure 5.2 Posters for close reading and text types 65
Figure 5.3 Report card standards for “Reading and Language” 66
Figure 5.4 “Bridge to Terabithia” unit 68
Figure 5.5 Jess carrying Leslie in “Bridge to Terabithia” 76
Figure 5.6 Compare and contrast venn diagram 82
Figure 5.7 Diego’s “End of year poem” 86
Figure 6.1 Academic language wall...98
Figure 6.2 Academic word of the week 98
Figure 6.3 “Good readers” worksheet A 99
Figure 6.4 “Good readers” worksheet B 99
Figure 6.5 Diego’s character chart...103
Figure 6.6 Prediction chart...104
Figure 7.1 Quotation interpretation worksheet 117
Figure 7.2 Figurative language worksheet...117
Figure 7.3 Self-evaluation report 125

I. Introduction

Mounting pressures for educators to “teach to the test” and prioritize students’ mastery of narrowly defined literacy skills have continuously positioned students of color and emergent bilinguals (García, 2009) as “struggling” to meet the expectations set in schools. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by forty-one states and the District of Columbia, since 2010, has exacerbated many of these concerns and has caused widespread debate about how these students can best be supported in the acquisition of the mandated skills. While as a researcher focusing on students’ language and literacy practices I too am concerned about the consequences of adopting these “rigorous” standards, I also find myself rejecting some of the persistent deficit ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martínez, 2009) that are inevitably tied up in this sense of concern.

Scholars have argued that the shifts represented by the standards pose concrete challenges for students, particularly emergent bilinguals, which must be addressed by teachers, administrators, and policymakers (Bunch, Walqui, & Pearson, 2014; Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012; Hakuta, Santos, & Fang, 2013; Lee, Quinn, & Valdés, 2013). The ELA standards place strong emphasis on students working with complex texts, particularly informational texts, and foreground a number of analytic practices, such as reading to extract multiple levels of meaning and effectively communicating claims and findings supported by text-based evidence. The primary reading strategy associated with the kind of text-dependent analysis prioritized by the standards is “close reading”, which is defined as: “reading closely to draw evidence and knowledge from the text” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 1). As some researchers have suggested, mastering these analytic skills can be particularly demanding for emergent bilinguals, who are still in the process of acquiring English and often have limited

exposure the types of academic and technical language found in complex texts (Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2015). Moreover, the narrow conceptualization of literacy learning represented by the standards can serve to privilege “academic” and “standard” English varieties while continuing to marginalize the linguistic practices of students from nondominant backgrounds in the classroom (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Studies have found that despite the monoglossic language ideologies that remain prevalent in schools (Nelson & Schissel, 2014), students are active agents, who consistently challenge and redefine the boundaries imposed on their language practices by expressing themselves in fluid and complex ways (e.g. Morales Corella & Lee, 2015; Martínez, 2010; Worthy et al., 2013). My interest in better understanding how emergent bilinguals engage in literacy practices associated with the standards, then, stems both from a concern for what these changes mean for experiences in the classroom, and from a conviction that students are the ultimate teachers, and that it is only by looking closely at what they do that we can learn how to best “accompany” them in realizing their full potential (Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee, 2017).

Although researchers working with emergent bilinguals have increasingly advocated for pedagogical spaces that embrace the hybridity of students’ language practices and leverage their full cultural and linguistic repertoires (e.g. García & Sylvan, 2011; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999; Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014) most emergent bilinguals find themselves in English-only public school classrooms where these spaces are rarely available to them. Nationwide, Latinxs represent 25% of students in public K-12 education and 75% of students classified as “English Learners” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In California, the state with the highest proportion of emergent bilinguals, 20.4% of students enrolled in public school are classified as “English Learners”.

Of those students, the vast majority (71.5%) are enrolled in grades K-6 and are Spanish speakers (82%) (California Department of Education, 2017). Given the large proportion of Latinx students and emergent bilinguals in public schools and in monolingual English classrooms it is crucial to better understand how the demands of the CCSS are impacting their experiences and opportunities as developing readers and learners.

It is important to note that while “English Learner” or “English Language Learner” continue to be the most widely used labels across the U.S. education system as well as in the research literature and documents related to the CCSS to refer to students from non-English dominant language backgrounds, the term “emergent bilingual” (García, 2009) more accurately reflects my perspective on language learning and is used throughout the rest of the dissertation. Unlike “English Learner”, which is often presented in a dichotomous relationship with “English Language Proficient”, García (2009) characterizes the term “emergent bilingual” as “children's potential in developing their bilingualism”, which as she explains “does not suggest a limitation or a problem in comparison to those who speak English” (p. 322). As García (2009) has argued, the labels used to categorize students have serious implications for education policies aimed at how emergent bilinguals are taught in schools. She has further pointed to a persistent gap between education policies and research, underscoring that while research shows that students who are able to draw on their home language have better education outcomes in the long-term policies continue to reflect monoglossic language perspectives.

Given the limited empirical work on how students currently in school are navigating the language demands presented by the CCSS, particularly on the role of “close reading” as a primary reading strategy, the following study aimed to expand knowledge on the ongoing

implementation of the ELA standards while building on scholarship that examines what students *can* and *are* doing in the classroom rather than focusing on what they are not achieving based on narrowly defined academic goals (Orellana & Gutiérrez; Bunch, 2014; inter alia). More specifically, by focusing on peer discussions in a sixth-grade public school classroom, this study examined how students negotiated and co-constructed their understanding of texts as they worked together on activities associated with "close reading".

In order to provide context for some of the questions the implementation of the CCSS has raised, the second chapter of this dissertation presents a literature review focusing on the changes presented by the standards, as well as on empirical studies conducted on students' literacy practices from a sociocultural perspective. In the third chapter, I outline my theoretical framework and discuss its implications for my understanding and analysis of students' language and literacy practices. In chapter four, I describe my methods for data collection and analysis. In the following three chapters I present an interactional analysis of students' peer discussions about text and how these conversations relate to: a) their cultural and linguistic repertories and funds of knowledge, b) their use of academic language, and c) their engagement in various literacy tasks. The final chapter provides a summary of my findings, as well as a discussion of implications for future research and teaching practices. Based on the findings, I propose an integrative and dynamic sociocultural approach to conceptualizing, teaching, and assessing students' literacy practices in the classroom.

II. Literature Review

This chapter begins by examining the major shifts represented by the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with respect to the literacy demands placed on students within English Language Arts (ELA) and across other subject areas. The second part of the chapter presents a review of literacy research conducted from a sociocultural perspective. Within this broader field of research, perspectives on academic language and approaches to leveraging students' cultural and linguistic repertoires in the classroom are discussed.

A. Reading under the Common Core

The revised criteria for the ELA standards specify that between eighty and ninety percent of the CCSS reading standards in all grade levels require students to engage in close text-based analysis. The CCSS anchor standards for reading, which apply to students from kindergarten through 12th grade, include the following standards: "1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text," and "10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently" (CCSS website). Additionally, the ELA standards note that students need to engage with "a range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts" in order to "acquire the habits of reading independently and closely, which are essential to their future success" (CCSS website).

One of the characteristics of the ELA standards that is particularly problematic for emergent bilinguals, but also for students more generally, is the notion that the language in complex texts holds meaning that is independent from the context in which it is read, as well

as from students' existing experiences and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). The revised ELA criteria emphasize that knowledge is found in the texts students read and that: "[T]ext-dependent questions do not require evidence from outside the text or texts; they establish what follows and what does not follow from the text itself" (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 6). The rigorous textual analysis and decontextualized nature of the questions and prompts students may encounter when engaging in close reading can, therefore, be particularly challenging for emergent bilinguals and members of marginalized groups who often have limited exposure to the kinds of arguments, academic language, and grammatical structures found in complex texts (Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2015). Fillmore and Fillmore (2012) emphasize that the transition from lower (1st-3rd) to upper elementary grades (4th-6th) is particularly crucial for students' literacy development as the texts they are presented with up until third grade tend to be primarily intended to support the acquisition of basic reading skills. Beginning in the fourth grade, students are expected to transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (p. 1). This implies being able to read texts to extract and communicate sophisticated academic content and ideas.

1. The Language Demands of the CCSS

The CCSS are divided into two main areas: *English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (which will be referred to as the "ELA standards") and *Mathematics*. The ELA standards are organized by grade level and grouped into standards for grades K-5 and 6-12, which are broken down into four main areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Starting in 6th grade, there are subject-specific ELA standards for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. For each group of standards there are also accompanying *College and Career Readiness Anchor*

Standards, which provide "general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce training programs ready to succeed" (CCSS Website). The anchor standards include skills such as: "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content" (CCSSI, 2010a, p. 18). The Mathematics standards for K-8 are grade-specific and divided into various domains, including "Operations and Algebraic Thinking" and "Measurement and Data", whereas standards for high school are more focused on specific conceptual categories (linear, quadratic, and exponential models; trigonometric functions, etc.). In addition, the Mathematics standards are supplemented with eight general standards for "Mathematical Practice", which apply to all grade levels and focus on students' reasoning and communication skills (CCSSI, 2010b, p. 6).

One of the major changes represented by the introduction of the CCSS is a strong emphasis on the development of language and literacy practices across subject areas. While this is most evident in the ELA standards, which require students to engage with a variety of texts and demonstrate mastery of complex analytic practices, this is also the case for the Mathematics standards, which emphasize the need for students to solve problems by making sense of language-rich scenarios and using specific terms and sentence structures to represent and explain their reasoning in multiple ways (Bunch, 2013; Santos, Darling-Hammond, & Cheuk, 2012).

As Kibler et al. (2015) have pointed out, each of the CCSS ELA domains (reading, writing, listening/speaking, and language) presents unique challenges that must be addressed in thinking about how to best support emergent bilinguals as a group, and as individual

learners with specific needs. They suggest that the increased focus on reading informational texts can lead to students encountering complex concepts and ideas they have had no prior exposure to, particularly given that many emergent bilinguals are still in the process of acquiring more basic English skills. With respect to writing, students are required to produce a variety of different texts, including opinion pieces, informative/explanatory texts, and narrative texts, and within each of these genres should be able to address different audiences effectively. Students must also support their claims and opinions with evidence from different sources, which again involves employing higher level skills most emergent bilinguals are still in the process of developing. For speaking and listening, the standards stress students being able to "present claims and findings by sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes" (CCSS, 2010, p. 49). Kibler et al. (2015) argue that in order to develop these oral skills, emergent bilinguals must be provided with opportunities to develop the *interactional competence* necessary to engage with others and gain experience with different formats of participation, as well as the norms associated with them.

One of the terms central to the discussion on the CCSS is the notion of *text complexity*. ELA reading standard ten "call[s] for a staircase of increasing complexity" (CCSS website), which involves teachers presenting students with progressively complex texts as they transition from elementary to middle and high school grades. In the standards, text complexity is defined along three dimensions: qualitative (e.g. language conventionality and levels of meaning), quantitative (e.g. word length and frequency and sentence length), and based on reader and task considerations (e.g. complexity of task, student motivation and experience, etc.) (CCSS Appendix A, p. 4). Bunch et al. (2014) suggest that most attention

has been given to the quantitative aspect of text complexity and that a deeper understanding of the qualitative aspects of texts, such as the layers of meaning embedded within the same text, as well as students' contexts and backgrounds, is essential in order to identify the kinds of challenges complex texts may present for emergent bilinguals. They further note that text complexity is often equated with difficulty and that the conflation of the two can be problematic and lead to the assumption that complex texts are inherently difficult and present insurmountable obstacles for students. Consequently, they define *text complexity* as the "lexical, syntactic, and discourse-level features of text", which they distinguish from *text difficulty*, which constitutes the "challenges to comprehension performance experienced by specific readers engaging with specific texts under specific conditions" (p. 536). They complement these two concepts with the notion of *accessibility*, which refers to the scaffolds teachers provide to support students' understanding of complex texts.

In relation to text complexity, Fillmore and Fillmore (2012) have maintained that one of the greatest challenges emergent bilinguals face in mastering the literacy skills required by CCSS is their consistent lack of exposure to the types of texts in authentic learning contexts that would allow them to develop these skills in the first place. They further suggest that the tracking systems in place in schools often result in emergent bilinguals and other language minority students being separated from others and deprived of opportunities to engage with complex texts, often based on the misguided argument that they are being protected from academic failure. Instruction for emergent bilinguals also tends to be focused on students acquiring specific vocabulary and teaching them how to decode language, rather than on understanding content and interpreting various levels of meaning embedded in text in order to engage in a variety of communicative practices (Fillmore, 2014). Given that these are

skills students have little or no experience with, they propose a pedagogical approach in which students and teachers regularly engage in extended class discussions that involve deconstructing a single complex sentence from the academic text they are working on: “The goal of these conversations [is] to help students learn to unpack the information so tightly packed into academic texts, and in so doing, gradually internalize an awareness of the relation between specific linguistic patterns and the functions they serve in texts” (Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012, p. 1).

The ELA standards for the area of Language also specify *language progressive skills*, which are identified as skills that are “particularly likely to require continued attention in higher grades as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated writing and speaking” (CCSSI, 2010a, p. 30) and include competencies such as: “Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others’ writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language” and “Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy” (CCSSI, 2010a, p. 30). These standards underscore the importance of using “standard” and “conventional” language, and suggest that precision in the use of language, rather than a more broadly conceived notion of communicative competence, is considered evidence of learning. The CCSS also make very limited mention of emergent bilinguals throughout, stating that it is “beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs” (CCSSI, 2010a, p. 6). Emergent bilinguals are addressed more explicitly in a separate and brief document in which teachers are encouraged to draw on students’ literacy knowledge in their first language and to complement the CCSS with language proficiency standards more

specifically geared towards supporting "English learners" (CCSSI, n.d.). The ELA standards further specify that it is important for all students to have opportunities to acquire the mandated skills and that "it is possible to meet the standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening without displaying native-like control of conventions and vocabulary" (CCSSI, 2010a, p. 6). The emphasis on students' mastery of academic language and "Standard English", however, appears to conflict with the goal of making the standards accessible to all students.

In response to the notable absence of emergent bilinguals from the standards, The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) along with the English Language Proficiency Development Framework Committee, have created a framework that aims to support various stakeholders in revising or designing English language proficiency/development standards that correspond to the CCSS and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS):

> The purpose of the Framework is to communicate to ELL stakeholders in states—from chief state school officers and district chief academic officers to state/district ELL and content area specialists to curriculum developers and teacher leaders—the language practices that all ELLs must acquire in order to successfully master the CCSS and NGSS and for second language acquisition more generally. (CCSSO, 2012, p. 1-2)

Flores and Schissel (2014) note that one of the greatest strengths of the framework is the attention to language development based on the use of language progressions that should be "attuned to the varying language growth trajectories of different ELLs" (CCSSO, 2012, p. 4). Although the framework provides valuable support to teachers and other stakeholders in

understanding the implications of adopting the standards for emergent bilinguals, Flores and Schissel (2014) critique the narrow focus on first and second language practices. They argue that more could be done to acknowledge the language practices of emergent bilinguals and how they can be leveraged, not solely for the purpose of meeting the ELA standards and acquiring skills in English, but for the development and maintenance of both languages in the long term.

With respect to how assessments can be designed to more authentically capture the capabilities of students and their progress towards meeting the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, Mislevy and Durán (2014) have proposed a sociocognitive/situated approach, which "considers an individual's capabilities with respect to social contexts" (p. 564), as opposed to the decontextualized assessment data provided by large scale tests. Consistent with this perspective, they offer four strategies that can contribute to improving current assessments: contextualizing assessment tasks based on knowledge of students' backgrounds and experiences, using learning progressions to broadly connect tasks to skills within a particular domain, taking advantage of technological advances that can allow for more individualized and dynamic forms of assessment, and using different assessment paradigms based on the purposes and context of each assessment.

Durán's (2014) discussion of the implications of the CCSS and the new standards movement for Latinx students stresses how the focus on test scores and mastery of narrowly defined skills stand in direct opposition to a sociocultural understanding of literacy and language learning. He argues that these approaches: "ignore deep attention to the socialization of learning opportunity and its foundation in students' sense of agency and identity as learners in a broader and more fundamental sense" (p. 211). While scholars such

as Fillmore and Fillmore (2012) and others are committed to finding ways to better support students who are at a clear disadvantage when it comes to meeting the language demands embedded in the new standards, there is much to be learned about the concrete challenges students are facing in the classroom.

2. "Close Reading" under the CCSS

Close reading has been framed by some scholars as a way to provide emergent bilinguals with opportunities to engage with complex texts and acquire the kinds of analytic skills and academic language needed to succeed in school. The evidence-based and "decontextualized" approach to reading proposed by the standards is presented as a way to "level the playing field" by eliminating differences among students based on their access to cultural knowledge and practices that could interfere with their ability to comprehend and analyze texts productively (Snow & O'Connor, 2013, p.3) As Durán (2014) argues: "the model of reading and text complexity put forth by the CCSS posits that text meaning is inherent in understanding the discrete linguistic statements making up a text and their grammatically signaled interrelationships" (p.177). This narrow definition of reading, hence, ignores the role of context and experience in students' interpretations and understanding of texts.

Among their critiques of this line of reasoning, Snow and O'Connor (2013) further emphasize that making close reading the center of literacy practices in the classroom runs the risk of marginalizing other valid sources of knowledge that are crucial to literacy development and allow students to interrogate texts and craft their own arguments and opinions: "Prior knowledge, moral judgment, social norms, and other sources of information and analysis constitute legitimate bases from which to argue, and in authentic argumentation are often needed as complements to text-based evidence" (p. 3). Building on this critique, it

is important to note that these forms of outside knowledge are often heavily influenced by students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and cannot be neatly separated from students' experiences with texts.

We now turn to a review of research on literacy practices conducted from a sociocultural perspective. The studies that will be discussed vary in their scope and analytic focus and serve to illustrate the range of questions that arise in attempting to capture and make sense of students' literacy practices in the classroom and beyond.

B. Researching Literacy Practices from a Sociocultural Perspective

Literacy has long been the focus of research in the field of education; however, how literacy is conceptualized and studied varies substantially depending on the theoretical research perspective. Traditionally, studies on literacy have focused on examining the cognitive processes involved in the acquisition of literacy skills, such as how individual students process and decode language in academic texts. Another branch of research, which will be discussed in greater depth in this review, is preoccupied with how literacy is socially constructed through practices between individuals situated in dynamic sociocultural contexts. Castanheira et al. (2001) argue that: "What counts as literacy in any group is visible in the actions members take, what they orient to, what they hold each other accountable for, what they accept or reject as preferred responses of others, and how they engage with, interpret, and construct text" (p. 354). Consistent with this conceptualization, Hull and Moje (2012) propose understanding literacy as "participation in a range of valued meaning-making practices [...] nested within particular activity structures that index desired purposes, roles, and identities" (p. 1). The focus of studies under this perspective is consequently centered on the social practices, rather than on the individual processes, that shape students' relationships

with texts and language.

A prominent and related subfield within literacy research is what has become known as the New Literacy Studies (NLS). Street (2003), one of the major proponents of this approach, suggests that understanding literacy as a social practice requires acknowledging that individuals do not engage in one but *multiple* literacies, and that these literacies are embedded in and must be understood as part of broader contexts of power: “NLS, then, takes nothing for granted with respect to literacy and the social practices with which it becomes associated, problematizing what counts as literacy at any time and place and asking ‘whose literacies’ are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant” (p. 177). Gee (1999) similarly emphasizes that these multiple literacies are “deeply political” and serve to position certain identities, actions, and forms of knowledge as more desirable than others.

One of the earliest and most widely recognized studies that have examined individuals’ multiple literacies is Heath’s (1983) ethnographic study on two working class communities in the Piedmont Carolinas in which she documented individuals’ language and literacy practices across home, school, and work. Heath was not only among the first to observe individuals’ interactions across these different spaces, but was able to compellingly expose the discontinuities faced by many working-class children upon entering school, often leading them to struggle academically, which as she argued was the result of a web of interrelated issues and could not be reduced to factors such as differences in parent-child interactions or home language practices: “The language socialization process in all its complexity is more powerful than such single-factor explanations in accounting for academic success” (p. 344).

In an interactional ethnography on the literacy demands of different subject areas at a

vocational school in Australia, Castanheira et al. (2001) took a unique approach and analyzed video data of one student's interactions with teachers and students across his five classes. By examining and comparing the student's interactions in each class they were able to "[make] visible the literate practices, actions, and demands that were shaped by, and in turn, shaped the opportunities to construct, take up, and display knowledge and learning" (Castanheira et al., 2001, p. 354). These kinds of concerns, related to individuals' participation and opportunities for acquiring school-based literacies lie at the core of sociocultural studies on literacy/ies.

Yet another set of sociocultural studies has examined the literacy practices of children and youth outside of traditional school contexts. Moje's (2000) research on gang-affiliated youth illustrates how students who are often labeled as underperforming academically and are viewed as unable to master the literacy skills privileged in schools engage in a wide range of "unsanctioned literacy practices", such as writing graffiti, journal and letter writing, and reading novels. These practices were found to be central to the youth's participation in gang life and functioned as "communicative, expressive, and transformative tools for shaping [youth's] social worlds, their thoughts, and their identities" (p. 653). Similarly, Hull and Schultz's (2002) edited volume about students' literacy practice in non-academic settings such as homes, after school programs, and community organizations, illustrates how individuals acquire and engage in a variety of literacy practices that do not originate in or serve the same purposes as the narrowly defined school-based literacies that are often the focus of education research and debates.

1. Redefining Academic Language

Practices associated with close reading in schools are inextricably tied to students'

ability to make sense of the kinds of language found in complex texts. However, as will be discussed, the traditional distinction between "academic" and "non-academic" language presents limitations in attempting to understand how students draw on their repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez and Rogoff, 2003) in their attempts to make meaning of academic texts. It is, therefore, worth reviewing some of the more recent scholarly work that has sought to challenge and reconceptualize existing definitions of academic language in order to reflect a sociocultural understanding of language.

Education scholars have noted that academic language can present challenges for students because of its distinct grammatical and lexical features that contrast with the language students learn and use in other contexts (Bailey, 2007; Bunch, 2014; Schleppegrell, 2001). This is particularly the case for members of nondominant communities and emergent bilinguals who have limited opportunities to acquire academic language due, in part, to the systemic discrimination they face in schools, where they are often tracked and maintained in lower-level classes (Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012; Valdés, 2004). The lack of opportunities to develop competency in academic language use is, consequently, also a product of the deficit and monoglossic ideologies that have shaped education policies and practices targeting emergent bilinguals (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006; Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martínez, 2009).

Despite the importance placed on academic language within education research and practice, there continues to be little consensus about how it can be defined and distinguished from other forms of language students learn and use inside and outside the classroom. Within Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, Cummins (1979) introduced one of the most widely adopted definitions of academic language to date. In order to distinguish academic

language from "conversational" or "social" language, Cummins proposed the terms *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* (CALP) and *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills* (BICS). This approach characterized academic language as more cognitively demanding and challenging to acquire than the "basic interpersonal" communication students use in non-academic settings. Academic language was further viewed as more "abstract" in contrast to language used in everyday interaction where learners can rely on contextual or paralinguistic cues to derive meaning. Numerous scholars have since challenged this conceptualization arguing that it is based on the assumption that academic language is inherently more complex and that it creates a false continuum between two distinct forms of language (Bailey, 2007; Hawkins, 2004; Valdés, 2004; Walqui & van Lier, 2010). Hawkins (2004), for example, has pointed out that: "There are multiple sorts of events, subject areas, genres of language, and discourse and participation structures represented in the classroom, which belie the stable and somewhat unitary concept of CALPS" (p. 2017). Despite these critiques, including Cummins's own clarifications about the theory's intent (Cummins, 2008), this dichotomous conceptualization remains widespread in TESOL and teacher education programs (Bunch, 2013; Valdés, 2004).

Bunch (2014) has proposed reconceptualizing the language students employ as they engage in academic tasks by categorizing it based on its intended purposes rather than on its cognitive complexity. Drawing on his research in a middle school classroom he has suggested that students may employ less formal language when they are discussing their initial responses to a text with their peers and that they often choose to use an academic register when sharing or presenting their work in front of an audience. Bunch (2014) defines the "language of ideas" as: "The use of any and all linguistic resources students bring to bear

on the engagement in and completion of an academic task" (Bunch, 2014, p. 74). The "language of display", in contrast, focuses more narrowly on: "evolving oral and written texts students develop, either individually or as a group, to present to particular academic audiences" (Bunch, 2014, p. 74). Despite this distinction he has noted that students fluidly move back-and-forth between these two types of language within any given academic task and that these transitions reflect students' strong metalinguistic and audience awareness.

In his analysis of 7th grade social science class presentations as speech events, Bunch (2009) found that even in the context of what would be considered a fairly structured academic task, students were continuously required to attend to a number of linguistic demands, which involved, among other things, addressing multiple audiences by using different registers, responding to interjections by teachers and peers, abiding to explicit and implicit rules, and transitioning between various participation structures. Consequently, attempting to categorize the linguistic practices within presentations as either "academic" *or* "informal" would have not only been futile, but would have involved discounting the wealth of practices employed by students, as well as the skills required to transition rapidly and smoothly between them. The findings support the notion that academic tasks are highly dynamic and complex and that students are constantly drawing from and combining resources from their linguistic and discursive repertoires while engaging in problem-solving and meaning making with others. Corella's (2016) research on academic language use among second graders similarly demonstrates how academic language can be used to simultaneously accomplish "academic" and "social" work, while students also employ "social" or "informal" language to pursue academic goals.

As an alternative to the more traditional understanding of academic language as a distinct linguistic register crucial for students' academic success, Haneda (2014) has proposed the notion of "academic communication", which she has argued more accurately captures the interactional nature of academic language use as well as the "multi-modal dynamics of learning and teaching as it occurs in classrooms" (p. 126). Haneda (2014) has further suggested that adopting a sociocultural approach involves challenging existing perspectives that position academic language acquisition as an end in itself rather than treating it as one of many semiotic resources students employ in the context of specific actions and tasks. Other proponents of a sociocultural conceptualization of academic language have similarly emphasized the need to view language as socially-situated and connected to students' multiple identities and communities of practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Haneda, 2014; Hawkins, 2004; Walqui 2006, inter alia).

2. Culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies

As previously discussed, various researchers have argued that mainstream pedagogies and forms of assessment do not take students' complex repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) into account and consequently do not provide a full picture of what students are able to accomplish (Mislevy & Durán, 2014; Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2014, inter alia). The approaches that will be discussed in this section have been instrumental in challenging established deficit perspectives and proposing avenues for how to leverage and sustain students' linguistic and cultural practices.

Funds of Knowledge

Moll et al.'s (1992) seminal work on connecting family and community knowledge with teaching aimed to challenge existing approaches that viewed working-class and

immigrant families as lacking the intellectual and cultural resources to support their children's academic growth. Moll et al. (1992) define funds of knowledge as: "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). The concept was introduced as part of a collaborative ethnographic study conducted in a border community in Arizona. The project involved classroom observations, as well as family interviews, and a series of workshops for teachers on qualitative research skills that trained them to conduct family household observations. The findings of this initial study demonstrated the power of reciprocal home-classroom connections and identified a wide range of funds of knowledge associated with areas such as: household and business management, medical practices, religion, scientific and agricultural expertise. The concept of funds of knowledge has since been employed in a number of other studies (e.g. Barton & Tan, 2009; Moje et al. 2004; Riojas-Cortez, 2001) and has been expanded by researchers to include additional types of cultural knowledge, such as familiarity with citizenship and immigration related issues (Gallo & Link, 2015; Mangual Figueroa, 2011). For example, in their study on the experiences of Latinx students and families living in a town in Pennsylvania experiencing a rise in immigrant deportations, Gallo & Link (2015) characterized "politicized funds of knowledge" as funds "[students] developed from crossing the border, navigating what it meant to have "papers," or serving as intermediaries between police officers and their parents" (p. 358). Similarly, Sánchez's (2007) research on immigrant Latina youth adopted the notion of "transnational funds of knowledge" to capture the linguistic and cultural expertise immigrant youth acquired as members of transnational families and communities. González and Moll (2002) have continued to develop the funds of knowledge approach and have advocated for a

participatory pedagogy involving strong relationships between parents and teachers stressing teachers' fundamental role in communicating with families and learning about their students' sociohistorical backgrounds.

Hybrid language practices

Within literacy research, a number of studies have focused specifically on how literacy practices that depart from the traditional view of the *language of schooling* (Schleppegrell, 2002) can be legitimated and leveraged as resources for learning. One of the most well-known examples of this type of research is Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda's (1999) work on literacy practices among emergent bilinguals. Gutiérrez et al. (1999) characterize the merging of multiple codes, contexts, and discourses in classroom interaction as part of the hybridity inherent to learning spaces. In their study in a Spanish immersion elementary classroom, they examined how a bilingual teacher strategically used the classroom's hybrid culture to facilitate students' engagement with academic content. Within an introductory unit on reproduction that was developed at the students' request, the teacher employed strategies such as switching back and forth between academic and colloquial terms to provide different opportunities and points of entry for students to relate to new academic concepts. During a lesson involving learning about the development of the fetal spine one of the students responded to a text the teacher was reading to the class by making a comment to his peers about his family nickname, *huesudo* (bony). Rather than dismissing his observation, the teacher invited the student to share his contribution with the class and then prompted him to use his knowledge to answer a follow up question about the body, which he was able to answer correctly. In this example, the teacher was able to not only validate the student's experience, but also allowed him to participate in the activity by positioning him as a capable expert. Based on these findings, Gutiérrez et al. (1999) have suggested that acknowledging

and levering hybrid practices can lead to the construction of a *Third Space*, in which students' diverse resources and repertoires are validated and: "alternative and competing discourses and positionings transform conflict and difference into rich zones of collaboration and learning" (Gutiérrez et al., 1999, p. 286). The concept of third linguistic spaces has been widely used to characterize the kinds of learning environments that can facilitate the use of hybrid language practices in the classroom.

Translanguaging

As part of a growing body of research on the role of bilingualism and hybrid language practices in schools, *translanguaging* (García & Wei, 2014) has emerged as an alternative analytic lens that aims to challenge established ideas about how bilingual and multilingual students employ and develop their linguistic repertoires. Rather than focusing on individuals' knowledge or competencies in each language, translanguaging refers to "the speakers' construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of language, but that make up the speakers' complete language repertoire" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 22). Translanguaging seeks to shift attention away from linguistic phenomena, such as code-switching, which foreground how bilingual speakers transition between bound and discrete codes or systems of language, to how individuals combine their semiotic resources and linguistic practices to make meaning with others in a wide range of situations. García and Wei (2014) argue that in addition to moving beyond traditional approaches to bilingualism, the concept of translanguaging can help counter existing linguistic hierarchies that stigmatize and marginalize certain languages and language varieties.

In their overview of the development of translanguaging, García and Wei (2014) trace its origins to the rise of *languaging* within the fields of sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. Within sociolinguistics, the concept emerged as part of a post-structuralist response, which aimed to redefine language as a "series of social practices and actions" (p. 9) and bring attention to individuals' agency in appropriating language and negotiating meaning through social interaction. Scholars in this tradition also seek to challenge the broader political structures that create and maintain language hierarchies and serve to obscure individuals' complex local language practices (see Flores & García, 2013). While post-structuralist psycholinguistics are less concerned with the role of context in mediating meaning making, they too have adopted a more socially-oriented perspective by examining how individuals employ their diverse linguistic resources as part of complex cognitive processes. Swain (2009), for example, defines languaging as "a vehicle through which thinking is articulated and transformed into an artifactual form" (p. 97). Language is, consequently, viewed as crucial to the ways in which individuals access knowledge and articulate their thoughts and ideas to others.

Building on the psycholinguistic conceptualization of languaging, Wei (2011) argues that translanguaging: "involves both going between different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering), and going beyond them" (p. 1223). According to Wei (2011), in doing so, individuals are able to create multilingual social spaces in which their multi-dimensional experiences, identities, and abilities are positioned as valuable. This *translanguaging space* can be created *for* as well as *through* translanguaging practices and is grounded in the interplay between individuals' "creativity" and "criticality" (p. 1223). Wei (2011) defines

creativity as: “the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language” (p. 1223). Criticality, on the other hand, refers to an individual’s capacity to “use available evidence appropriately, systematically and insightfully to inform considered views of cultural, social and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematize received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations” (p. 1223). Together, these two elements inform the linguistic choices individuals’ make and the strategies they use in advancing their understanding of the world and communicating effectively with others.

Numerous studies on translanguaging have examined students’ linguistic practices in bilingual education settings, such as dual language or two-way immersion programs (Esquinca, Araujo, & de la Piedra, 2014; Sayer, 2013; Velasco & García, 2014; Worthy et al., 2013, inter alia). In their study on first grade students in a two-way dual language program in Central Texas, Durán and Palmer (2014) found that teachers and students played an instrumental role in co-constructing a pluralist multilingual discourse “that protected their classroom space for bilingual/biliterate development” (p. 382). During the time designated “bilingual center” each day, students worked primarily in pairs and small groups they were assigned to with the goal of grouping opposite language-dominant students together. Although the bilingual education model at the school required alternating between English and Spanish as the “language of the day”, during bilingual center time students were allowed to move fluidly between the two languages and teachers did not enforce the language of instruction. Moreover, students displayed positive identities in relation to their language practices and their status as “experts” and did not seem to view translanguaging as stigmatized. Durán and Palmer (2014) also noted that most of the instances of switching from

one language to another by students were not evidence of *crutching*, but rather intersentential switches intended to facilitate communication and mutual understanding with their peers. In their analysis of teaching practices within the same larger ethnographic study, Palmer et al. (2014), emphasized the two master teachers' central roles in supporting and promoting translanguaging in the classroom. Some of their teaching strategies included: modeling dynamic bilingualism through their own translanguaging practices, encouraging and making use of students' metalinguistic observations to promote learning, and positioning all students as bilinguals, independently of their abilities in each language.

Similarly, Durán, Hikida, Pruitt, and Peterson's (2013) research exemplifies how even in the context of a transitional bilingual program, in which students are being prepared for "English only" classrooms, teachers have the ability to transform instruction in order to validate students' linguistic and cultural resources. By examining classroom interaction during read-aloud discussions, Durán et al. (2013) found that the teacher in their study consistently created opportunities to draw connections to students' existing knowledge and experiences. The text the teacher chose to read with the students-- a book about a young girl's journey emigrating to the United States from Mexico with her family-- generated rich discussions in which using hybrid language practices was the norm. The teacher herself also engaged in these practices and used them both to validate students' contributions and expertise, as well as to help them draw metalinguistic connections and facilitate their understanding of vocabulary and content in both languages.

García, Makar, Starcevic, and Terry's (2011) study in an English-Spanish bilingual kindergarten program demonstrates how even in the absence of linguistically inclusive instructional spaces, students appropriated and engaged in translanguaging by creating third

spaces in which these practices were legitimated. As they describe, language separation in the program was strictly enforced and students were taught to use each language with a particular teacher and within designated instructional spaces, or "language territories" (p. 41). García et al. (2011) emphasize the agency of the young children in the class in undermining the monoglossic language ideology within the program, and demonstrate how the children's language use reflects their dynamic bilingual identities. The children in the study used translanguaging for a wide range of purposes that included facilitating understanding and co-constructing knowledge with their peers, using translanguaging during private talk to try out and make sense of new practices and ideas, as well as for the purposes of social inclusion and exclusion within peer groups. This significant range of unsanctioned applications suggests that even in education settings that are organized around the separation of languages, students are often motivated to create their own translanguaging spaces, which allow them to further their learning and interact with others in ways that would not be possible without the use of their complete linguistic repertoires.

Martin-Beltrán's (2014) research on the "Language Ambassadors" program at a monolingual English public high school in Washington D.C. clearly illustrates the multiple strategies employed by students of diverse linguistic backgrounds in making meaning during literacy activities. Participants in the program were categorized as "English experts", "Spanish experts", and "Bilingual experts" and were divided into mixed language groups. Students were instructed to discuss and compose their written work in their "target language", but were encouraged to use all of their language resources to consult with their peers. In this context, the students used translanguaging for several purposes, including: mediating learning and understanding through the use of both languages, using their

metalinguistic knowledge to defend and explain specific word choices, and expanding their linguistic repertoires.

In more recent work on "translanguaging" Wei (2017) extends the discussion to propose that translanguaging is not merely a concept that attempts to capture a specific form of language use but that it represents a theory of language that: "reconceptualizes language as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making, and the multilingual as someone who is aware of the existence of the political entities of named languages and has an ability to make use the structural features of some of them that they have acquired" (Wei, 2017, p. 22). As I will argue in my analysis, this broader perspective proves useful in thinking about how students fluidly combine features of different linguistic register to make meaning during academic tasks.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)

In an effort to extend and challenge existing approaches to working with students from nondominant backgrounds, Paris (2012) has proposed adopting *culturally sustaining pedagogies*, which he defines as pedagogies that "support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95). Unlike existing "asset-based" approaches, such as *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995), which Paris (2012) has argued have not gone far enough in countering the deficit perspectives that continue to shape education policies and practices in the United States, culturally sustaining pedagogies aim to "perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 95). While Paris & Alim (2014) have recognized the crucial role approaches such as "culturally relevant pedagogy" have played in pushing back

against deeply entrenched deficit perspectives in classrooms and teacher education programs, they have stressed that the time has come to reexamine the goals of these perspectives. One of their main critiques is that being "relevant" to students' backgrounds through teaching does not address the need to support students in sustaining their cultures and languages in the long-term. They have further questioned the focus on static and at times overly deterministic understandings of heritage cultures that have been perpetuated by education programs claiming to be "culturally relevant" or "asset-based", which do not reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of students' cultural practices. Moreover, they have underscored the need to problematize the notion that students of color should be evaluated based on how well they assimilate into and reproduce White cultural and linguistic practices: "What if, indeed, the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms but to explore, honor, extend, and, at times, problematize their heritage and community practices? (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86). Similarly, to the work done on hybrid language practices and translanguaging, CSP, hence, seeks to address the underlying power and racial dynamics that shape the experiences of students of color and emergent bilinguals in schools.

C. Research Questions

In light of the research discussed in this chapter, numerous questions emerge. One crucial issue is how students' literacy practices are defined and how these conceptualizations influence how literacy is taught and assessed in the classroom. From a sociocultural perspective, the narrow focus of the CCSS on "close reading" and the associated analytic practices clearly omits key aspects of literacy development; most notably, the social contexts in which it occurs. In terms of the experiences of emergent bilinguals, a growing body of

research suggests that embracing translanguaging practices can create educational spaces in which students are able to engage meaningfully with texts while drawing on their full linguistic and cultural repertoires. The reality, however, is that most emergent bilinguals in the United States are in monolingual English classrooms in which these hybrid language spaces are not available to them. Given this scenario, and the limited empirical studies on students' experiences with close reading in public school classrooms, I decided to approach some of these issues by observing what the students themselves were doing as they participated in activities intended to teach close reading skills. The main research question driving this study is: How do students negotiate and co-construct meaning in instructional activities involving close reading? This broader question was further broken down into the following more specific research questions:

1. What linguistic practices and resources do students draw on in their interactions with others during activities involving close reading?
2. What roles and identities do students take on in these interactions?

It is important to note that the goal of the analysis presented in this study was not to determine whether students were doing close reading "correctly", but rather to shed light on the multiple and complex linguistic practices students employed as they co-constructed their understanding of texts. The following chapter will layout the theoretical framework that has informed these research questions, as well as the study's methodological approach and analysis.

III. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framing of this study integrates various perspectives that focus on how language is conceptualized, co-constructed, and learned by individuals through their interactions with others and as members of dynamic sociocultural contexts and communities of practice. In this chapter, I discuss how these theoretical influences have informed my understanding of how language is learned and how individuals use language to construct and negotiate their identities with others.

A. How is Language Learned?

1. Sociocultural learning theories

From a theoretical standpoint, my understanding of language learning and classroom interaction draw heavily on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, particularly his conceptualization of development as a shared process involving joint activity between individuals situated in particular sociohistorical contexts. Building on this idea, Vygotsky (1978) maintained that individuals reach their level of *potential development* by engaging and co-constructing knowledge with others. His widely adopted notion of the *zone of proximal development* (ZDP), represents the space between what learners are able to accomplish independently and what they are able to achieve through their interactions with more experienced adults or peers. Another central concept of this theory is *mediation*, which refers to the role of cultural tools and artifacts in mediating understanding between individuals. In classroom settings, these mediating artifacts may include texts, various types of technology, as well as gestures, symbols, and other representations of spoken and written language.

A related notion that was not part of Vygotsky's original theory but has come to be

strongly associated with contemporary applications of the ZPD is *scaffolding*, which can be defined as: "a process of 'setting up' the situation to make the child's entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it" (Bruner, 1983, p. 60). In research on language learning, scaffolding has often been identified as one of the instructional practices that can facilitate the development of new skills and linguistic practices by taking into account each individual's context and existing skills. Within Neo-Vygotskian theory, Rogoff's (1990) concept of *apprenticeship* has been applied to represent the kinds of social relationships and interactions that lead individuals to acquire communicative competence, and is grounded in a sociocultural view of cognition, in which learning is scaffolded through the guidance of a more experienced individual. Researchers in this area have also increasingly challenged the idea that being in an expert role necessarily involves being an adult rather than a child and have demonstrated how individuals may alternate between taking on the roles of experts and novices depending on the context. This is particularly the case in peer-to-peer interactions, where who is positioned as the expert is continuously being negotiated in moment-to-moment interactions (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011).

With respect to how learning occurs from a sociocultural perspective Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) have maintained that in order to create participatory spaces in which students' diverse backgrounds and resources are valued, teachers must be aware of their students' "linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires," which they define as "ways of engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices" (p. 22). They further distinguish between individuals' *membership* and *participation* in groups, noting that membership is often viewed as a static trait used to make generalizations about

individuals based on their ethnic and racial backgrounds, whereas participation in different groups can vary across individuals and change over time. Repertories of practices are therefore understood as fluid sets of practices that are not determined by students' participation in any one community.

2. Language as action

An approach that has built on some of the principles of sociocultural theory is the conceptualization of *language as action*. From this perspective: "language is an inseparable part of all human action, intimately connected to all other forms of action, physical, social and symbolic" (van Lier & Walqui, 2012, p.4). Language is consequently also viewed as inextricably tied to individuals' agency within their particular sociocultural and historical contexts. In terms of how this perspective can be translated into concrete teaching practices, van Lier and Walqui (2012) propose that: "In a classroom context, an action-based perspective means that ELs engage in meaningful activities (projects, presentations, investigations) that engage their interest and that encourage language growth through perception, interaction, planning, research, discussion, and construction of academic products of various kinds" (p. 4). They also stress the importance of teachers using scaffolds and peer work to facilitate language learning for students. It is important to note that this understanding of language is dramatically different from traditional views of language in schools that often focus on students' acquisition of specific grammatical and lexical features (Schleppegrell, 2002).

3. Language socialization

Another theoretical lens that is useful in analyzing language practices in schools and overlaps significantly with some of the principles of sociocultural theory is language

socialization (LS) research. As Duff (2007) argues, both LS and sociocultural theory focus on meaning-making processes in the context of social interaction and share a cultural and social understanding of how language is learned. LS research draws from various disciplines, including Linguistic Anthropology and Human Development, and focuses on "the ways participants in socialization interactions, whether in expert or novice roles, negotiate the acquisition and display of skills for competent participation in a community" (Baquedano-López & Hernandez, 2011, p. 197). In their influential overview of the field, Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) define LS as occurring through two distinct paths: "socialization *through* the use of language and socialization *to* use language" (p. 163). More recently, Garrett & Baquedano-López (2002) have characterized LS research as "concerned with all of the knowledge and practices that one needs in order to function as—and, crucially, to be regarded by others as—a competent member of (or participant in) a particular community or communities, however broadly or narrowly defined" (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002, p. 345). This focus on how individuals learn and use language in order to function as "competent members" of communities is particularly relevant to the role of language in education settings where students' access to and participation in different groups is often determined on the basis of their language practices.

A distinguishing feature of LS, particularly when compared to other subfields within Linguistics, is its concern for the role of context. Rather than analyzing language in isolation, LS research views "development as culturally situated, as mediated, and as replete with social, cultural, and political meanings in addition to propositional or ideational meanings carried or indexed by various linguistic, textual, and paralinguistic forms" (Duff, 2010, p. 172). Along with an emphasis on context, one of the central units of analysis is the notion of

community. While early LS research focused primarily on small scale societies, which often made it easier to delimitate a particular community in terms of geographical boundaries, the kinds of settings researchers are taking on within LS are increasingly viewed as connected to broader and often distant linguistically and culturally heterogeneous contexts. One way in which this issue has been addressed by LS scholars is by adopting Lave and Wenger's (1991) more fluid and dynamic concept of *communities of practice*, which can be defined as: "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464). Lave and Wenger (1991) further characterize communities of practice as having three main features: a shared domain, a community of individuals engaged in repeated and joint activities, and repertoires of resources and practices resulting from individuals' mutual engagement. For this study, the concept of communities of practice, as well as LS more broadly, prove particularly useful in attempting to make sense of how particular linguistic practices are taught and acquired by students through processes of socialization within and across the different communities they navigate inside and outside the classroom.

4. Language as dialogic

Bakhtin's (1981) vision of language as *dialogic interaction* proposes that all literacy practices occur in conversation with an "other". Individuals participating in literacy tasks may be in conversation with each other, as well as with the author of a text, but, more importantly, they are appropriating and "populating" ongoing conversations that have been shaped by existing and prior discourses. This "multivocal" understanding of language foregrounds how individuals appropriate a wide range of semiotic resources that not only

include words or utterances, but symbols, artifacts, and other forms of media in order to make meaning and enact various identities as they engage with others.

In addition to drawing on Bakhtin's notion that language is fundamentally dialogic, this line of research can also be informed by Freire's critical pedagogy approach to *dialogic learning*. According to Freire (1970), learning occurs through the process of critical dialogue in which the teacher acts as a facilitator and students are given opportunities to examine issues that are relevant to their lives and social contexts. He further employs the concept of *praxis* to represent the shared process of reflection and action, which results in *conscientização* or "critical consciousness". Similarly to other approaches discussed thus far, Freire's vision is deeply sociocultural and positions learners as the driving force behind their own learning: "For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1970, p. 71-72).

Both of these approaches are relevant to my analysis of students' peer interactions as they suggest that students' ideas and interpretations are in constant conversation with others and cannot be understood independently from the sociocultural contexts in which they occur.

B. Language and Identity

Recognizing that the concept of identity has been defined and theorized in a wide range of ways within education (see Lee & Anderson, 2009) and across various related fields, this study is informed by a *sociocultural linguistic* understanding in which identity is viewed as: "a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual

psyche or in fixed social categories" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p. 19). This approach further focuses on the emergent nature of identity as it is negotiated in moment-to-moment interactions. Identity is, hence, seen as a form of social action enacted through language and other semiotic resources. According to this conceptualization, identity is also defined *in relation* to other identities. In the context of this study, for example, the category of a "good reader" is necessarily defined in relation to that of a "bad" or "struggling" reader.

Another component of the sociocultural linguistic framework, which is particularly useful for examining students' peer-to-peer interactions is the notion of indexicality (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 1985). Indexicality broadly refers to: "the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 394). Bucholtz and Hall (2005) stress that these links between language and meaning must be understood in the context of broader ideologies and discourses "about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 394). This framework, hence, allows for a more nuanced analysis of the types of identities students negotiate in their interactions and moves away from more static categories such as "English learner" and "Mexican" that do not reflect the multiple communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) students participate in, and the dynamic ways in which they make use of language in order to express themselves across different contexts.

In her conceptualization of indexicality, Ochs (1992) argues that language is not directly linked to identity categories, but that individuals use language to produce stances, which in turn become associated with certain socially recognized identities. According to Du Bois (2007): "Stance has the power to assign value to objects of interest, to position social actors with respect to these objects, to calibrate alignment between stancetakers and to

invoke presupposed systems of sociocultural value" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 139). Due to my interest in peer interactions, the concept of stance is particularly relevant to understanding how certain roles and identities are instantiated as students position themselves and others by aligning/disaligning with each other's arguments, making evaluative statements, and negotiating what practices are valued locally at any given moment.

Although a sociocultural linguistic understanding of identity challenges static notions of identity that have been dominant across various fields, Bucholtz et al. (2012) recognize that when individuals are continuously positioned in certain ways stances can develop into "itineraries of identity" which become less flexible over time. Within certain contexts, these itineraries can limit individuals' abilities to opt out of "well-worn ideological routes along which socially positioned subjects may be compelled to travel" (Bucholtz et al., 2012, p. 157). Consistent with this perspective, my analysis focuses on moment-to-moment interactions with attention to how these specific interactions tie into broader social patterns and dynamics.

1. Agency

Similarly to discussions surrounding identity, the concept of agency has generated debate within fields such as Linguistics, Sociology, and Anthropology, which have questioned its conceptualization as a static attribute of rationally acting individuals. The field of Linguistic Anthropology has been particularly influential in challenging existing approaches. Duranti (2004), for example, has proposed the following working definition: "Agency is here understood as the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities'(and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of

their responsibility for a given outcome)" (p. 453). Duranti's definition points to the interactional nature of agency, where individuals affect others through their actions and can be evaluated by others on the basis of their language use, for example, by commenting on their linguistic competence.

From a sociocultural linguistic perspective, Hall and Bucholtz (2005) propose conceptualizing agency as: "the accomplishment of social action" (p. 606). They argue that agency is social and relational and that it is not only the product of intentional actions, but also of "habitual" responses that are not always conscious, but nevertheless have effects on the world. Moreover, they maintain that agency can be "ascribed through the perceptions and representations of others or assigned through ideologies and social structures" (p. 606). In their discussion of the role of affect in Latinx students' learning, Bucholtz et al. (2018) suggest that agency can be enacted both through language and the body. They further emphasize the role of power, which has largely been omitted from previous conceptualizations stating that: "agency, whether individual or collective is political: It acts upon the world and thus effects change and engages with power in consequential ways – whether to claim that power, to redistribute it, or incapacitate it" (p. 4). Drawing on these perspectives, in this study, students' agency is viewed as interactional and as both challenging and at times constrained by broader ideological and political structures.

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives overviewed in this chapter together provide conceptual tools for examining and interpreting students' literacy practices in the classroom. Some of the main implications of these approaches for my analysis are: language learning is seen as a fundamentally social process; students' language practices cannot be examined separately

from the sociocultural contexts in which they occur; students have agency over their language use; and identities are fluid and socially constructed through moment-to-moment interactions.

IV. Methods

This chapter presents the study's methodological approach and provides descriptions of the setting and participants, followed by an overview of the methods for data collection and analysis. As will be discussed, the study combines qualitative methods that are consistent with the ethnographic and sociocultural linguistic orientation of the research, and include the following methods of data production: participant observation, video and audio recordings, fieldnotes, ethnographic interviews, as well as analysis of classroom artifacts.

Adopting an Ethnographic Approach

This study is theoretically and methodologically grounded in an ethnographic research perspective. Recognizing that there is much debate about what counts as ethnography and how it can be distinguished from other qualitative methods (Agar, 2006; Green & Bloome, 2004), my research approach incorporates a number of features that have been identified as central to conducting ethnography. These include viewing ethnography as an interactive process that is abductive, recursive, and iterative in nature (Agar, 2006); as well as a focus on uncovering local meaning-making practices (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Some scholars further argue that ethnography should not be narrowly defined as a method or an instrument for data collection, but rather a "philosophy of research" (Anderson-Levitt, 2006), or a "logic of enquiry" (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2011). This conceptualization has significant implications for what it means to identify research as ethnographic and to what extent the ethnographic perspective should shape the various stages of the research process. Green and Bloome (1992) suggest that "*doing ethnography* involves the framing, conceptualizing, conducting, interpreting, writing, and reporting associated with a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group" (p. 4). This study draws on these

perspectives, particularly on the interactive nature of *doing ethnography* and its conceptualization as both a theoretical and methodological perspective that aims to uncover local meaning making practices.

Anderson-Levitt (2006) further argues that the “meaning making” that ethnography attempts to make visible can be located in three different places: in participants’ minds, in social interactions, and in artifacts. The idea that much of meaning is in people’s minds and is based on their personal interpretations makes the challenge of doing ethnography substantial, but also highlights both the importance of attempting to access these interpretations and the obvious limitations this creates for the researcher. In this study, the focus on peer interactions, along with the analysis of interviews and various classroom artifacts, offered numerous entry points into local meanings and interpretations.

A. Classroom Context

1. Setting

Roseland Elementary (pseudonym) is a mid-sized elementary school in a suburban community in Southern California. Compared to other elementary schools in the district, Roseland Elementary has a more ethnically and racially diverse student body than most other schools, which are predominantly composed of White or Latinx students. During the 2015-16 school year, 59.4% of students at Roseland were Latinx, 27.9% students were White, 5.9% were Asian, 0.7% were African American, and 4.1% were of one or more races. Socioeconomically, students’ families at the school come from a mix of working and middleclass backgrounds.

In terms of test scores, the 2015-16 results for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress [CAASPP] System show that 55% of Roseland elementary

students met or exceeded state standards for ELA, while 49% met or exceeded state standards for mathematics. The results position Roseland above the statewide averages (49% for ELA and 37% for Mathematics) and below the district averages (59% for ELA and 54% Mathematics). These test scores are based on students' scores on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments administered for students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11, as well as the California Alternate Assessments [CAAs] for students in the same grade levels with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

It is important to note that students at Roseland had a number of resources available to them that are not standard for public schools. Students had regular access to computer tablets and classrooms were equipped with SMART boards. Students participated in music, dance, and art lessons as part of their regular class schedules. They also had access to a well-stocked library, which they visited bi-weekly and where the librarian enthusiastically exposed them to different books and genres. During my time at the school, students had the opportunity to participate in a number of extracurricular activities such as attending sleep-away "space camp" and going to a screening of the popular animated movie "Inside Out", where the director answered students' questions about the movie.

I was first put into contact with the 6th grade classroom teacher, Ms. Anderson[1], through Meghan Corella in the Department of Education at UC Santa Barbara. After meeting with me to discuss my proposed research project Ms. Anderson willingly agreed to allow me to collect data in her classroom. Given the ethnographic orientation of my study and my desire to build a relationship with the students and the teacher I offered to volunteer in the classroom and work with the students during English Language Arts (ELA) and Academic

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

Language Development (ALD) classes, while collecting data for my research. Since IRB and district approval were delayed, I began volunteering in Ms. Anderson's classroom in October of 2015, but did not begin to collect data until the beginning of the second semester, in January 2016. The first few months of volunteering proved to be helpful in allowing me to familiarize myself with the classroom practices and routines and build rapport with the students without the presence of the camera and other recording devices. During my eight months at Roseland elementary, I visited the classroom two to three times a week from 8:30-10:30 am, during ELA and ALD classes, which were both taught by Ms. Anderson. During data collection, which lasted until the end of the school year, I continued to assist Ms. Anderson during a variety of literacy projects and activities and worked with the students both individually and in small groups. Over the course of the semester, I collected approximately 76 hours of video data.

2. Participants

The sixth-grade class where I conducted my observations was made up of 23 students. Three of the students had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and were not generally in the classroom while I was collecting data. Of the twenty remaining students, sixteen agreed to participate in the study. The sixteen participants included four students who were formerly English learners and were reclassified at the beginning of the second semester, as well as a new student from Brazil, who joined the class in January and was in the school's intermediate English Language Development (ELD) class, which was mainly comprised of third and fourth graders. Student's ethnoracial backgrounds were consistent with overall school demographics: One student was Asian American (Filipino background), one student

was mixed race (African American/Latinx), one student was Brazilian, eleven were Latinx (Mexican background), and nine were White (Non-Latinx).

Due to my interest in the experiences of emergent bilinguals within close reading activities I identified the five students who were in the school's English Development Program (ELD) at the beginning of the school year as my focal students. I later added two additional Latina students, who were also Spanish speakers and former ELs, due to Ms. Anderson's characterization of them as "competent" and "serious" students. Four of the ELs were reclassified at the beginning of the second semester when I officially initiated my data collection. As Ms. Anderson explained to me, graduating "advanced" EL students from the program in the sixth grade was a common practice at the school because teachers were concerned that transitioning into middle school as an EL would be detrimental to students in the long-run.

Figure 4.1 Participant Profiles

Student (Pseudonym)	**Linguistic/Ethnoracial information**	**Profile**
Diego	Bilingual Spanish/English Reclassified EL (January 2016) Latinx/Mexican	Diego self-identified as "99.9% Mexican" and considered himself to be fluent in Spanish. He compared his language abilities to his sister's, who he described as better at English than him because she had graduated from ELD when she was in the 3rd grade. He was the student I had the closest relationship with, in part because we spent a lot of time working together one-on-one because he needed support completing ELA assignments. His favorite classes were Math and Social Science. Diego enjoyed being in Ms. Anderson's class and described her as his "bestie". His peer group was mainly made up of other Latinx students in the class. He liked to code-switch and used Spanish words or phrases with me on occasion. During ELA he was often "behind" on his work, although this changed for the final ELA unit, where he was among the first students to complete the

		project.
Pedro	Bilingual Spanish/English Reclassified EL (January 2016) Latinx/Mexican	Similarly to Diego, Pedro was a recent graduate of the ELD program and came from a predominantly Spanish-speaking home. Much of his extended family lived in the area. He described himself as fluent in Spanish and also used Spanish with his peers frequently. Pedro identified as Mexican in exchanges with me and his peers and often made references to his background and cultural heritage. Although I usually observed him interacting with other Latinx students in the class he identified several of the White students in the class as his friends. Pedro often joked with his peers and sometimes seemed distracted during literacy tasks, particularly those involving writing independently.
Lucas	English/Some Spanish Reclassified EL (January 2016) Mexican background	Lucas had recently graduated from the ELD program. Although his parents and the majority of his family were from a Mexican background, he did not identify as Mexican and told me he was unsure about how to classify himself. He described experiencing difficulty communicating in Spanish and said that "everyone" in his family spoke Spanish. Lucas frequently engaged in disruptive behavior, such as making inappropriate jokes, particularly racial jokes that sometimes referred to peoples' skin color. Although some of his peers encouraged his sense of humor they also complained about his jokes and were at times upset by the things he said. His favorite classes were Science and Math. In his free-time he said he enjoyed playing video games. Several students such as Diego and Pedro considered Lucas to be their friend, but in his interview he joked that he didn't have friends in the class.
Inés	Bilingual Spanish/English Latinx/Mexican	Although Inés was not initially identified as one of my focal students, I grew interested in her due to her role in the class as one of the "studious" Latinx students. Inés, who was a former EL, was from a Spanish-speaking home and was well-liked among her peers. Her peer group was mainly made up of other Latinx students. She and her friends were part of a group of girls who were generally academically motivated and engaged. She enjoyed ELA and often displayed curiosity and confidence in expressing her ideas both in

		small group and whole class activities. She was also athletic and enjoyed playing sports outside of school.
Vanessa	Bilingual Spanish/English Latinx/Mexican	Vanessa, although more reserved than Inés, was part of the same friendship group and displayed many similar characteristics. She was not one of my original focal students, but I decided to observe her more closely due to her displayed competence at several of the ELA skills prioritized in the class. In her interview, Ms. Anderson mentioned she considered Vanessa to be among the higher performing students. She was an avid reader and often read ahead during the final ELA unit on the novel "Bridge to Terabithia". Although she appeared to be serious and quiet she often joked with her peers and enjoyed talking about music and pop culture. She also stood her ground when she was challenged by her peers in the context of academic activities.
Natalia	Bilingual Spanish/English Reclassified EL (January 2016) Latinx/Mexican	Like Diego, Natalia was one of the students who used Spanish more frequently while in the classroom. In my interview with her, she described math and science as her favorite subjects and explained that she liked science because you "get to do really cool stuff". She was generally vocal about needing help or finding certain tasks "confusing" during ELA. Natalia was very social and often got caught up in conversations with her friends during ELA activities. Despite not always engaging with the class material she always seemed happy in the class and was very cheerful and outgoing.
Mateo	Bilingual Portuguese/English Classified "Intermediate EL" Brazilian	Mateo, who joined the class in January, was originally from Brazil. Despite the language barrier Mateo was not afraid to ask for help or speak up in front of the class. He was very outgoing and frequently joked with Ms. Anderson and his peers. At times, Mateo grew frustrated with certain ELA tasks. He often asked me for help and connected with me over our shared Latin American background. Because I am Argentinian, he liked to joke with me about the historic Brazil-Argentina soccer rivalry. He was also eager to share his experiences in Brazil with his peers and teachers and frequently drew connections and commented on how they compared to his new schooling experience in

		the U.S. Socially it was initially difficult for Mateo to establish close friendships, particularly because other students were often tasked with “helping” him in the class and he was positioned as somewhat of an outsider. This slowly changed over the course of the second semester when he grew friendly with some of the White students in the class, such as Andrew and Sean.

Ms. Anderson

Ms. Anderson was a White veteran teacher, who was two years from retirement at the time of data collection. She taught at Roseland elementary for a total of fourteen years. She earned an undergraduate degree in History and a Master’s degree in Education. Although she had spent some time earlier in her career teaching 3rd grade, she mostly taught in the upper elementary grades (4-6). Ms. Anderson took Spanish classes in high school and college and used Spanish occasionally in the classroom to draw connections between languages. For example, she used Spanish when teaching the class about Latin and Greek roots, as well as during a lesson on personal pronouns. She also used Spanish to communicate with some of the Spanish-speaking parents although she claimed she was “not very good” (e-mail communication).

From our first meeting, Ms. Anderson was eager to welcome me into her classroom and supportive of my research. Her classroom was one I would describe as cheerful, yet focused. Ms. Anderson achieved the difficult balance between being respected by the students and also finding joy and laughter in learning. She had a number of “inside jokes” with her students such as a rubber chicken which became the class mascot and was referred to as the “chy-cken”. Every morning students had a “brain-break” around 10 am in between their English Language Arts and Academic Language Development or English Language Development classes. These brain-breaks usually involved Ms. Anderson projecting

animated videos or music videos, which guided the students through various dance choreographies and in some cases relaxation exercises. One of the things that struck me about Ms. Anderson early on was that she always participated in these activities and that even when she was busy finishing up with something or getting ready for the next activity she would walk around the classroom waving her arms in the air and dancing to the music along with her students. It was no surprise that Ms. Anderson was extremely well-liked among the students.

3. Activities

In English Language Arts (ELA), students participated in a range of activities. Classes often began with students working on or reviewing worksheets on grammar exercises and specific features of language, such as adjectives and adverbs, different types of pronouns, and Greek roots. During these exercises, Ms. Anderson would often use the SMART board camera to project the worksheets and would call on students to give their answers. Usually, she did this by randomly selecting from a plastic container filled with popsicle sticks with students' names on them. Students often also read short texts together, such as informational texts and short stories, and answered questions about the texts in their table groups.

There were also a number of long-term projects that students worked on over several days and weeks. At the beginning of the second semester, students read a book of Greek myths and completed an accompanying "scrapbook", which included various exercises and extension activities, such as writing their own myth and composing a letter to one of the gods/goddesses. Students also spent several days researching a specific country on the internet and writing a report detailing various aspects of their assigned country and its people, including politics, geography, and cultural traditions.

The unit I focus on throughout much of this study is the final ELA unit in which students read the novel "Bridge to Terabithia" by Katherine Paterson. I chose this particular unit because it involved students reading together and discussing the novel in small groups over a one-month period. For most of the other projects, such as the Greek myths, students engaged in discussions, but read more independently. Further, given that it was the last unit of the year I considered it a good site to examine what students were able to accomplish together after spending the year developing various literacy skills in the class. Throughout the unit, students were divided into three "reading groups". One group worked with Ms. Anderson in the main classroom, a second group worked independently in another corner of the classroom, and the third group worked with me in an adjoining room. When creating the reading groups, Ms. Anderson accommodated my interest in working primarily with the students who were classified as English learners. Three of the English learners were in my group and the other two were assigned to Ms. Anderson's group because she felt they would benefit from additional support. This was particularly the case for Mateo, the new student from Brazil who was attending an English language school for the first time. The group that worked independently was made up of what Ms. Anderson referred to, during her interview, as two of her "very high" female students and three other female students she considered to be very capable yet more reserved. She explained to me that she had put those students in the same group because she could trust them to be focused and work well together (INT 6-1-16). Chapter five provides a detailed description of specific activities students participated in during the "Bridge to Terabithia" unit.

During Academic Language Development (ALD) students typically sat at their tables in small groups and were given an issue of Scholastic News Magazine, which they could

choose an article from. Students were expected to highlight important details in the articles as they took turns reading and then presented brief summaries of what they learned to the rest of the class. The other main activity that took place during ALD were debates. Debate topics were on topics such as "should recess be free time?" and were viewed by students as a fun and enjoyable activity. Students were assigned to each side and were expected to participate by using academic language to communicate their arguments. Because English Language Development (ELD) classes were scheduled during ALD, the students who were English learners did not participate in these activities until the second half of the year when they had been reclassified.

B. My Positionality

A discussion of my research approach is incomplete without addressing the crucial issue of positionality. My background is both the reason why I care so deeply about the experiences of emergent bilinguals in school and an ongoing source of tension and reflection when it comes to understanding my place as a participant observer in Latinx communities. While I identify as a Spanish speaker from a Latinx background, my family is originally from Argentina, which is culturally quite different from the predominantly Mexican/Latinx communities in the area of my research. I also come from an upper middleclass background, which means I have had access to many opportunities, such as attending private schools, as well as travelling and living abroad. Most importantly, I have been largely sheltered from the various sources of discrimination other immigrant Spanish speakers face daily in the United States. I also identify as a cisgender woman, which in certain situations has brought its own set of privileges and protections. While my experiences living in different places have shaped my perspective on issues of language, culture, and race in important ways, they also create

clear differences between myself and many of the community members I work with. Recently, I was at another nearby elementary school with one of my White colleagues and a Latinx parent who struck up a conversation with us was surprised to learn that we both spoke Spanish. Although in some situations I am read as White or ethnically ambiguous I am always read as "different." The result is that I tend to be cautious about sharing too much about myself out of fear that it will create distance between myself and the students I work with. I have also, not always consciously, adopted strategies to reduce this distance, such as trying to neutralize my Spanish so that my accent is not as clearly identifiable.

The students' understanding of me as a Latinx woman volunteering and conducting research in their classroom was continuously evolving and being reassessed. This was, however, not a linear process or one in which I found myself progressively on "the inside" of the group of Latinx students in the class. While being a Spanish speaker allowed me to connect with several of the students on a personal level and I shared important aspects of my identity with them, such as identifying as being from a country I did not grow up in and having most of my extended family living outside the U.S., there were many instances where my ignorance and privilege positioned me as an outsider. This often occurred when I questioned students about cultural practices and terms I was clearly unfamiliar with (such as the word "*chancla*", which refers to sandals or flip flops), but also when I made assumptions about their experiences. In one conversation, for example, I was surprised to learn that Diego who strongly identified as Mexican and often spoke about Mexico had never been to Mexico before. This was, of course, clearly a possibility, but in the moment, I did not stop to consider the deeper implications of what it means to be able to travel freely to your country of origin.

C. Data Production

1. Units of Analysis

In order to analyze students' literacy practices related to close reading I focused on observing and documenting student-student interactions within instructional activities that were part of broader curriculum units in the subjects of ELA and ALD. For example, at the beginning of my data collection process the students read a number of Greek myths during ELA as part of a unit on Greek mythology. As noted above, for this project, students were expected to complete a "scrapbook" that had various components, such as writing detailed summaries of the myths including students' opinions about the myths supported by textual evidence. Similarly, the "Bridge to Terabithia" unit involved students' filling out a "workbook" with activities that specifically targeted Common Core reading skills, such as filling out a chart identifying different characters' perspectives and making predictions about future events in the novel based on evidence from the text.

2. Fieldnotes

As a participant observer, one of the primary ways in which the researcher can document what they are observing in the moment is through the use of detailed fieldnotes: "Through fieldnotes, everyday events in the field setting are described and attempts are made to identify the significance of actions in the events from the various points of view of the actors themselves" (Shaffif & Stebbins, 1991; cited in Creese et al., 2008, p. 202). Anderson-Levitt (2006) argues that it is important for ethnographers to make distinctions in their notes between descriptive information and their own interpretation of events. She recommends rereading field notes frequently and attempting to identify and remove any bias that may influence future analysis and interpretation of the data.

During my time at Roseland, I kept a small notebook to record detailed fieldnotes whenever possible. Writing fieldnotes while in the classroom was easier when students were participating in whole class activities, in which I had a more passive role. When I was working with students individually and in groups it was often more challenging to find time to take notes, although I would jot down quotes and important details as best I could. In order to ensure that I had a detailed account of each day's activities, I generally recorded audio fieldnotes right after leaving the school. This allowed me to later go back and add to my written fieldnotes while checking for my biases and perceptions, as Anderson-Levitt suggests.

3. Video and Audio Recordings

Using video recording as way to document classroom interaction presents a series of challenges. One of the most crucial issues is where to focus the "ethnographic gaze" (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Erickson (2006) highlights that a video recording should not be treated as data, but rather viewed as: "[a] resource for data construction, an information source containing potential data out of which actual data must be defined and searched for" (Erickson, 2006, p. 178). He makes a number of recommendations about how to best capture social interaction through video recording, which include limiting panning and zooming, as well as recording continuously rather than cutting and editing footage while data is being collected. Although my goal was to video record student interactions continuously from the moment I arrived in the classroom, the fact that I had four students in the classroom who were not participating in the study sometimes forced me turn off the camera briefly. This became less of a challenge than I expected since I tended to film individual groups to observe peer-to-peer interactions rather than trying to capture whole class interactions. The tables in

the classroom were arranged so that students sat facing each other in groups of four or five. These table groups were reconfigured frequently by Ms. Anderson, which made it relatively easy to only film groups of consenting students.

While I was in the classroom I also audio recorded the groups I was filming, by placing my phone on the table. I initially attempted to use individual lapel mics on the focal students, but found that the sound quality in large classroom activities was not very good and that the mics were often a distraction for students and caused frequent interruptions. For the "Bridge to Terabithia" unit sound was less of an issue because my group worked in a separate room, which reduced the loud background noise that was common in the main classroom.

4. Interviews

As part of the study, Ms. Anderson and the focal students in the class were interviewed at the end of the school year. The goal of the interviews was to learn about participants' perceptions about the literacy practices in their class, but also more broadly about the way they viewed themselves as learners and members of their classroom community. Interviews also served to gain insight into students' experiences with language outside the classroom and across their communities of practice. I prepared a series of semi-structured questions that were designed to serve as a starting point to engage students in conversation. Student interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. My interview with Ms. Anderson was somewhat more structured given that I had a number of questions about my classroom observations that we had not had a chance to address in our regular conversations or through email correspondence. My interview with Ms. Anderson lasted approximately 1.5 hours.

Although interviewing has traditionally been viewed as an established and rather uncontroversial research method, some scholars have called for the problematization of the interview process. Talmy (2010), for example, conceptualizes interviewing as a "collaborative achievement", rather than a research instrument, and proposes "treating interviews not as sites for the excavation of information held by respondents, but as participation in social practices" (p. 28). The tools of discourse analysis and sociocultural linguistics are very much compatible with this approach and serve to foreground and examine the interactional and socially situated nature of the interviews. Although video recording the interviews would have undoubtedly provided richer data in terms of capturing nonverbal interaction, I decided to audio record them (as I have in the past) in order to provide a less intimidating interview environment in which the students, in particular, would feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences with me. Students were interviewed in the room that was connected to the main classroom and where I often worked with them individually and in small groups. My interview with Ms. Anderson took place at her desk in the classroom after the school day had ended.

5. Artifacts

Cole (1998) characterizes artifacts as "materialized in the form of objects, words, rituals, and other cultural practices that mediate human life. They are ideal in that their form has evolved to achieve prescribed means to prescribed goals, and they have survived to be tools for our use, "partial solutions to previously encountered problems" (p. 292). Consistent with this approach, I was interested in learning about the language and cultural values that were represented in various classroom artifacts. As part of the study, some of the artifacts that I analyzed included: students' worksheets with exercises and suggested sentence frames,

classroom bulletin boards and signs, workbooks, copies of texts students read during ELA and ALD, as well as students' self-evaluations. It is important to note that artifacts were primarily analyzed as tools for meaning making in the context of student interactions rather than as stand-alone products of students' literacy practices or academic achievement.

D. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by drawing on a sociocultural approach to discourse analysis, in which language is viewed as "social action with a focus on what members of a social group are accomplishing through their discourse, rather than focusing solely on language form or function" (Green & Gee, 1998, p. 122). This analytic perspective was combined with a more fine-grained sociocultural linguistic analysis of participants' linguistic practices, centered on how individuals constitute and negotiate their identities through social action (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

1. Coding

Erickson (2006) warns that one of the primary challenges with analyzing video records is to gravitate towards one of two extremes: microanalysis of illustrative examples or molar analysis through coding of broad categories. In both cases, he argues that: "one inadequately represents the range and frequency of analytically significant variation in the phenomenon being reported" (p. 279). Consequently, how data is coded and which parts of the data are selected for transcription and microanalysis are crucial methodological and analytical decisions.

Coding of video data was an ongoing process and occurred both during and after data collection was completed. The video and audio data were coded using an open process of inductive and deductive coding (Saldaña, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some preliminary

descriptive codes were developed based on relevant theories and literature as well as on specific reading skills prioritized within the CCSS such as: "using evidence" and "prediction". These codes were reviewed and revised throughout the transcription process, along with the inductive codes, which were created based on patterns that emerged from the data. Saldaña (2015) defines coding as a heuristic and cyclical process that is an instrumental piece of a broader process of qualitative inquiry and "demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience" (p. 285). Consequently, revisiting and refining codes in order to appropriately represent a particular phenomenon was a crucial aspect of the coding process.

Following Saldaña's proposed coding scheme, moving from particular to more general observations, these codes were organized into broader categories that were in turn grouped into themes. This approach created ample opportunities to identify emergent codes and themes rather than beginning with a fixed set of codes, which would have narrowed the analytic scope of the research. Through the process of "indexing" I first created detailed time records for each video and documented language use and activities that were then coded. Throughout this process I revised codes numerous times and recoded indexes to reflect emergent patterns and categories.

Angelillo, Rogoff, and Chavaja (2007) argue that within research informed by sociocultural learning theories coding schemes continue to focus primarily on individual behaviors and actions performed by students or teachers. They maintain that not enough thought has been given to how coding schemes can be designed to capture interactional patterns between multiple participants:

> Such coding that breaks down social interaction to focus on individuals' acts in isolation from other individuals' acts does not directly address the dynamic intersubjective aspects of emerging shared meaning and purposes in group interaction. As a consequence, the coding may not actually address a study's social interactional question. (p. 189-190)

Throughout the coding process I attempted to capture interactional patterns by using codes such as: "shared experience", "peer collaboration"/"peer conflict", and "supporting idea." These kinds of codes were particularly helpful in identifying moments where students were sharing or building on each other's knowledge and experiences.

Coding and transcription was performed using Transana software, which allowed for the grouping of transcripts and episodes into larger themes and categories. The coding process allowed me to identify common phenomena and patters, as well as *frame clashes* (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012), which are moments in which "ethnographers are confronted with a surprise or something that does not go as expected" (p. 310). These moments were often interactions in which the students made unexpected connections or used their linguistic and cultural resources in ways that were creative and unprompted. In addition, "telling cases" (Mitchell, 1984) representing common phenomena, such as the students' use of various funds of knowledge, were selected for further microanalysis.

2. Transcription

For the purposes of this study transcription is conceptualized as "a sociocultural practice of representing discourse" (Bucholtz, 2007, p. 785). As Bucholtz (2007) argues, the choices that are made in the process of transcribing discourse can "facilitate or foreclose different analytical possibilities" (p. 800). Being reflexive about these analytical choices is, therefore, a crucial aspect of striving for transparency in the "theoretical bases of

transcription decisions" (Skukauskaite, 2012, p. 1). Given the interactional focus of the study and my interest in capturing the co-construction of meaning among participants I chose to adopt a sociocultural linguistic approach (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005) to discourse analysis based on Du Bois et al.'s (1993) conventions for transcription, which treat "intonation units" as the primary unit of naturally occurring conversations and speech events (see appendix).

Drawing on the data sources outlined above, the following three chapters will present an interactional analysis of the observations conducted in room 6A over the course of five months. The analysis is centered around interactional video excerpts and supported by interview data, as well as the analysis of various classroom artifacts and how they were used in the context of students' peer discussions.

V. Creating meaning: Agency and identity in students' reading group discussions

Lucas: "You ever thought about if he's Mexican?"
Diego: "He's a gringo."

During the above exchange the class had just begun reading the novel "Bridge of Terabithia" (Paterson, 1977) and students were completing a chart in small groups, which required them to fill out traits and important quotes for the novel's main characters. As the students in my reading group discussed possible traits for Mr. Aarons (the main character's father), Lucas turned to Diego and asked him if he had considered the possibility that Mr. Aarons could be Mexican. While during the interaction Diego rejected this idea by characterizing Mr. Aarons as a "*gringo*", the question of who the characters were and where they came from resurfaced in various ways over the course of the month-long ELA unit. Building connections to the experiences and the characters portrayed in the novel occupied a central place in the students' discussions and interpretations of the text and, consequently, became a focus of my analysis.

Although they were not generally encouraged to do so as part of the prompts and activities in the unit, students consistently made references to shows or movies they had seen, to anecdotes involving their families and friends, as well as to the communities they navigated in their daily lives and the similarities and differences they saw between them. This may not seem surprising given that these are common topics of conversation among students (particularly sixth graders), but it soon became clear that these discussions served multiple purposes that were fundamental to the students' understanding of the text. As students went about the reading tasks they had been assigned, such as identifying main ideas in a passage or making predictions supported by evidence from the text, they instinctively drew on their rich and diverse funds of knowledge to establish connections and deepen their

understanding of the characters and the story. It also became evident that students were not simply uncovering the meaning and intentions of the author, but, rather, that they were using their own knowledge and experiences to create meaning.

In this chapter, I examine the linguistic and cultural resources employed by students as they co-construct meaning through their collective reading of the novel. Findings suggest that students' identities and experiences outside the classroom proved to be powerful tools in mediating their interpretations and understanding of the text. Students were intentional and strategic in accessing their cultural and linguistic repertoires, and were able to leverage these resources in order to perform various analytic practices. Lastly, I argue that the opportunity to engage in dialogue in order to establish and examine possible connections to their lived and imagined experiences is particularly crucial for students whose funds of knowledge often go unrecognized in the classroom and are rarely represented in the texts they read in school.

The first part of the chapter provides a brief overview of some of the theoretical concepts and scholarly literature relevant to my understanding of students' literacy practices from a sociocultural perspective. Next, I present an interactional analysis of students' peer discussions by drawing on video and audio data, semi-structured interviews, and field notes collected in room 6A. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how findings relate to broader questions about how students' literacy practices are defined and evaluated in school contexts.

A. Reading as a Social Practice

As discussed more extensively in Chapters 2 and 3, this study builds on scholarship that views literacy as fundamentally social and interactional. The sociocultural perspective I adopt in my analysis includes an action-based approach to learning and teaching language, in

which students use language to actively engage with their worlds (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). In contrast to the CCSS's narrow conceptualization of reading, the analysis presented in this chapter illustrates how students bring their whole selves, including their experiences as emergent bilinguals and members of nondominant communities, to the reading of texts. Consequently, I argue that while students may be asked to focus on specific aspects of texts, such as their structural and lexical features, their understanding of texts cannot be separated from the sociocultural contexts they navigate inside and outside the classroom. Bunch et al. (2012) underscore the importance of providing students with opportunities to develop autonomy in making decisions about texts and their meaning and caution that this aspect of their learning "may be masked, and even stifled, by instruction that only values 'correct' interpretations of what a text 'really' means on one hand, or the use of a pre-ordained set of 'reading comprehension' strategies on the other" (p. 4). As Snow and O'Connor (2013) have pointed out, in the case of close reading, there is a risk of conflating its value as a reading strategy that can be helpful in facilitating students' understanding of complex texts with what it means to read and be a reader more broadly.

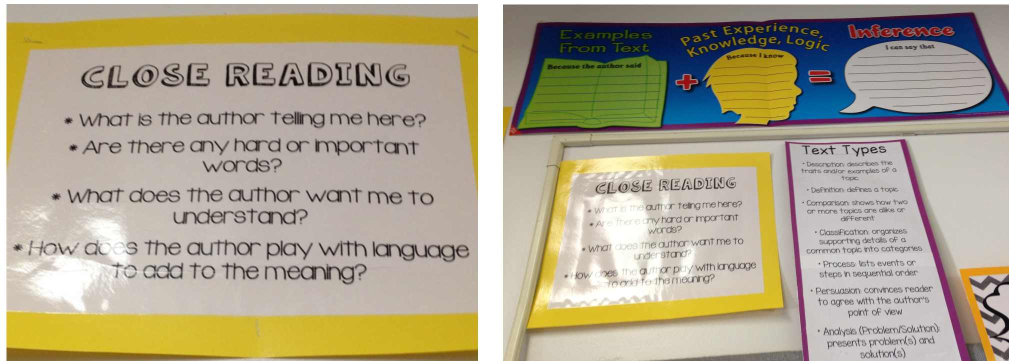
Another aspect of reading that is largely neglected in the CCSS is the dynamic nature of students' understanding and interpretations of text. The emphasis on text-based evidence and informational text leaves little room to consider students' agency in developing their own interpretations and ideas about what they are reading. Langer (1998) inspired by the work of Fillmore (1981), for example, uses the term "envisionment" to refer to the dynamic interpretations that individuals develop and revise at different points in time as they engage with texts. While this perspective provides a useful lens for understanding the dialogic processes involved in developing an understanding of a text, the findings presented in this

chapter suggests that students' envisionments are not individual, but collaborative accomplishments that allow students to invite others to examine and participate in their imaginary worlds. Similarly, in their study on elementary school students' cooperative story telling practices, Durán and Szymanski (1995) found that students' connections to texts or "story extensions" served as a form of "cultural interpretation" (p. 159), which allowed them to examine beliefs and issues relevant to their social contexts.

B. "Close Reading" in Room 6A

Although the term "close reading" was rarely used in room 6A (pseudonym), the literacy practices that were prioritized within the ELA curriculum and through classroom instruction focused heavily on Common Core reading skills required for close text-based analysis at the sixth-grade level. These practices included: making evidence-based claims, identifying main ideas, making predictions about the text, understanding different points of view, identifying cause and effect relationships, recognizing changes in characters over time, and interpreting the language used by the author. The description of close reading on display in the classroom (see figures 5.1 and 5.2 below) highlighted the role of the reader in uncovering the author's intended meaning and ideas by asking questions such as: "What does the author want me to understand?" and "How does the author play with language to add to the meaning?". The absence of the reader as an active participant in the construction of meaning in this definition is consistent with the CCSS, which foreground students' ability to extract knowledge from texts in order to demonstrate understanding and support their claims about the text.

Figures 5.1 Definition of close reading; 5.2 Posters for close reading, text types, and inferences



During our interview at the end of the year, Ms. Anderson stated that she did not feel the CCSS represented a dramatic departure from the kinds of skills she had taught in ELA in the past and that it was more a matter of how the curriculum was organized and what skills she was expected to prioritize. Although Roseland Elementary had been working towards the adoption of the CCSS for several years, 2015-2016 was the second year of the standards' full implementation. In the district, students' report cards for ELA and Math had recently been aligned with the CCSS and the report cards now assessed students on a subset of the standards for each academic area. The four standards that were listed on the report cards under "Reading and Language" for the sixth grade can be seen in figure 5.3. Students were evaluated by their teachers based on how well they had met each standard on a scale from 4 ("extends standards") to 1 ("has difficulty meeting the standards").

Reading and Language			
Informational Text and Literature			
Cites textual evidence to support analysis and demonstrate understanding of a text			
Determines or clarifies the meaning of unknown words and phrases based on grade level reading and content			
Integrates information presented in different media or formats to develop a coherent understanding of a topic			
Reads and comprehends complex literary and informational text independently and proficiently			

Figure 5.3 Report card standards for "Reading and Language"

When we reviewed the report cards together during her interview, Ms. Anderson emphasized the use of text-based evidence as one of the key skills students were expected to master in her class:

> These are the biggest skills: 'cites textual evidence to support analysis and demonstrates understanding of texts'. That's when I say comprehension. That's basically what it is. Everything 'text, text, text'. 'How do you know that? How do you know that? How do you know that?' That's something [we're] all talking about all the time and the new kids were like 'Uh, I don't know, I don't know', versus these kids that have been around for a while. [They're] pretty good. They might not always get it right, but they at least know they have to do it. (INT 6-1-16)

Ms. Anderson noted that she had been working on the use of textual evidence with the students all year and that this was a skill they were also taught in the earlier grades. When I asked her about which aspects of the standards the students had the most difficulty with, she said that students seemed to struggle with language complexity. She explained that one of the reasons why the novel "The House on Mango Street" (Cisneros, 1984) was taught in the sixth grade was in order to give students the opportunity to examine the author's language more deeply. She also felt that teaching students to interpret complex language was one of the most

challenging aspects of the reading standards. Overall, she described her students as being competent at reading comprehension skills and drawing evidence from the text, as well as at effectively using academic language to communicate their ideas, although there were some students who were still in the process of mastering these skills. She found this not to be surprising given that one third of the students in the class had been categorized as reading two or more grade levels below the sixth grade.

The "Bridge to Terabithia" reading unit

The data that will be analyzed in this chapter are from the class's final month-long ELA unit, in which students read the novel "Bridge to Terabithia" and completed a "workbook" that included a variety of activities and prompts. The novel tells the story of the friendship between Jess, a young boy from a working-class family in rural Virginia, and Leslie, the new girl in school, whose wealthy parents decided to leave the city in search of a simpler life. Despite their differences, Jess and Leslie become close friends and in the process create "Terabithia", an imaginary world hidden away in the woods, which becomes an escape from the challenges they face in their daily lives. The CCSS reading skills that were prioritized by Ms. Anderson within this unit were: comparing and contrasting characters, being able to describe how characters change throughout the plot, distinguishing between different points of view, and making predictions about upcoming events. Students also continued to practice a number of other CCSS reading skills they had been working on during the school year, such as identifying main ideas and supporting their arguments with specific details and evidence from the text. During this unit, I facilitated one of the reading discussion groups two to three times a week. The reading group was made up of five students, all from Latinx backgrounds: three boys, who had all recently graduated from the

ELD program, and two girls, who were not in the ELD program. All of the students came from Spanish-speaking homes, but their self-reported levels of proficiency in Spanish varied (see Chapter 4 for participant profiles).

The chart below displays the ELA standards that correspond to the various activities students were required to complete within the unit. While Ms. Anderson explained to me in general terms which standards were being targeted I found it helpful to map correspondence between tasks and the standards in order to observe how closely the activities aligned with the standards and reproduced the language of the CCSS. As the chart shows, the unit activities closely corresponded with grade-level ELA standards.

Figure 5.4 Bridge to Terabithia Unit (5/2/16-5/31/16)

Dates	Chapters	Activities	ELA Standards
5/2/16-5/31/16	Unit-wide activities	- Character chart: Identify character traits, important quotations, greatest challenge, greatest moment - Vocabulary words	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4
5/2/16-5/4/16	Section 1: Chapters 1-3	- Identify main events and important quotations - Imagine story from point of view of different characters	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6
5/5/16-5/10/16	Section 2: Chapters 4-6	- Identify main events and important quotations - Make predictions about following chapters and end of the book based on evidence in the text	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2
5/11/16-5/17/18	Section 3: Chapters 7-9	- Compare and contrast different characters	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1
5/18/16-5/24/16	Section 4: Chapters 10-13	- Identify causes and effects in the story - Describe how characters	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4 CCSS.ELA-

		have changed over time - Determine main themes of the text - Word choice analysis: connotation, tone, denotation	LITERACY.RL.6.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2
5/25/16-5/31/16	Complete workbook	Extension activities	

Building a context for understanding

During the first few days of reading the novel, the students were preoccupied with identifying and getting to know the different characters, while trying to make sense of the setting in which the story unfolds. Since the novel transpires in a rural town in Virginia, during the 1970s, there were not many obvious parallels to the students' experiences living in suburban Southern California. Nevertheless, in the following interaction, one of the students, Pedro, was quick to draw a connection to a movie he had seen. As Pedro was reading aloud about the main character's dream of becoming the best runner at his school, he interrupted himself to compare the novel to the movie "McFarland USA" (2015), which tells the story of a high school running team from a Latino farm laborer community in California.

Example 5.1

1	PEDRO;	This is just like McFarland USA,
2		right?
3		(1.1)
4		Where like that one guy,
5		um wha-
6		What was his name?
7		Uh, the fat one.
8	LUCAS;	[Billy Junior].
9	PEDRO;	[The fat one].
10	INÉS;	((*nods, then raises her hand*))
11	MARÍA:	What- is that a movie?
12	INÉS;	Yeah.
13		It's like about Mexican runners. ((*smiling*))
14	PEDRO;	@Mexican runners.
15	DIEGO;	*Viva México!* ((*swings arm*))
16	PEDRO;	*Viva Méxi-* ((*singing*))

17	MARÍA;	Wait.
18		And so why is it like this?
19	PEDRO;	McFarland USA is like another version of,
20		of Mexico.
21	LUCAS;	Why?
22	DIEGO;	Really?
23	PEDRO;	Yeah.
24		(1.0)
25	MARÍA;	Another version of?
26	PEDRO;	Mexico.
27	MARÍA;	What do you mean another version of Mexico?
28	PEDRO;	Like, it's the same as Mexico.
29		They're like,
30		the houses are the same,
31		they have chickens.
32		They have dogs.

In this example, Pedro notices a parallel between the novel and the movie and shares his observation with his peers while asking them for confirmation: "This is just like McFarland USA, right?" (lines 1-2). Inés appears to be familiar with the movie and nods in agreement. Inés raising her hand in the context of this relatively informal discussion clearly indexes an academic orientation towards Pedro's idea, which she takes up as a plausible connection to the text. Her explanation that the movie is not just about runners, but "*Mexican* runners" (line 12; emphasis added) introduces the runners' national/ethnic identity as relevant to the discussion. Diego then jokingly exclaims "*Viva México!*" ("Long live Mexico") a phrase used to express national pride, but also circulated in popular culture through memes and stereotypical jokes. Diego, who identified as "99.9% Mexican" (VID 3-15-16), frequently made these kinds of humorous comments and references to Mexican culture and identity. When I prompt Pedro to expand on his connection, he explains how the community portrayed in the movie is "like another version of Mexico" (line 18). He suggests that the town of McFarland is similar to Mexico because of the kinds of houses and animals that appear in the movie. Pedro's choice to list specific features that are similar between the

two contexts is consistent with the kind of evidence-based claims that were encouraged through classroom instruction and literacy tasks. Pedro further employs his knowledge of the movie as well as his understanding of life in rural Mexico to provide greater context for his comparison.

Although the discussion of the similarities between the town of McFarland and Mexico could be viewed as tangential to the academic task at hand, Pedro then reaches the core of his argument, which is that the main characters in the movie (Daniel) and the novel (Jess) share key characteristics and develop in similar ways throughout their respective stories:

Example 5.2

1	PEDRO;	I'm comparing Daniel and Jess,
2		because first they were like the suckiest kids,
3		and they didn't even know what they were doing.
4		Because Daniel first was a fat kid who just kept eating all day.
5	MARÍA;	OK,
6		In the movie?
7	PEDRO;	And Jess was like this crazy little kid,
8		who just kept drawing all day,
9		and um,
10		when they got older,
11		they realized um,
12		what life was about.

Pedro's choice to compare these two characters demonstrates his ability to extend the task of comparing characters within the same story to those in other narratives he has encountered outside the classroom. In this particular case, he had not been prompted to compare the two boys and does so on his own initiative. Pedro also demonstrates his ability to appreciate change in the characters and argues that their transformation was brought on by a common experience. According to Pedro, becoming a runner was important for both Jess and Daniel because it helped them overcome unfavorable circumstances (being seen as "fat"

and “crazy”) and allowed them to learn “what life was about” (line 12). As previously noted, identifying changes in characters and how they contribute to the storyline was one of the skills prioritized by Ms. Anderson for this unit.

While Pedro is able to use the connection between the movie and the novel to demonstrate his proficiency in employing numerous analytic skills, his reference to “McFarland USA” simultaneously allows him and his peers to narrow the cultural and linguistic divide between their own backgrounds and those of the characters in novel. Unlike the novel, which transpires in a setting that is unfamiliar to the students, the community portrayed in the movie and the communities Pedro describes in Mexico introduce more relatable contexts and alternatives paths for accessing and making sense of the text. In addition to being a common cultural reference within his peer group, the movie “McFarland USA” had clearly made a strong impression on Pedro. He asked me on several occasions if I had seen the movie and endorsed it enthusiastically. His interest in the movie is particularly relevant given the lack of representation of Latinx/Chicanx experiences in mainstream media (Hunt & Ramón, 2018; Negrón-Muntaner, 2014).

Envisioning possible worlds

The co-construction and negotiation of more relatable contexts also became apparent in students’ later discussions about the characters in the novel. In addition to drawing on outside knowledge to make sense of the text, the students negotiated their interpretations of the imaginary and possible worlds they envisioned through the text. In the example below, students express their ideas about who they think the characters are and where they come from.

Example 5.3

1 INÉS; But I'm going to make a Southern,
2 PEDRO: Not [$_1$anymore$_1$].
3 INÉS; [$_1$for a$_1$] narrator.
4 DIEGO: Ya::
5 Yee:ha
6 INÉS; An accent.
7 MARÍA; You're going to do an accent?
8 DIEGO; Yee:ha
9 MARÍA; So why—
10 Why is your accent [$_2$going to be Southern$_2$]?
11 DIEGO; [$_2$#*Arriba:*$_2$]!
12 INÉS; I don't know.
13 PEDRO; It's nice to feel [$_3$goo:::d$_3$] ((singing))
14 INÉS; [$_3$Because they live on a farm$_3$].
15 LUCAS; [$_4$Why don't you do a Mexican accent$_4$]?
16 MARÍA; [$_4$Do you imagine them as having$_4$] a Southern accent?
17 [$_5$Is that why?$_5$]
18 PEDRO; [$_5$*Ya cayate*$_5$]
19 INÉS; Yeah.
20 [$_6$Because look it$_6$].
21 LUCAS; [$_6$*Y ese:*$_6$]
22 INÉS; One of them is like,
23 [$_7$“you're kiddin'”$_7$].
24 LUCAS: [$_7$###$_7$]
25 MARÍA: What did you say Diego?
26 DIEGO; I imagine them talking Spanish,
27 MARÍA; You imagine them talking Spanish?
28 DIEGO; Yeah.
29 PEDRO; I- I think they're Hispanic.
30 LUCAS; *¿Cómo estás mi amigo?*
31 *¿Cómo estás* #?
32 INÉS: No, but one of them says “you're kiddin'”.
33 LUCAS; *Ese*::
34 DIEGO; I think they're Latin.
35 MARÍA; Why do you think,
36 Why do you thin-
37 Why do you say that?
38 DIEGO; He looks strong. ((*Pointing at picture in the book*))
39 MARÍA; He looks strong?
40 OK.

During this conversation, the students discuss whether or not Inés' “Southern” accent is an appropriate choice, which leads them to address the greater question surrounding the characters' backgrounds. Inés enthusiastically announces that she's going to perform a

Southern narrator (lines 1-3), and when questioned by me justifies her decision by stating that the characters live on a farm (line 14). It is important to note that the context of the story had been previously discussed by Ms. Anderson with the class and had also come up in earlier conversations in my reading group. Inés goes on to further support her claim by reading a quote from the book: "Because look it, one of them is like 'you're kiddin'" (lines 22 and 23). This comment displays her linguistic awareness and understanding that the dropping of the g in the suffix -ing is a feature typically associated with a Southern U.S. dialect. Further, her response to go to the text to find more evidence to support her argument without being asked to do so demonstrates her proficiency in employing a skill the students have been learning and practicing in the class. Inés' argument and quote from the text get lost in the conversation as I turn my attention to Diego's comment about how he imagines the characters to be speaking in Spanish (line 26); however, Inés is quick to challenge Diego's statement and reads the quote from the book again, insisting that the characters must be Southern (line 32).

Despite Inés' argument for enacting a Southern narrator, Diego and Pedro agree that they imagine the characters in the novel to be Spanish speakers and "Hispanic"/"Latin" (lines 29 and 34). The idea that the characters could or should be Latinx is shared by Lucas who early on in the exchange suggests that Inés should "do a Mexican accent" (line 15). Lucas himself later enacts what could be described as an exaggerated or stereotypical Mexican accent by briefly engaging with Pedro in Spanish in lines 18 and 21 and then interjecting, "*¿Cómo estás mi amigo?*" (line 30). Lucas also uses the term "*ése*" (literally "that one") — a slang word meaning "dude" or "guy", which gained popularity among Latinx/Chicanx youth in the Southwestern United States in the 1940s, but continues to be used in some

communities to index friendship and affiliation (García, 2005). Although Lucas does not directly build on Diego and Pedro's argument for why the characters are Latinx, he is the first to introduce this possibility and his performance of "doing Mexican" aligns with the "envisionment" (Langer, 1998) of the text they are proposing.

While throughout this interaction Inés is orienting towards the text and engaging in the kind of text-based analysis that is being encouraged and modeled through class instruction, the three boys are less concerned with the details of the text and are orienting towards a possible scenario in which the characters are Latinx/Chicanx. When I ask Diego to expand on his argument (lines 35-37) he points to a picture in the book, which shows Jess carrying Leslie in the woods and explains that Jess "looks strong" (line 38). The image does not display the characters' features although Jess is represented as a dark silhouette and Leslie appears to have light hair (see Figure 5.4). Diego's association between Latinx masculinity and physical strength again suggests that he is pursuing an envisionment that is centered on the characters' ethnic identities rather than on the specifics of the text. It is also important to note that the image Diego refers to is part of a later chapter in the book and not the one being discussed during this conversation. His response to return to the text after I question his statement indicates that he is aware that within the context of this academic task he is expected to produce some form of evidence to support his claim.

Figure 5.5 Jess carrying Leslie through the woods in “Bridge to Terabithia”

Similarly to the previous example, the students’ focus on the characters’ ethnic/national identities points to an aspect of reading that is not often addressed in discussions about teaching literacy, which is the need for students—particularly students of color— to see themselves represented in the narratives they read. While Diego and Pedro do not provide evidence to support their hypothesis that the characters are speaking Spanish, they are committed to this idea and are not dissuaded by me (as someone in an instructor-like role) or their peers. This suggests that, at times, the need to connect with each other and the text in more authentic ways can take precedence over the academic task at hand.

This interest in narratives representing Chicanxs/Latinxs also came up in my interview with Pedro at the end of the school year. When I asked him which ELA projects he had liked the most, he said his favorite book had been “The House on Mango Street” (Cisneros, 1984), which the class had read during the first semester. The novel, which is written in the form of a series of vignettes, is about a young Mexican American girl growing up in a Latino *barrio* (neighborhood) in Chicago. I found Pedro’s response to be somewhat surprising since he had been among the students who had taken the longest to complete the workbook and who had seemed frustrated by some of the tasks required as part of the project.

When I asked him why he had enjoyed the book he replied: “I liked how it was about like Mexicans. They were Mexicans and they couldn’t afford the place where they used to live, so they moved to a street where a lot of different things happened” (INT 6-1-16). Here, again, Pedro highlighted the characters being Mexican as the novel’s greatest appeal. Diego on the other hand, was clear about his dislike of the novel and said that he had not enjoyed working on the comprehension questions and that he felt the book “had so many different things in it” (INT 6-1-16). In Diego’s case, the structure of the novel (a series of vignettes with many different characters), and the heavy use of figurative language prevented him from engaging more deeply with the text and appreciating the novel as a narrative about a young Chicana’s coming of age in a Latinx community.

When Ms. Anderson and I discussed students’ experiences reading “The House on Mango Street”, she expressed doubts about whether or not it was the best choice. She noted that it introduced diversity into the curriculum but that it did not match the students’ reading levels: “We were trying to find something at the right lexile level and with diversity and everything. I still think it's more of an eighth grade and up text. But we have purchased it and we try it and we've adapted it a little bit more this year and it's so much better than last year” (INT 6-1-16). She also described the text as containing subjects that were not necessarily appropriate for sixth grade students and stressed that although the text was very “rich” it was “definitely hard for your English language learners” (INT 6-1-16). Due to this “richness” and language complexity, some of the students who could have benefited from engaging with a narrative about a Latinx community faced the most significant barriers to understanding the language in the text.

Identifying with characters

Despite the cultural differences between the students in my reading group and the characters portrayed in “The Bridge to Terabithia”, the students found ways to connect their personal experiences to those of the characters in the novel. In the following example, Inés draws a parallel between Jess’s experience telling his father about his desire to become an artist and a similar conversation she had with her mother:

Example 5.4

1	PEDRO;	"He thought he would be,
2		uh pleased.
3		He wasn't."
4		@@
5	INÉS;	((*Turns to Vanessa*))
6		@ That's how my mom was.
7	VANESSA;	Why?
8	INÉS;	##
9	PEDRO;	“What are they teaching you in this damn school?”
10	MARÍA;	Wait.
11		What were you saying Inés?
12	INÉS;	That's how my mom was.
13		Because she said,
14		“Well they don't get paid @a lot.”

Here, Pedro is reading aloud from a section in the book in which Jess describes wanting to show his father a drawing he made. Jess decides against it because he remembers a conversation they had when he was younger, where his father had disapproved of his interest in becoming an artist. As Pedro reads the line about Jess’s father not being pleased with the idea (lines 1-3) Inés turns to Vanessa to comment on her own mother’s reaction. When I encourage her to share how the two scenarios are similar she explains that her mother had also discouraged her from considering a career as an artist because she claimed that it was not profitable (line 14). Shortly thereafter, Inés added that her mother also argued that “[Artists] only get paid after they die”. This comment led students to engage in further discussion about whether or not it was a valid claim and why someone would want to be an

artist if that were the case. Inés sharing her experience with her mother, consequently, created a platform from which students were able to collaboratively examine the perspective of a character in the text (Jess's father) through the lens of a more relatable example.

Reading their worlds

As the peer interactions discussed thus far suggest, students' analysis of the text was closely tied to the multiple communities and contexts they navigated inside and outside the classroom. Students often made connections that were unprompted and reflected the realities they were facing outside the classroom, as members of marginalized communities.

During the first week of the unit, while students read about why Leslie's family had decided to move to the countryside they learned her family did not come from a farming background, but rather, that they chose to leave the city based on a personal preference. As the students attempted to make sense of this decision and what it suggested about the family's socioeconomic status, Diego introduced the question of whether farmers in the context of the novel were rich or poor.

Example 5.5

1	DIEGO;	Well back then people that had farmland were they poor or rich?
2	MARÍA;	I guess it depends.
3		I don't think that,
4		um,
5		What do you think Inés?
6	INÉS;	Rich.
7		I don't know.
8		Because they had all the crops, right?
9		And then they gave it,
10		they selled it to the people?
11	PEDRO;	They selled it?
12	DIEGO;	That's so funny because [here],
13	INÉS;	[They sold it].
14	PEDRO;	They selled it @@
15	DIEGO;	Here,
16		in America,
17		people that have farmland are ri:ch,

18 LUCAS; *Student name removed*
19 DIEGO; but in Mexico people that have farmland are poor.

In response to Diego's question Inés states that farmers "back then" were probably rich because they owned "all the crops" and were able to sell them (line 8). Diego builds on her observation by saying that he thinks it's "so funny" (line 12) that people who own farmland in the United States are rich in comparison to farmers in Mexico. His assessment that the same profession can be valued differently and can carry different social status depending on the national context is one Diego is able to make by drawing on his "transnational funds of knowledge" (Sánchez, 2007) and understanding of life in Mexico.

Following this discussion, Inés and her peers identify parallels between the socioeconomic differences depicted in the novel and the socioeconomic landscape in their surrounding communities.

Example 5.6

1	MARÍA;	It sounds like,
2		Leslie came from a rich place right?
3		And now she's there,
4		and [I don't know if they're] poor but,
5	PEDRO;	[Like Mesa Springs].
6	MARÍA;	they don't have-
7		you know,
8		it's kind of a rural simpler area right?
9	INÉS;	It's like she was from Sierra Vista,
10		and then,
11		(*6.2s skipped, Lucas moving recording device*)
12	MARÍA;	Inés what were you saying?
13		It's like she was from Sierra Vista and?
14	INÉS;	Yeah, because it's like rich there.
15		And then,
16		Uh,
17		what's his name?
18		Jessie?
19	LUCAS:	Jess:
20	INÉS;	Is like from—
21		I don't know.
22		From somewhere poor,

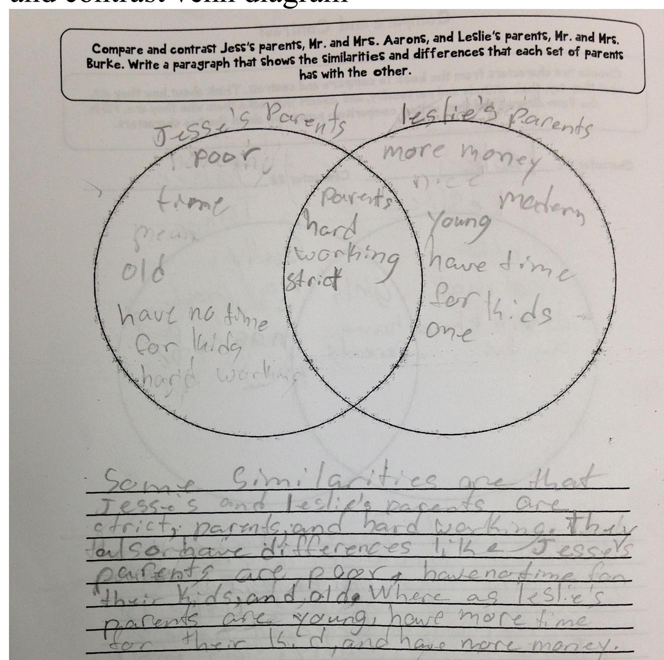
23	VANESSA;	It's like—
24		She came from like,
25		Like have you seen those homes that are like on hills?
26	LUCAS;	Yes, yes.
27	INÉS;	Oh yeah.
28		Like something high,
29	VANESSA;	She doesn't associate.
30	PEDRO;	Like “bro why did you come down here?”
31		She's like “bro, neck yourself.”
32	INÉS;	Oh!
33		It's like from Mango Street,
34		'cause remember how they said like people—
35		Rich people up in the hills and they're like,
36	PEDRO;	Like “bro why would you come all the way down here?”

When I mention that Leslie’s family came from somewhere rich Pedro immediately draws a connection to the neighboring city of Mesa Springs, which is an affluent tourist destination by the beach (line 5). Shortly thereafter Inés suggests that it is as if Leslie is from Sierra Vista, which is a smaller town located south of Mesa Springs, known for its large celebrity estates, located on hills overlooking the ocean (line 9). Vanessa aligns with Inés and builds on this parallel by referencing “pictures” of wealthy homes located on hills (lines 24-25). Pedro joins into their shared interpretation by enacting someone living at the bottom of the hill. Pedro uses slang terms such as “bro” to impersonate the “poor” person, who creates a contrast with Leslie’s rich family living above him. Inés goes on to relate this geographical division of rich and poor to “The House on Mango Street” in which the main character, Esmeralda, dreams of living on the hill, where the wealthy people live. In this example, the students are able to gain greater insight into the socioeconomic dynamics being portrayed in the novel by mapping the categories of “rich” and “poor” onto their own surrounding communities as well as onto other narratives they have read. As Latinx students, these

categories and geographical distinctions are both salient and relevant to their experiences moving between different communities.

The conversation about socioeconomic status was taken up again by students the following week as they continued to examine the differences between Jess's and Leslie's backgrounds. One of the activities students were required to complete as part of their workbook asked them to compare Leslie and Jess's parents. The prompt read: "Compare and contrast Jess's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Aarons and Leslie's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Burke. Write a paragraph that shows the similarities and differences that each set of parents has with the other."

Figure 5.6 Compare and contrast venn diagram


Compare and contrast Jess's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Aarons, and Leslie's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Burke. Write a paragraph that shows the similarities and differences that each set of parents has with the other.

As students worked on completing the venn diagram together, they agreed that Jesse's parents were "poor" and that they had less time for their children because they had to work more and had to take care of a large family. In contrast, they described Leslie's parents as having "more money", being "modern", and "[having] time for their kids." In the

following discussion, the question of wealth resurfaced and led students to examine if having a nanny and being “hardworking” were two mutually exclusive categories.

Example 5.7

1	DIEGO;	Wait so Jess's parents are hard-working?
2	INÉS;	We just said that.
3	PEDRO;	<SINGING> Only one call away,
4		I'll be there to save the day. </SINGING >
5	DIEGO;	What about Leslie's parents?
6	MARÍA;	I don't know.
7		What do you guys think?
8		Are Leslie's family- parents hard-working or not?
9	VANESSA;	Yeah, but they're—
10	PEDRO;	Actually aren't all parents hardworking,
11	INÉS;	[They're not really hard-working].
12	PEDRO:	[Because they take care of you].
13	INÉS;	Yeah but what is if they have like a nanny.
14		Like in “Jessie”.
15	PEDRO;	They don't.
16	DIEGO;	No.
17	LUCAS;	Not.
18	PEDRO;	That's a TV show.

When I ask students if they consider Leslie’s parents to be hardworking Inés begins to argue that Leslie’s parents “[are] not really hardworking” (line 11), while Pedro introduces the idea that all parents are by definition hardworking because they have to take care of their children (line 12). Inés refutes this argument, by suggesting that some parents may have nannies and makes a connection to the TV show “Jessie” about a young nanny working for a wealthy family in New York City. Inés faces resistance from her peers and Pedro specifically challenges her on the grounds that the source she is referencing is a “TV show” (line 18). Inés’ and Pedro’s contrasting views generate a discussion in which, rather than simply listing similarities and differences between the two sets of parents, the students are able to engage more deeply with the question of how their socioeconomic status influences the kinds of parents they are.

Exploring "politicized funds of knowledge"

In addition to relating the text to questions of identity, socioeconomic inequality, and language, the students also made references to current political events such as the upcoming 2016 U.S. presidential elections, "*El Chapo*" Guzmán (a famous, Mexican drug cartel leader), and *la migra* (the immigration police). These topics were, however, brought up in the context of more informal peer conversations that were not generally tied to specific academic tasks. The following example illustrates one of the few instances where the issue of politics and immigration was brought up as part of the analysis of a text.

During one of the last days of the unit, Inés was reading aloud from the final chapter of the book in which the author reveals that "the bridge" of the title is a fallen tree trunk in the woods that Jess and Leslie have made the imaginary passageway into the world of "Terabithia":

Example 5.8

1	PEDRO;	Wait.
2		So the bridge is the tree trunk?
3	LUCAS;	It's [actually pants].
4	INÉS;	[Yeah].
5		It's the tree trunk branch. ((*makes explanatory hand gesture*))
6	LUCAS;	Pants.
7		(1.50)
8	PEDRO;	((*raises book to his face and covers his mouth with it, acting surprised*))
9	MARÍA:	So that—
10		Yeah.
11		So that becomes the bridge right?
12	DIEGO;	So it's really really thick so it won't, ((*makes loud popping sound*))
13		Break.
14	INÉS;	((*makes popping sound while flicking her fingers*))
15	DIEGO;	Like like the:
16		Like the:
17		Like the Trump wall.

1

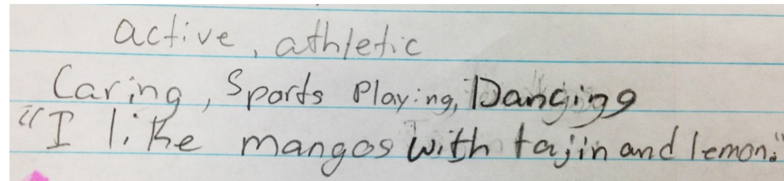
Pedro interrupts Inés to corroborates details from the text with his peers by asking: "So the bridge is the tree trunk?" (line 2). Inés confirms his statement and Diego goes on to

describe the bridge as "really really thick" and unbreakable (lines 12-13). He then proceeds to compare the bridge to the "Trump wall" (line 17), which is unexpected, given that bridges are usually thought of as connecting rather than dividing geographical spaces and people. Trump's project of building a wall across the U.S.-Mexican border with the explicit goal of keeping out immigrants from Mexico and Central America was widely covered in the media and undoubtedly an issue of grave concern among members of Latinx communities. The fact that the image of the wall was what came to mind for Diego when discussing a literary passage about a bridge illustrates the strong presence of racialized discourses surrounding immigration in the United States. This example also highlights how the social and political contexts the students navigated mediated and were inextricably tied to their understanding of and experiences with the texts they read. As Gallo and Link (2015) highlight in their research, these "politicized funds of knowledge" relating to issues such as immigration and deportation are generally deemed as off-limits in the classroom, and are consequently often avoided by teachers and students.

The following week Diego raised the issue of immigration again in a conversation with Pedro about a reality show he had seen on border patrol agents at the U.S.-Mexican border. That morning, Ms. Anderson asked students to create posters to be displayed at their sixth-grade graduation. As part of the assignment, students were required to write short "poems" describing themselves using five adjectives followed by a quote of their choice. For his quote Diego chose to write:"I like mangos with tajin and lemon." *Tajín* is a chilly powder blend from Mexico used to condiment many types of food including fresh fruits, such as watermelon and mangos. It is popular in Mexico as well as among Mexican immigrants in

the U.S. and can be found at most supermarkets in California. Diego's choice to include this particular quote reflects his strong identification with Mexican cultural practices.

Figure 5.7: Diego's "End of year poem"



Immediately following the conversation about *tajín* Diego and Pedro were sitting at their desks with their hands raised, waiting for Ms. Anderson to check their poems. While they waited, Diego turned to Pedro to share what he had seen on television:

1	DIEGO;	Dude.
2		So I was watching this, ((*Pedro slaps Diego's raised hand several times*
3		*playfully*))
4		"Risk Takers" thing,
5		Um,
6		and then,
7		it was like,
8		border patrol?
9	PEDRO;	[@Border patrol],
10	DIEGO;	[And they call]—
11		They- they called Mexicans,
12		aliens.
13		((*Pedro gently slaps Diego's raised hand*))
14	PEDRO;	@@
15	DIEGO;	And they're like,
16		What's #that,
17		They're like,
18		<VOX> Oh there are aliens right there.
19		Oh we're going to go catch the aliens.
20		You #can't #cross the border"</VOX>
21		I'm like,
22		"What the frig? ((*Diego puts his hand on his head*))
23		We're not aliens!
24		We're not aliens!"((*Diego puts both hands on his head then extends*
25		*them in front of him*))
26	PABLO;	We're Mexicans.
27	DIEGO;	Yeah,
28		We're Mexicans!

Here, the task of representing himself on a poster and thinking about his own cultural background and practices appears to have prompted Diego to make a connection to a portrayal of Mexican immigrants in the media that had clearly made a strong impression on him. In this excerpt, Diego makes reference to the reality show “Risk Takers” (line 4), which is about “risky” professions such as paramedics, stunt people, and, in the episode he describes, border patrol agents. Although Diego’s reaction to the characterization of Mexicans as “aliens” (line 12) appears to be somewhat performative and humorous, as indicated by his arm gestures (lines 22 and 24) and his enactment of a border patrol agent’s voice (lines 18-20) he also seems surprised and upset by the use of the word “alien”, which he repeats twice emphatically after his initial comment in line 12. Pedro clapping Diego’s hand as if giving him a “high-five” in line 13 suggests a display of solidarity at a moment when they are discussing their shared cultural background. Diego and Pedro resist the label “aliens” both asserting that they are not aliens but Mexicans (lines 22-28). After this exchange, Diego goes on to explain to Pedro how on the show “*el coyote*” had left the people he was accompanying at the fence on the border: “He just leaves them there to jump over the fence” (VID 6-2-16). This conversation illustrates how although these references to issues of politics and race were rare and remained at the margins of academic discussions they clearly occupied an important place in students’ experiences.

Sounding like a “Hispanic mom”: Students’ use of Spanish

Despite their repeated references to Mexican culture and identity the students rarely employed Spanish as part of their discussions about the text. My presence in the reading group did seem to encourage some students to use Spanish with me and with each other, but these incidents were isolated and largely limited to peripheral conversations and humorous

exchanges.

Example 5.9

1	MARÍA;	Do you want to keep reading or you don't want to keep reading?
2	VANESSA;	*¿Sí o no*? (*yes or no?)*
3	DIEGO;	N:o.
4	PEDRO;	(H) You sound like a mom now.
5		I feel like when she grows up she's going to be a Hispanic mom.
6	DIEGO;	@@@
7		*¿Dónde está mi chancla*? (*Where is my flip-flop?)*
8	PEDRO;	((*softly throws pencil on the table*))
9		((*makes whipping sound*))
10	DIEGO;	@@@

In the above interaction, Vanessa uses Spanish to ask Diego if he plans to take the next turn to read aloud to the group. In response, Pedro teases Vanessa by saying that she sounds like a "mom" (line 4) and then specifies that she's going to grow up to be a "Hispanic mom" (line 5). Notably, Vanessa echoing my request to Diego in Spanish becomes associated with a "Hispanic mom" rather than with someone in a teacher-like role. Diego builds on the characterization of the "Hispanic mom" by imitating a mother looking for her "chancla" (flip-flop or slipper) in Spanish. This is a cultural reference based on images of Mexican mothers chasing their children with their "*chanclas*" to spank them as a form of disciplinary action. The implication that Spanish belongs in a family context illustrates that the students did not tend to think of Spanish or their bilingualism as legitimate resources for learning in the classroom.

Conclusion

The peer discussions examined in this chapter suggest that while students were demonstrating their competency with several of the reading skills mandated by the CCSS, such as comparing different characters and making evidence-based claims, they were doing so in creative ways that involved combining different forms of cultural and linguistic

expertise. More significantly, students were participating in a number of analytic practices that allowed them to construct and negotiate meaning with others and engage deeply with the story and its characters.

Returning to the CCSS's conceptualization of close reading as evidence-based, students' reflections and discussions about the text were fluid and shaped by their interactions with others. The notion that answers to reading questions can be "decontextualized" strongly contrasts with the kinds of connections students were making and their desire to look for answers outside of the text and the classroom. They did so by relating content to their rich funds of knowledge as well as to narratives they had encountered in other texts and the media, but also by building off of each other's arguments to clarify their theories and ideas about the text. While students' hypotheses and envisionments were not always consistent with the details of the text, the analytic and interactional work that was accomplished allowed students to engage in critical discussions that involved interrogating their own thinking and that of their peers. As Bunch, Kibler, and Pimentel (2012) argue: "[In] terms of fostering—and recognizing—students' ability to make sense of complex text, both literary and informational, ELs may be well served by opportunities to explore—and justify—their own 'textual hypotheses,' even if their initial interpretations diverge from those of the teacher" (p. 4-5). By focusing too narrowly on whether students are producing the "right" kinds of answers these analytic practices can, therefore, easily go unrecognized.

The analysis presented in this chapter further illustrates how engaging with different texts creates necessary opportunities to examine issues of class, race, and language that are deeply intertwined with students' experiences both inside and outside the classroom. As other researchers have noted, a deeper understanding of students' cultural and linguistic

backgrounds should also take into account how the discourse practices privileged in school interact with those students have been socialized into as part of their families and communities. Guajardo and Guajardo (2013), for example, describe how the notion of "*plática*" (literally meaning talk) within Mexican culture represents "an expressive cultural form shaped by listening, inquiry, storytelling, and story making that is akin to a nuanced, multi-dimensional conversation" (p. 160). These everyday conversations that take place around family tables and in the community share various features with the critical conversations valued in academic spaces; however, rather than participants looking for concrete answers, *plática* "[poses] opportunities to co-construct spaces and to explore important issues as we work on getting to know each other" (p. 161).

Lastly, students' agency in creating context for the text and building meaningful connections to their backgrounds and lived experiences clearly demonstrates the social and interactional nature of students' literacy practices. As educators, facilitating and supporting these meaningful connections in the classroom is consequently not just a matter of "recognizing diversity", but rather a way to create spaces where students are given opportunities to deploy the full range of their cultural and linguistic repertoires in order to enhance their learning.

VI. "Good readers" use "proper language": The role of academic language in students' discussions about text

The CCSS's characterization of students' desired language practices is consistent with monoglossic language ideologies (Nelson & Schissel, 2014) that favor "standard" or "academic" English. The language standards for 6th grade state that students should be able to: "Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language" (CCSSI, 2012a, p. 30). The College and Career Readiness language standards for grades 6-12 further specify that students should: "Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking" (CCSSI, 2012a, p. 51). As numerous scholars have argued in their work, the notion of "conventional language", particularly the perceived need to improve on the expression of conventional language, marginalizes the linguistic practices of emergent bilinguals and speakers of other English language varieties, such as African American English (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martínez, 2009; Valdés, 2004, inter alia). Moreover, rather than placing the emphasis on all students developing fluency in academic language as another variety and resource students can draw on to accomplish specific academic tasks, the standards focus on identifying and correcting deviations from "standard" English. Academic language is, thus, defined in opposition to, rather than in addition to, other languages and language varieties that may compose students' diverse linguistic repertoires.

In room 6A, the use of academic language was central to how students were expected to communicate their ideas about different texts. Students were frequently provided with worksheets that listed sentence frames specifying vocabulary words and preferred sentence

structures for literacy assignments. Ms. Anderson stressed the need to state answers in full sentences both in written work, as well as orally, and praised students when they used full sentences without being prompted to do so. She also encouraged students to distinguish between a more formal or academic register and a conversational tone in their work. Early on in the second semester, as part of a unit on argument writing, she reminded students: "consider your audience" and "you're not talking to your friends" (FN 2-25-16). Similarly, when providing feedback to students on their country reports she commented that some students were using "conversational" and "informal" language (FN 3-27-16). Although sentence frames were used frequently, Ms. Anderson emphasized that students should view them as a starting point and urged them to express themselves more creatively and independently, particularly in their writing (FN 2-23-16).

During our interview, Ms. Anderson noted that most of the students in her class were competent in the use of academic language. She pointed to the academic language posters hanging on the classroom wall and explained: "We've been doing that for several years" (INT 6-1-16). She elaborated:

> We all get lazy about talking in complete sentences, but they know and they've gotten that. Versus, I had a brand-new student, I had many students who are brand-new to the school and school system, and I was talking to the higher-ups about this, they don't have it. It's hard because it's ingrained. I don't stop to reteach it because it's so ingrained in all the students. (INT 6-1-16)

In the class, academic language use was, therefore, often associated with the production of "appropriate" language forms, such as using correct grammar and specific types of academic vocabulary.

Due to the importance placed on academic language use in classroom 6A, as well as in the ELA standards, I was interested in seeing how students were using (or not using) academic language in their discussions about text. As the examples analyzed in this chapter illustrate, students viewed academic language as a valued skill that was embedded within broader discourses about being a competent English speaker and a "good reader". Students displayed strong awareness of academic language practices and often used academic language without being instructed to do so. In their discussions, they employed their translanguaging skills to frequently transition between various linguistic registers and demonstrated metalinguistic awareness by drawing attention to their language choices. There were also instances of language policing where students referenced "proper" language use and mocked their peers for not conforming to "standard" language practices. While academic language was certainly part of students' interactions surrounding text, students were also able to accomplish analytic work without relying heavily on academic language forms to communicate and negotiate their ideas.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of scholarly perspectives on academic language development and emergent bilinguals, followed by a discussion of the role of language ideologies in shaping students' and teachers' perceptions and language practices in the classroom. In the following interactional analysis of students' peer discussions, I argue that narrow conceptualizations of academic language, particularly those that define academic language competency as an end in itself, can limit teachers' abilities to value and leverage the full range of linguistic resources students employ as they analyze texts. Findings further suggest that adopting a "translanguaging" perspective and applying it to the blending of

linguistic registers displayed by the students allows for a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of how language is used as part of their meaning-making practices.

A. Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature

1. Academic Language and Emergent Bilinguals

In response to the strong push for academic language proficiency, a growing body of research has called for a more nuanced view of how academic language is defined and understood, particularly with regard to how emergent bilinguals learn and use language in schools (Bailey, 2007; Hawkins, 2004; Valdés, 2004; Walqui & Van Lier, 2010). Dominant perceptions about a strict division between "academic" and "everyday" language have increasingly been problematized and have given way to alternative conceptualizations that underscore the socially-situated nature of language (see Chapter 2). In addition, Moje et al., (2004) have suggested that for emergent bilinguals, "academic language" may conflict with the cultural and linguistic practices of their families and communities: "Academic texts can limit some students' learning as they struggle to reconcile different ways of knowing, doing, reading, writing, and talking with those that are privileged in their classrooms" (p. 43).

Numerous studies have shown that emergent bilinguals who have access to their full linguistic repertoires are able to engage in complex meaning making practices that do not rely solely on the production of academic language forms. These practices include: using translanguaging to express their ideas and defend their word choices, expanding their linguistic repertories, developing metalinguistic awareness, drawing on their cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge to interpret text, and responding to the communicative needs of their peers to clarify understanding (Esquinca et al. 2014; Martin-Beltrán, 2014; Worthy et al., 2013). Durán (2017) further finds that emergent bilinguals display strong audience

awareness in their written and oral work and are able to adapt their discursive practices to different language audiences from a young age. Despite the many benefits of adopting more linguistically flexible approaches in the classroom, assessments often narrowly evaluate students on their use of academic language forms rather than on the underlying analytic practices required for different academic tasks (Snow & Uccelli, 2009). The pressure for students to demonstrate academic language proficiency, hence, limits students' opportunities to draw on their linguistic repertoires and teachers' abilities to create spaces in which a broader range of meaning making practices are valued.

2. Language Ideologies

Although scholars working with emergent bilinguals have increasingly pushed for more flexible conceptualizations of language, research suggests that deficit perspectives that position "standard English" as the language of schooling remain widespread. Even among dual language programs that favor additive perspectives other related ideologies concerning the need for the strict separation of languages continue to marginalize certain language practices among emergent bilinguals, such as the use of translanguaging (Lee, Hill-Bonnet, & Gillispie, 2008). Martínez, Hikida, and Durán (2015) find that ideologies of "linguistic purism" and language separation are also present in bilingual classrooms where teachers embrace and model hybrid language practices for their students, but at times reproduce the very ideologies they are pushing back against. Due to the persistence of these language ideologies and the barriers they create for students, García and Sylvan (2011) argue for a heteroglossic approach to bilingualism in the classroom. Flores and Rosa (2015) further maintain that scholars have not gone far enough in problematizing the discourses that accompany the categories used to classify language in seemingly objective ways: "Notions

such as ‘standard language’ or ‘academic language’ and the discourse of appropriateness in which they both are embedded must be conceptualized as racialized ideological perceptions rather than objective linguistic categories” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 152).

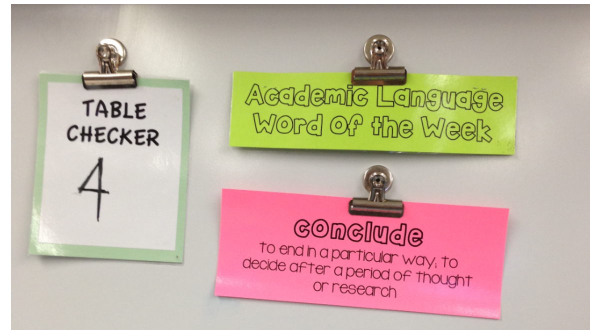
B. Academic Language in Room 6A

As described in greater detail in Chapter 4, I conducted my observations in room 6A during English Language Arts and Academic Language Development classes, which were scheduled from 8:30-10:05am and 10:05-10.30am, respectively. Although I did have the chance to observe numerous ALD lessons, as the year progressed I increasingly spent that time working with students individually and in small groups in an adjoining room on finishing various assignments, predominantly for ELA. The students I worked with most closely during that time were Diego, Lucas, and Pedro, as well as a handful of other students who needed additional time to complete specific assignments.

Despite the distinct names for each class period, the division between ELA and ALD was somewhat unclear and appeared to be mostly based on the types of activities students engaged in and less on the expectations for academic language use, which were consistent across both class periods. Due to the short amount of time assigned to ALD, the activities often seemed less rigorous than the ones students engaged in during ELA, where students were required to complete various long-term projects and read various types of texts over several days or weeks. To the students, there did not appear to be a significant difference between ALD and ELA. For example, when I asked Lucas if there were things he found to be different about ALD, as a newcomer to the class, he replied: “I think that it’s basically just Language Arts, but it’s just called different” (INT 6-6-16).

For the students classified as English learners, English Language Development classes were scheduled during ALD, which meant that they did not initially participate in these activities. Once they were all reclassified at the beginning of the second semester (with the exception of Mateo, who attended ELD with the 3rd and 4th graders at a different time) they joined ALD along with the rest of the class. In practice, however, some students, like Diego and Pedro, spent most ALD periods catching up on other work for ELA and, occasionally, other classes. In their interviews, the recent graduates of the English language development program characterized ELD classes as “fun” and “easy”. The kinds of lessons they described were geared towards students practicing grammar and vocabulary, and less on the kinds of analytic skills they were expected to master during ELA and ALD. In our interview, Diego described students having an ELD journal which was used during most activities: “Once you would get there, she would write something on the board like: ‘What is your favorite ice cream? Color? And why?’ So we would have to open it up and write one or two sentences about it. And then we would have to talk to other people, or say it out loud” (INT 6-1-16). Another activity Lucas mentioned was acting out different scenarios based on pictures provided by the teacher. In terms of the language practices that were prioritized, Pedro described ELD classes as teaching the use of “proper grammar”. He distinguished this from ELA and ALD where he said there was more of an emphasis on using rather than learning correct grammar: “[Here] we’re learning proper grammar, but we’re learning how to use it” (INT 6-1-16).

Figures 6.1: Academic language wall; Figure 6.2: Academic word of the week

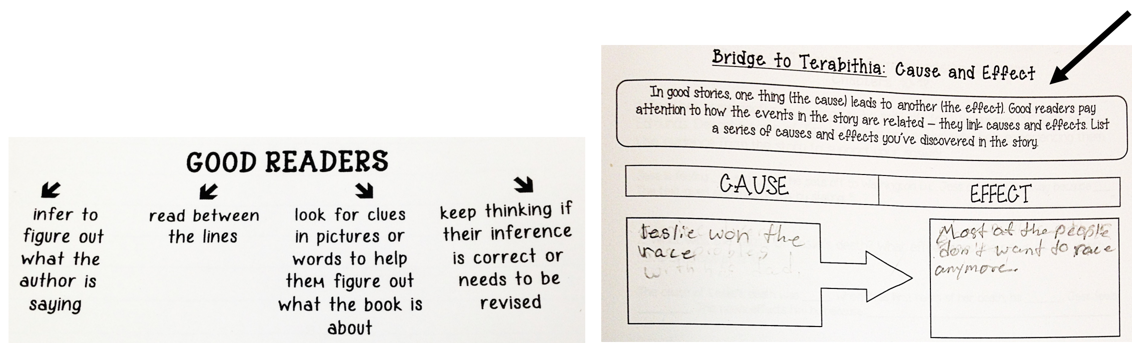


In room 6A, there was an academic language wall, which displayed numerous terms from the ELA reading standards, such as: predict, support, evidence, perspective, compare, describe, and perspective, along with their corresponding definitions (Figure 6.1). Individual words from the academic language wall were also put on display on one of the classroom's large whiteboards at the front of the class under the sign for "academic language word of the week" (Figure 6.2) There was another set of academic language posters above the windows on the opposite side of the room that presented suggested sentence frames for communicating with others in the class. Some of the practices highlighted were: agreeing/disagreeing, reporting on a group's or partner's idea, and asking for clarification. The poster for "agreeing", outlined sentence frames such as: "My perspective/experience is similar to ____'s". Another poster proposed expressing disagreement by saying: "I have a different point of view."

In addition to the importance of using academic language, there was a related discourse that was present in some of the class materials that referenced the notion of a "good

reader”. During an exercise on the difference between making predictions and making inferences the students received a worksheet, part of which is displayed in Figure 6.3. In the center, underneath the heading “good readers”, several practices were specified. These included: “infer to figure out what the author is saying” and “read between the lines”. Notably, these practices are consistent with the class poster definition for close reading, which also encourages students to ask what the author is trying to tell them (see Chapter 5). Similarly, as part of the “Bridge to Terabithia” workbook one of the worksheets students used to identify cause and effect relationships in the text stated: “Good readers pay attention to how the events in the story are related – they link causes and effects” (Figure 6.4). Being a good reader was consequently associated with displaying competence at the skills prioritized within the standards as well as indirectly with the academic language practices being modeled in the class.

Figure 6.3 Good readers worksheet A; Figure 6.4 Good readers worksheet B



The following interactional analysis of students’ peer discussions is based on examples drawn from the class’ final ELA unit on the novel “Bridge of Terabithia” (see Chapter 5). As previously discussed, I worked with the same group of students for the duration of the unit. All of the students were from Latinx backgrounds, and three of them were emergent bilinguals who had recently been reclassified (see Chapter 4 for participant profiles). While discourse surrounding the importance of academic language was

appropriated and reproduced by students in various ways, they were also selective and intentional in their use of academic language. Students employed academic language to signal their alignment with certain ideas and participants, while simultaneously drawing on other linguistic and cultural resources. Further, students were also able to engage in analytic practices, such as presenting their own arguments and requesting more evidence from their peers, without systematically drawing on academic language practices.

Using academic language

One of the activities students were required to do as part of the “Bridge to Terabithia” unit was to complete a character chart in the workbook. The chart included four separate columns titled: “personality traits”, “important quotation”, “greatest challenge”, and “greatest moment”. During one of the first group discussions about the novel, the students were working on completing the chart in their workbooks and identifying the main characters and the relationships between them. Since the main character, Jess, comes from a large family, the students and I were trying to establish whether two of his sisters were older or younger than him:

Example 6.1

1	MARÍA;	I think Brenda and Ellie are both his older sisters.
2	PEDRO;	(1.0)
3		Oh yeah!
4		It i- It is.
5		Probably.
6		Because he says he's in the middle in the beginning of the text.
7		He's always—
8		He's [in the middle].
9	INÉS;	[Oh yeah].
10	PEDRO;	Like that one TV show,
11		Me and—
12	VANESSA;	Stuck [in the middle].
13	PEDRO;	[Stuck in the] middle.
14	DIEGO:	<SINGING> It's just me myself and I. </SINGING >

Here, Pedro employs an academic register when responding to my claim that Brenda and Ellie are Jess' older sisters. He aligns with me by stating: "Because he says he's in the middle in the beginning of the text" (line 6). The use of the word "text" indexes an academic stance and is consistent with his choice to provide specific evidence to support my hypothesis. Similarly to the examples discussed in Chapter 5, Pedro, in addition to referencing supporting evidence from the text then draws a connection to a Disney sitcom, "Stuck in the Middle", in which the protagonist is the middle child of seven children in a Latinx family. While Jess is one of five children he is also, as Pedro puts it, "in the middle" (line 6). This example clearly illustrates how students used academic language to enact practices that were expected within literacy tasks such as supporting claims with text-based evidence and using specific vocabulary. Academic language was, however, one of several discursive resources they used concurrently with other practices that allowed them to express their ideas and negotiate their understanding of the text with others. It is also interesting to note that despite using an incorrect name for the sitcom initially, Pedro's reference is immediately recognized by Vanessa. In this brief interaction, Pedro is, therefore, able to make a claim using "appropriate" academic vocabulary, while also sharing a common cultural reference with his peers that allows him to expand on his idea that Jess is "in the middle."

During a later exchange within the same activity, the students were filling out personality traits for Jess's music teacher, Miss Edmunds, in the same chart:

Example 6.2

1	MARÍA;	What about the music teacher?
2		Miss Edmunds.
3	INÉS;	Oh,
4	VANESSA;	She's—
5		She's very nice.

6	INÉS;	She has black hair.
7	PEDRO;	How do you know?
8	INÉS;	It says.
9	MARÍA;	Ok, but the personality traits.
10	VANESSA;	Inés we are listing the—
11	MARÍA;	The personality—
12	VANESSA;	Personality.
13	INÉS;	And blue eyes.
14	MARÍA;	She's very nice,
15		right?
16	INÉS;	Nice.
17	DIEGO;	She's beautiful. ((*makes air quotes with hands*))
18	MARÍA;	He says she's beautiful.
19		Ok yeah,
20		but she's very nice.
21	LUCAS;	Wait who?
22	MARÍA;	The- the music teacher.
23	LUCAS;	Oh Miss Bubububu.
24	MARÍA;	Edmunds.
25	DIEGO;	Put it in quotation marks "beautiful". ((*makes air quotes with right*
26	*hand*))	
27	INÉS;	In quotes?
28	DIEGO;	Yeah.
29		Because she's not.
30	INÉS;	@@
31	DIEGO;	@ ((*shrugs*))

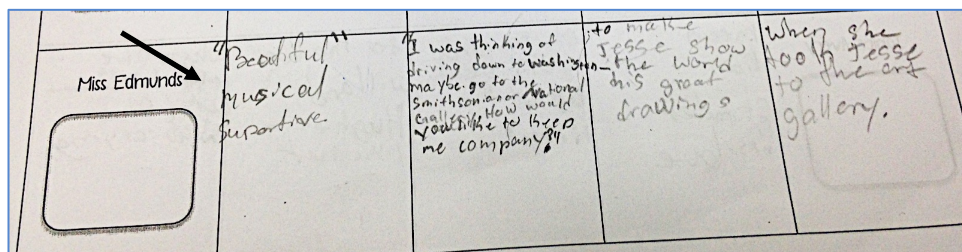
1

Vanessa first suggests that Ms. Edmunds is "very nice" (line 5), while Inés focuses on her physical characteristics by describing her as having "black hair" (line 6) and "blue eyes" (line 13). When Pedro questions Inés on how she knows this information, she refers back to the text in which both of these characteristics are mentioned: "it says" (line 8). Diego builds on Inés' observation and describes Ms. Edmunds as "beautiful", which is an adjective Jess uses to describe his teacher in the same passage from the book. Diego's use of air quotes demonstrates his understanding that he is citing Jess's description of Ms. Edmunds from the text. Although I attempt to redirect Inés' and Diego's attention to Ms. Edmund's personality traits rather than her physical attributes they continue to pursue this idea and Inés lists "beautiful" as one of her traits in her chart. Diego is insistent that she should write the word

"beautiful" in "quotation marks" (line 25). Here, Diego's use of the academic term serves to reference the associated practice of quoting from the text as a way to provide evidence. As displayed in the image taken of Diego's workbook (Figure 6.5) the word "beautiful" is the only one written in quotes. The other two adjectives used to describe Ms. Edmunds ("musical" and "supportive"), which were agreed upon by the group, were not direct citations from the text and were not written in quotation marks.

Towards the end of the exchange, when Inés asks Diego for confirmation that she should be using quotes, Diego comments that the reason she should use them is "Because she's not" (line 28). Diego joking about Ms. Edmunds not actually being beautiful displays his metapragmatic awareness that this form of punctuation can serve multiple purposes, including expressing sarcasm. It is important to note that despite Inés and Diego's answer being technically incorrect, because the word "beautiful" refers to the character's physical appearance and not to her personality traits, their interaction allows them to engage in analytic practices, such as building off of each other's ideas and identifying relevant evidence to support their claims in the text.

Figure 6.5 Diego's character chart



In the above examples students used academic terms without being prompted to do so explicitly, although the activity they were participating in and the academic materials clearly provided an "academic" context. Academic language use while allowing both Diego and Pedro to position themselves as aligned with the task of completing the character chart was

one of several practices they engaged in as they attempted to learn more about the characters in the story and connected with their peers.

Analytic practices with(out) "academic language"

In the following interaction, which took place the next week, the students were working on formulating predictions about what was going to happen in future chapters of the novel by drawing on evidence from the text. Before students were divided up into their reading groups, Ms. Anderson explained to the class how they were expected to fill out the "prediction chart": "So you go 'I predict what will happen *because*…' You're going to tell me why. And then you're going to find your evidence." (AUD 5-5-16). For this exercise, students were required to list their predictions in one column and the supporting evidence from the text in another. Sentence frames were provided at the top of each column: "I predict____will happen because____" and "The text supports my prediction because_____ It states '____'"

Figure 6.6 Prediction chart

Bridge to Terabithia Prediction Chart
Chapters 4 - 6
After reading each chapter, make a prediction about what will happen next. Give evidence to support your thoughts.

Chapter	Prediction I predict ___ will happen because ___	Evidence from the Text The text supports my prediction because ___ It states, '___'.
Rulers of Terabithia (Chapter 4)	I Predict Jess will be followed by a Stalker because the chapter is called The Giant Killers.	I Predict this because the chapter is called The Giant Killers.

In this activity, Vanessa and Diego model two different approaches to formulating a prediction: one closely reproducing the academic register expected in the class, the other using more spontaneous and informal language. As students were making predictions about what would happen in the following chapter, Vanessa predicted that the main character, Jess, was going to paint something with the watercolors Leslie had given him (an event described

in the previous chapter). Building on Vanessa's idea, Diego then suggested that Leslie might draw pictures to give to Leslie as a gift:

Example 6. 3

1	MARÍA;	Vanessa what did you say?
2		So you predicted that he was going to paint something?
3	VANESSA;	Yeah like maybe,
4		the golden room is what he's always painting.
5		And then,
6		um,
7	MARÍA;	What did he—
8	VANESSA:	The text supports my prediction because,
9		when Leslie gave um,
10		him [the water colors].
11	LUCAS;	[He can make a little throne room].
12	VANESSA;	He was really excited so—
13	DIEGO;	Oh!
14		No and didn't he also say that he was,
15		like he was going to draw a big ##?
16	LUCAS;	They had Moby-Dicks.
17	MARÍA;	He said what?
18		That he was going to draw what?
19	DIEGO;	Like draw a whole bunch of pictures and then put them together and
20		then give them to Leslie.
21	LUCAS;	Out of what?
22		Out of Moby-Dicks?
23	MARÍA;	I don't remember that.
24		Like in this chapter?
25		((*Pedro returns from restroom and discussion is interrupted;*
26		*9.2 seconds omitted*))
27	DIEGO;	Wait.
28		Didn't it say?
29		that?
30		Inés did it say that uh Jessie was—
31		wanted to draw,
32	INÉS;	Yeah but that was for the present,
33		but he already gave her a dog.
34	DIEGO;	So how do you know he won't do it again?

During this discussion, Vanessa clearly exemplifies the type of academic language students were expected to use when making predictions and models the use of the sentence frames provided in the workbook (line 8). She begins by stating that she believes that Jess

will paint something and goes on to provide specific evidence: “the text supports my prediction because when Leslie gave him the watercolors, he was really excited…” (lines 8-12). Diego responds enthusiastically to Vanessa’s prediction as he appears to have made a connection to another incident in the story where Jess was considering giving Leslie a collection of his drawings as a gift. Unlike Vanessa, Diego uses a more informal register and suggests that Jess was going to “like draw a whole bunch of pictures” (line 19). After I comment that I do not remember that particular event, Diego insists that it occurred and asks Inés to confirm his version of events: “Inés, did it say that?” (line 30). Interestingly, Diego singles out Inés rather than posing the question to the entire group, positioning her as the more expert peer. Inés is quick to respond to Diego by stating that the event he is referring to took place earlier in the book and that Jess had decided to give Leslie a dog instead of his pictures: “but he already gave her a dog” (line 33). Diego uses this exchange to formulate his own prediction by claiming that although Jess had not given his drawings to Leslie earlier in the story there is no evidence to suggest he would not want to “do it again” (line 34). While Diego is less explicit in formulating his prediction using an academic register, he makes the argument that based on prior evidence from the text Jess giving Leslie his drawings is a plausible future event. This example clearly illustrates that there are multiple ways for students to engage in a particular analytic practice, and that academic language is not always necessary in order for students to demonstrate analytic thinking.

In the following conversation, the students were discussing an encounter between Leslie and Janice, the class bully. In the text, Jess notes that he is surprised that Leslie returns from talking to Janice in the bathroom without a black eye. Diego seems confused by this statement and asks for clarification:

Example 6.4

1	MARÍA;	She came back and she looked totally fine.
2		No black eye,
3		right?
4	DIEGO;	O:h
5		Wait.
6		So he wanted them to get in a fight?
7	MARÍA;	Well I don't know if he <u>wanted</u> them to,
8		He <u>expected</u> them to.
9	VANESSA;	He expected <softly>,
10	DIEGO;	Why?
11	VANESSA;	Because it's Janice.
12		She's a bully.
13	DEIGO;	And?
14	VANESSA;	And she was cussing.
15		And she was,
16	DIEGO;	And?
17	VANESSA;	[crying],
18	DIEGO;	[##}
19	VANESSA;	And it was loud.
20	DIEGO;	But how do you know?
21		How do you know?
22		Leslie didn't give uh whatever [her name is a black eye]?
23	PEDRO;	[Give birth]!
24	MARÍA;	Well we don't know that yet.
25	VANESSA;	Well because,
26		U:m,
27	DIEGO;	[Bullies never win].
28	VANESSA;	[Janice started crying].
29	DIEGO;	Bullies don't always win,
30		you know?
31	PEDRO;	####
32	VANESSA;	I'm not saying they always win,
33		I'm just [saying,
34		that],
35	LUCAS;	[How to defeat the ##]

When Vanessa suggests that Jess expected Leslie to return with a black eye because Janice is a bully, Diego responds by questioning her repeatedly. Vanessa supports her claim by stating that Janice was “cussing” (line 14) and “crying” (line 17), as well as the fact that Janice and Leslie’s conversation was loud (line 19) are all indications that the conflict

between them may have escalated. Diego stands by his position and introduces a counter argument asking Vanessa: “How do you know? Leslie didn’t give uh whatever her name is a black eye?” (lines 21-22). Rather than drawing on specific details from the text he further argues that “Bullies never win” (line 27) and then self-corrects by saying “Bullies don’t always win” (line 29). Diego appears to be referencing the broader logic of the story and whether it would be consistent with other narratives he has encountered for a bully to “win”. While on the surface it would be easy to interpret Diego’s oppositional stance and informal tone as disruptive and “non-academic” a closer analysis of the interaction exposes his use of an argumentative style to create a counter claim and engage in a text-based discussion with his peer.

Blending multiple registers

While students varied in how much they employed an academic register to express their ideas they also transitioned rapidly between multiple registers and at times went from using academic vocabulary and sentence frames to expressing themselves by using language more consistent with the language used among their peers. In this conversation, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, Pedro draws a comparison between Jess and a character in the movie “McFarland USA”. It is worth revisiting part of the interaction in order to observe how Pedro blends an academic register with a more informal register in order to share his idea with the group:

Example 6.5

1	PEDRO;	I'm comparing Daniel and Jess,
2		because first they were like the suckiest kids,
3		and they didn't even know what they were doing.
4		Because Daniel first was a fat kid who just kept eating all day.
5	MARÍA	OK,
6		In the movie?

7	PEDRO;	And Jess was like this crazy little kid,
8		who just kept drawing all day,
9		and um,
10		when they got older,
11		they realized um,
12		what life was about.

As he expands on his argument about why the two characters and stories are similar, Pedro moves fluidly between the "academic" language students were expected to use to communicate this type of idea in the class: "I'm comparing Daniel and Jess because first…" (lines 1-2) and a more informal register, which he uses to characterize the two boys as the "suckiest kids" (line 2), as well as to describe Daniel as a "fat kid" (line 4), and Jess as a "crazy little kid" (line 7). Pedro's process of sharing his analysis is consistent with Bunch's (2014) findings that students may choose to use less "academic" language while discussing and articulating their initial ideas about a particular text, but that they are still capable of employing other registers and displaying audience awareness. By using multiple registers Pedro not only engages productively with the text, but spontaneously crafts a comparison that allows him to deepen his understanding of the characters and the storyline.

1

Reproducing "standard" language ideologies

In addition to using academic language selectively and in combination with other linguistic resources, students reproduced language ideologies in their interactions and made references to the use of "proper" or "good" language. On some occasions, the comments were associated with the use of specific academic terms and forms, but often these ideas were generalized to using correct grammar as well as to other language skills such as reading accurately and fluently from the text. Students displayed strong awareness of their language practices and monitored their academic language use, even when they were not being asked

to do so explicitly. In the following example, Pedro and Inés were discussing future events in the book and both aligned with class expectations for academic language use:

Example 6.6

1	PEDRO;	Me and Inés know what's going to happen.
2		@@
3	MARÍA,	Who do you think it is?
4	LUCAS;	His friends,
5		###
6	PEDRO;	No I know I know,
7		I've got to use correct-
8		proper language. ((*waving finger and pointing it in Inés' direction*))
9		Inés and I know what's going to happen.
10	MARÍA;	Very good.
11	INÉS;	We made a guess.
12	PEDRO;	A guess?
13		###
14	MARÍA;	What was the guess?
15		Oh the guess was who the names are?
16	INÉS;	No.
17		Not that.
18		For,
19		Who—
20		Like who raced—
21	PEDRO;	The fastest kid in fifth grade.
22	MARÍA:	O:h
23	PEDRO;	We know who's going to win.
24	INÉS;	Well we made a guess.
25	LUCAS;	Obviously.
26	PEDRO;	A guess?
27	INÉS;	A prediction.
28	PEDRO;	A prediction?
29		We read it.
30	VANESSA;	Oh I know who it is.
31	MARÍA;	What was—
32		So what was the prediction?
33	PEDRO;	Ok, she knows.
34		Inés,
35	INÉS;	Ssh don't say it.
36	PEDRO;	Vanessa,
37		and I,
38		know what's going to happen.
39	MARÍA;	Wait.
40		So how do you guys know?

41 PEDRO; It says. ((turning book around to show back cover))

Pedro begins by claiming that he and Inés know what is going to happen in the text and interrupts himself to say that he needs to use “correct”/“proper language” (line 8). He then reformulates his statement grammatically to say, “Inés and I” instead of “Inés and me” (line 9). Pedro’s repair is not prompted by anyone, but introduces a playful shift in his tone to a more academic register, which seems to be indexing his orientation to the discussion as an academic task. Inés then explains that they have “made a guess” about future events in the book (line 24). When Pedro questions Inés, she assumes that he is correcting her English or word choice and substitutes “guess” with the more academic term the students have been using in the class: “prediction”. It then becomes clear that Pedro is not questioning Inés’ word choice, but, rather, the accuracy of her statement. As he explains soon after, the students were not guessing what was going to happen because they had read the summary on the book’s back cover, which reveals that Leslie wins the race. Notably, Pedro repeats the same “correct” sentence structure from earlier in the interaction when he says: “Inés, Vanessa, and I know what’s going to happen” (lines 34-38). In this example, both Pedro and Inés display metalinguistic awareness and modify their language in order to conform to the “standard” language practices valued in the class.

Interestingly, it was often the students who had been classified as English learners who policed others on their language use most heavily. Lucas would frequently correct his peers as they read and occasionally mocked them. In one instance, Inés was reading aloud to the group and had to reread a particular sentence several times. Lucas interrupted her as she attempted to correct her mistake and commented “good English” (VID 5-23-16). In the following example, Gabriel, another student who was classified as an English learner, but

was not usually in the classroom during ELA and ALD because he was on an Individualized Education Program (IEP), described the character, Janice, as a “bullier”:

Example 6.7

1	MARÍA;	Who was Janice Avery?
2		Remember?
3	GABRIEL;	The bullier.
4	MARÍA;	So ok,
5		[so just write someth-]
6	LUCAS;	[Yeah.
7		Yeah.]
8		English. ((*Makes a thumbs-up sign with his left hand*))
9		Bullier.
10	GABRIEL;	<SOFTLY>The bully: </SOFTLY>
11	LUCAS;	The bullier. ((*smiles*))

1

Here, Lucas uses the thumbs-up gesture to embody mocking approval of Gabriel’s English (line 8). The notion of a “standard” or “good English” Lucas invokes in these interactions is clearly tied to the discourses surrounding language students have been exposed to repeatedly, particularly as English learners in a school setting. As previously mentioned, using correct grammar appeared to be central to the students’ understanding of being a competent reader and English speaker. In another example discussed more extensively in Chapter 5, Inés tries to get her point across about farmers in the United States making money by selling their crops:

Example 6.8

1	INÉS;	Because they had all the crops, right?
2		And then they gave it,
3		they selled it to the people?
4	PEDRO;	They selled it?
5	DIEGO;	That's so funny because [here,]
6	INÉS;	[They sold it.]
7	PEDRO;	They selled it @@

1

When Pedro points out Inés' use of the word "selled" (line 4), she immediately self-corrects (line 6); however, rather than allowing her to continue to read, Pedro repeats her mistake and draws more attention to it through his laughter (line 7). These kinds of interactions between students, particularly, by the students classified as English learners, were manifestations of language ideologies they had appropriated. At times, these ideologies were used to undermine others and challenge students, like Inés, who were often positioned by teachers and peers as being more "competent".

Conclusion

As the interactions examined in this chapter illustrate, using academic language both in writing and orally was a practice that was highly valued in room 6A. When engaging in discussions about text, the students were intentional in their choice to use academic forms and terms as a way to index their alignment with certain tasks and peers and often did so on their own initiative. While some students, such as Vanessa, more consistently used academic language in conversations with her peers, other students were less inclined to adopt these forms, but nevertheless engaged meaningfully in desired analytic practices.

Echoing findings from Corella's (2016) work on academic language use, students in the class used academic language to accomplish both social and academic work, and likewise used more "informal" types of language to perform academic practices while also pursuing relational work with their peers. Given that students were drawing fluidly from various linguistic and semiotic resources as they discussed and analyzed the text together the dichotomy between "academic" and "everyday" language proves limiting in capturing the dynamic and multi-layered interactions they were participating in. By isolating academic language use as the end goal, it would further be easy to dismiss students like Diego, who

engaged critically with the text and his peers, but did not always use “academic” language to do so.

In their discussions, students’ also reproduced ideologies of “proper” and “standard” language. This was displayed through the monitoring and policing of their own language practices and those of their peers. It is important to recognize that students in the class did not have access to bilingual spaces and that they did not tend to use their knowledge of Spanish in conjunction with academic language (although this was more common in discussions about their experiences and funds of knowledge; see Chapter 5). They did, however, blend different linguistic registers to communicate their ideas as a way to expand their opportunities to engage with others authentically.

The fluid movements between registers, which allowed students to pursue multiple goals is consistent with the translanguaging approach, which focuses on how emergent bilinguals combine various features of languages to make meaning. Although registers and language varieties are indirectly addressed in Wei’s (2017) formulation of translanguaing as a “theory of language”, I would argue that in attempting to examine emergent bilinguals’ language practices, particularly in education settings, the use of register must be given greater attention. As others have pointed out, mastery of an “academic” register, which is highly valued in school, is not simply an academic skill, but a product of racialized discourses that position certain languages and language varieties as more valuable and desirable than others. Students’ choices to use or not to use features of particular registers must, consequently, be understood as actions informed by broader social and political discourses.

While undoubtedly developing fluency in academic language is an important skill for students to acquire, it is equally important to ask what academic language use can tell us about students' thinking and meaning-making processes. As the examples analyzed in this chapter suggest, academic language is only one of numerous discursive tools students draw on as they read and interpret text. It is, therefore, crucial that teachers look beyond academic language as a measure of learning in order to examine students' analytic thinking and rich linguistic repertoires, within the context of interaction.

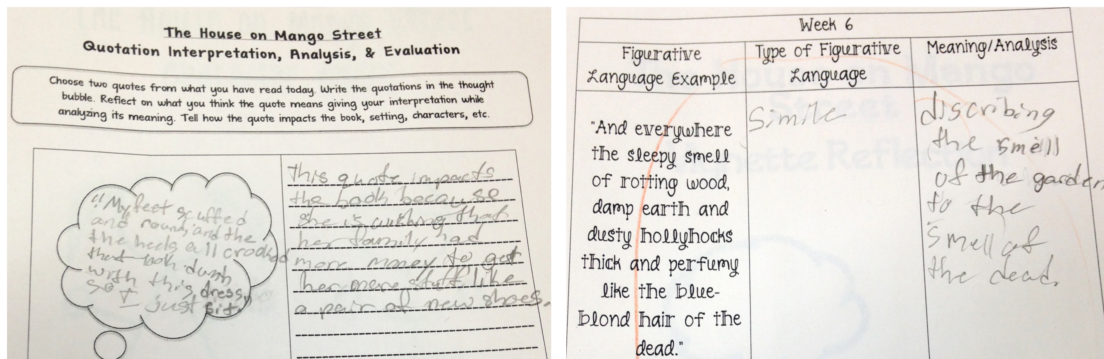
VII. "My least favorite subject": The social construction of reader engagement

"I don't like reading.
Reading is not my favorite subject.
Like my least favorite subject." – Pedro

As Pedro's statement above suggests, students' relationships to reading were complex and were intertwined with their perceptions about the expectations for reading in the class. Reading was understood as a necessary part of assignments such as writing reports and completing ELA unit projects. During our interview, Pedro shared that he had not enjoyed the class's Greek mythology unit because the myths were "so long and we had to read them" (INT 6-1-16). He also stated that one of the reasons he did not like ELA more generally was because of the reports they were required to write: "I kind of get stressed out sometimes because I can't finish it" (INT 6-1-16). Reading and writing were consequently viewed as practices that were performed with a specific purpose and often with an associated deadline. Like Pedro, several of the other emergent bilinguals did not express much enthusiasm for reading in their interviews. Students' self-assessments and perceptions about reading, however, did not reflect the active analytic work they often performed as they participated in discussions about text. These inconsistencies led me to want to examine students' engagement across various literacy tasks and activities more closely.

As previously noted, the students in room 6A read the novel "The House on Mango Street" (Cisneros, 1984) during the first semester of the school year. Similarly to the other major ELA projects, "The House on Mango Street" unit required students to complete a "workbook" made up of exercises and activities, such as: comparing two vignettes, identifying meaningful quotes, and interpreting figurative language. Below are sample pages from the workbook displaying two such exercises:

Figure 7.1 Quotation interpretation worksheet; Figure 7.2 Figurative language worksheet



Most students completed the workbook by the end of the first semester. When I began data collection in January, Diego still had a substantial amount of work left to do on the assignment. Ms. Anderson asked me to work with him individually while students were participating in ALD activities, typically from 10:05 to 10:30 a.m. Diego appeared to have trouble focusing during our meetings and was visibly disengaged. In his interview, he said he had not liked the book because there were "so many different things in it" (INT 6-1-16). The fact that the book is made up of a series of vignettes with many different characters made this a common complaint among students. Due to this experience, I was surprised by Diego's level of engagement and enthusiasm while working on "Bridge to Terabithia", just a few months later. There is no doubt that wanting to avoid being in the same situation again was a strong motivator for keeping up with his work, but it was also clear that Diego connected with the novel in a different way and one that allowed him to engage with the story deeply and productively. I became curious about his transition from being the last student to finish, to one of the first students to complete the unit workbook.

Although this is not a question I initially set out to answer, it became clear through my fieldwork that students' engagement and identities as readers were tied up in their

experiences with different texts. Further, how students were positioned by others, including their teacher and peers, and how they positioned themselves was fluid and socially constructed through moment-to-moment interactions. In this chapter, I argue that while students may become associated with certain narratives or "itineraries of identity" (Bucholtz et al., 2012), such as the "struggling reader", these itineraries are not fixed and can be reframed and challenged both by teachers and students themselves. Findings also suggest that students engagement was locally constructed and varied across texts and activities.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the literature on reader engagement followed by an overview of the notion of "itineraries of identity" (Bucholtz et al. 2012) and how it provides a useful lens for examining how students' identities are negotiated through social interaction. The analysis presented in this chapter is divided into two parts: The first part examines the case of Diego and his evolving engagement as a reader throughout the school year. The second part of the chapter examines other instances in which focal students displayed engagement with various literacy tasks in order to examine how their engagement was socially constructed in specific activities.

A. Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature

1. Reader "engagement"

Much of the research on literacy has traditionally focused on cognitive approaches to understanding reading by examining how students decode language and acquire specific language forms. An interest in learning more about the affective factors that lead students to want to engage in reading practices has brought about the development of another body of research that has applied the concept of "motivation" to reading. Within these studies: "The engaged reader is viewed as motivated to read for diverse purposes, an active knowledge

constructor, an effective user of cognitive strategies and a participant in social interactions" (Rueda et al., 2001, p. 236). Rueda et al. (2001) note that this research, while providing a valuable and more integrative perspective, continues to focus heavily on the reader's individual characteristics, such as their competency at employing various cognitive strategies. They situate their own work as part of reading research informed by sociocultural theory, which builds on this literature, but understands reading engagement as embedded in sociocultural contexts and relationships:

> Sociocultural studies of motivation and reading engagement in classroom contexts must also consider the interdependent roles of students and social contexts, including the relationships students have with teachers, the type and distribution of activities in which they engage, the language of instruction, and the status differences among students. (p. 239)

They further emphasize how adopting such an approach is particularly crucial for examining the literacy practices of students from nondominant backgrounds.

In her influential research on literacy instruction, particularly among learners from diverse backgrounds, Au (1998) uses the term "ownership" to refer to "the notion that literacy is personally meaningful and viewed as useful for the individual's own purposes" (p. 309). Au (1998) similarly advocates for a sociocultural approach in which educators are invested in designing instruction in order to promote students' ownership of their literacy practices. Some of the strategies she suggests in order to create this kind of learning environment include: incorporating literature that presents diverse cultural experiences, recognizing students' home languages, and forging strong ties between the community and the classroom.

From a related "language as action" perspective (see Chapter 3), the role of the teacher in fostering engagement is to provide the necessary structure and scaffolds for students to see themselves as active participants in their own learning: "This structure only exists to enable the unexpected, the unpredictable to occur. The framework of the task makes the innovation possible." (Walqui & Heritage, 2012, p. 3). Another key element required for creating a sense of engagement is that students view themselves as members of a community of practice, in which learning occurs through the process of apprenticeship. The ultimate goal of such a community is for students to develop a "stance of generativity and autonomy", meaning that students are supported in taking charge of their own learning (Walqui and Heritage, 2012, p. 3; see also van Lier, 2004).

Together these approaches inform the sociocultural orientation to reader engagement adopted in this chapter. In the following analysis, I focus particularly on how students' engagement is influenced by the characteristics of different texts and their affective responses to those texts.

2. Itineraries of identity

As discussed more extensively in Chapter 3, this study adopts a sociocultural linguistic understanding of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). This approach privileges social interaction as the means by which people enact different stances and identities. The deficit ideologies that have been critiqued thus far often contrast with this perspective by reinforcing notions of identity that are fixed and consistently associated with similar kinds of issues through identity categories such as "English learners" and "struggling readers".

While an interactional focus provides a more nuanced perspective on how individuals position themselves and are positioned through interactions, it is important to recognize that

individuals may experience interactional patterns over time that lead them to consistently be positioned in similar ways (Bucholtz et al., 2012). This can particularly be the case in schools, where labeling and categorizing students are widespread practices, which significantly impact students' educational trajectories and opportunities.

In her study on "struggling" reader identities among students of color who had also been categorized as "learning disabled" (LD), Hikida (2018) found that the teacher played a vital role in reframing students' identities in the classroom. Through a process she refers to as "holding space" for students, she suggests that teachers can create opportunities for students traditionally marginalized in the classroom to construct and assert their literate identities. She describes how the teacher in her study "held space" for students during whole class discussions in order to create participatory structures that allowed the voices of students to be heard and their identities as "struggling" to be reframed.

B. Diego: Pushing Back against the "Struggling Reader" Narrative

As previously noted, Diego's fluctuating interest in reading throughout my time in the classroom represented one of the "frame clashes" (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012) that led me to the question of students' engagement as readers. At the end of the year, when I interviewed Diego, we had the opportunity to discuss his experience with the book "The House on Mango Street" in more detail:

Example 7.1

1	MARÍA;	What didn't you like about it?
2	DIEGO;	Uh,
3		comprehension questions.
4	MARÍA;	You thought the comprehension questions were hard?
5	DIEGO;	No.
6		I just don't like doing them.
7	MARÍA;	Oh.
8		You just [don't like] doing them.

9	DIEGO;	[@@]
10	MARíA;	Ok.
11		Um,
12	DIEGO;	I also thought the book had so many different things in it,
13		like,
14	MARÍA	Mhm.
15	DIEGO;	It was complicated to me.
16	MARÍA;	Yeah.
17		It had a lot of details right?

When I ask Diego more specifically what he did not like about the book, he refers to the comprehension questions the students were required to complete as part of the unit. I respond by making the assumption that the reason he did not like the questions was because they were "hard" (line 4). The way I word the statement further suggests that the questions were not objectively difficult, but rather, that *he* had found them to be challenging (line 4). Diego immediately pushes back against my interpretation by saying: "No. I just don't like doing them" (lines 5-6). He also describes the text as having "so many different things in it" (line 12), and being "complicated" (line 15). Through his response, Diego rejects my account of him having struggled with this particular task and reframes it, shifting the focus to the activity itself not being engaging and to the characteristics of the text.

Diego being "behind" on "The House on Mango Street" unit became the source of frequent, generally well-meaning, jokes in the class. In the following conversation, Diego, Pedro, and Olivia were in the small room with me during ALD and were working on finishing their Greek Mythology scrapbook. As Diego is going through his scrapbook and listing the tasks he still has to complete, Pedro points out that Diego still has not finished his workbook from the previous semester.

Example 7.2

1	PEDRO;	He still has to finish,
2		um,
3		Mango.

4		#He still hasn't finished Mango.
5	MARÍA;	You finished Mango,
6		right Diego?
7	PEDRO;	No.
8	DIEGO;	Maybe. ((*smiling*))
9	MARÍA;	Diego!
10	PEDRO;	That was like a long [time ago.
11		###]
12	DIEGO;	[I don't want to.
13		I don't want to] finish.
14	PEDRO;	He's too lazy.
15	MARÍA;	Because you want to keep working on Mango forever,
16		because you like it so much?
17	DIEGO;	No.
18		I hate it,
19		but I–
20		And then I get out of things that I don't like.

Since Diego and I had been working on finishing the project over several weeks and he had very little left to do I was surprised to learn that he had not handed it in to Ms. Anderson yet (line 9). In this exchange, Pedro emphasizes that the project was from "a long time ago" (line 10). Diego then states that the has not finished it because he does not "want to finish" (lines 12-13). In doing so, he frames "not finishing" as his choice, rather than attributing it to any aspect of the project itself or his own ability to complete the project. When I joke that he wants to continue working on the book because he is enjoying it so much he adamantly rejects this idea and states that he "hates" it (line 18) and further explains: "I get out of things that I don't like" (line 20). Pedro, who himself was among the last students to finish the same project, describes Diego as "too lazy" (line 14) to finish. This comment clearly reflects one of the characteristics commonly associated with the "struggling reader" identity, which links students' inability to meet expectations to their intrinsic lack of motivation. Diego appears to be responding to this narrative and preempts it by providing his own rationale for why he is "behind". As emergent bilinguals both Diego and Pedro had

inevitably been exposed to these deficit ideologies that position students as being the root cause of their lack of engagement.

It is interesting to note that despite Diego's strong identification with his Mexican background and his tendency to draw on his funds of knowledge in discussions about text (see Chapter 5), he did not feel a strong connection to "The House on Mango Street". Pedro, on the other hand, who also fell behind on his workbook and did not always seem engaged in the literacy tasks associated with the text said he had liked the book because it was about Mexicans. In Diego's case, the characteristics of the text and the tasks he was required to complete seemed to interfere with his desire to connect with the book and its characters. The fact that the text was about a Mexican American community alone, of course, does not imply that all of the Latinx students would necessarily enjoy it or feel represented by the experiences portrayed in the book. Nevertheless, given that students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds played such a central role in their discussions about "Bridge to Terabithia" (see Chapter 5), which represented a much more culturally distant context, it is somewhat surprising that Diego expressed such a strong dislike for the book.

When I discussed Diego's experiences in ELA with Ms. Anderson she observed: "I think he just got behind on Mango, or it was, it was a little too hard for him. And so he kept getting behind and it was hard. He needed more one-on-one" (INT 6-1-16). She contrasted this with his experience with "Bridge to Terabithia", which in her view had been positive and even transformative: "One: he was working in a small group all the time. I think he understood it. I think he also learned. I mean he is just this new person. I'm just— I'm just ecstatic and every time I see his mom I tell them" (INT 6-1-16). While in her explanation of Diego's experience Ms. Anderson recognized the text being "a little too hard" for him and

Diego needing more “one-on-one”, she also highlighted that the smaller group setting seemed to work well for him, suggesting that by modifying something external such as the amount of attention Diego was receiving and the type of participation structure in place this could impact his ability and desire to engage with the text. Ms. Anderson did not suggest that there was anything permanent about Diego’s ability to accomplish ELA tasks or engage with texts productively. She also later made a more general comment about how sometimes anyone can find themselves in a situation that can be hard to get out of: “Sometimes when you get in a hole, you just feel like there’s no end in sight.” This statement again suggests that she did not think of Diego’s experience as particularly problematic or unique.

Diego’s own perception of his performance during ELA and ALD was reflected in his self-evaluation report in which he rated his participation in ELA and ALD as a “3” out of five, explaining that he “[doesn’t] always participate in class” and is “usually quiet”. For Math, which he identified as one of his favorite subjects, he gave himself a “4”, noting in the comments that he “[participates] 95% of the time”.

Figure 7.1 Diego’s self-evaluation form

Participation and Classroom Management Focus
Student-Led Conference Reflection

Rate your participation in each area.

Subject	Rating (1-5)	Reasoning
Language Arts	3	I don't always participate in class,
ALD/ELD	3	I am usally quiet.
Math	4	I participate 95% of the time.

Although Diego clearly resisted being labeled as “struggling”, on occasion he characterized literacy tasks as being “confusing” or “hard”. For the Greek mythology

scrapbook, students were required to write summaries of myths along with their personal responses to each myth. After Diego gave a verbal summary of one of the myths I asked him to write down what he had just told me and he replied: “It's really hard for me to put it down on paper” (VID 3-15-16). Having to write about texts, in particular, seemed to be one of the tasks Diego least enjoyed and one he was frequently required to do as part of ELA projects and activities.

In contrast to “The House on Mango Street”, when I asked Diego if he had liked the novel “Bridge to Terabithia” he replied: “I loved Bridge, even though it was sad.” He then explained how he had especially liked how Jess’s and Leslie’s friendship had developed throughout the story and how Jess had changed after Leslie’s death:

Example 7.3

1	DIEGO;	The part I liked is how,
2		Uh Jess and Leslie became friends,
3		and then they started like—
4		Their friendship became—
5		Started getting bigger and bigger and bigger.
6	MARÍA;	Uh huh,
7	DIEGO;	And then,
8		Leslie died.
9		And Jess like,
10		like,
11		became nicer,
12		when- with,
13		What's her name?
14		With that little girl.
15	MARÍA;	Uh Maybel?
16		Is that?
17	DIEGO;	Maybel.
18	MARÍA;	Uh huh.
19	DIEGO;	Uh,
20		So I thought that was really cool.
21		How Leslie uh,
22		changed Jess.

In his response, Diego makes no mention of the level of difficulty of the text or the tasks he was required to perform as part of the workbook. He instead reacts to the plot of the novel and the relationships between the characters. He focuses on how the friendship between Jess and Leslie grew "bigger and bigger" (line 5) and ended up changing Jess in a profound way, which he describes as "really cool" (line 21).

This affective connection to the novel was also reflected in Diego's reactions to the plot as he was reading the book with his group. After a discussion about the encounter between Leslie and Janice Avery ("the bully") in the school restroom (see example 6.4 in Chapter 6) students began discussing why they thought Janice had come out of the restroom crying:

Example 7.4

1	DIEGO;	I don't feel bad for her,
2		at all.
3	VANESSA;	Oh!
4		Maybe,
5		because –
6		(1.0)
7		You know how she's a bully,
8		and bullies usually bully people,
9		because there's something going on at home.
10	MARÍA;	Ok.
11		Yeah sometimes.
12	DIEGO;	I do <u>not</u> feel bad for her.
13	INÉS;	Or maybe she's tricking them,
14		and she's fake crying.
15	MARÍA;	Maybe she's tricking them.
16		Yeah.
17		That's good.
18	DIEGO;	Oh uh,
19		Can we [keep] reading?
20	MARÍA;	[Ok].
21	DIEGO;	I want to read this!
22		I want to read this! ((*Bouncing up and down in his chair*))
23	VANESSA;	Maybe it's not even about Willard.
24	DIEGO;	Can I read this? ((*Shaking his book*))

25 I want to read this!

Here, Diego emphatically declares that he does not feel sorry for Janice ("the bully") for crying (lines 1-2). Vanessa and Inés both share their theories about why they think she might be crying and Diego again asserts that he does not feel bad for her (line 12). Interestingly, Diego's connection to the text in this passage is primarily affective. Unlike Vanessa and Inés, who are more concerned with explaining what caused Janice to cry, he reacts to her as a bully and someone who is undeserving of his sympathy. Diego then asks for the group to keep reading and eagerly requests the next turn (lines 21-25). In addition to his urgent tone, his excitement is embodied through his physical responses as he bounces in his chair and shakes his book to get his peers' attention. This example contrasts with other instances where Diego said he did not like to read or want to read in a group setting. For example, during another activity where students were reading an informational text about the Sojourner's landing on Mars I asked Diego to continue reading and he tried to get other members of his group to take his turn: "But Natalia likes to read" (VID 4-12-16).

In Chapters 5 and 6 there are other examples of Diego visibly engaged in discussions about "Bridge to Terabithia". Some of them involved him making connections to his funds of knowledge, such as when he drew a parallel between farmers in Mexico and the farmers being portrayed in the novel. In another instance, he actively engaged in an analytic discussion about the text and formulated his own predictions about what would happen in the plot next. Evidently there were a number of factors that contributed to Diego having very different experiences as a reader of the two novels. Some of the barriers Diego faced with "The House of Mango Street", such as the specific language features and demands of the text, appeared to have contributed to his lack of engagement. Nevertheless, the differences in

language demands alone cannot account for his visible excitement and affective responses to the characters and events in "Bridge to Terabithia." These contrasting experiences, therefore, suggest that being "engaged" is not a fixed attribute, but a dynamic process in which different texts can present unique opportunities for students to make meaningful connections to reading, even when they have previously been labeled as "struggling" or "behind".

C. Communicating Engagement

1. "I remember this problem": Students as active knowledge constructors

One of the projects students worked on during ELA early on in the second semester was writing a report on a country they had been assigned. Students were provided with worksheets outlining the specific areas they were expected to cover in their reports (i.e. government, culture, geography) and what kinds of details they should include in each section. The worksheets served as a place to take notes to record initial findings that were then to be used to type up the full report on their computer tablets. Students were expected to work independently and research their assigned country on the internet. The class worked on the reports over several weeks. During the following interaction, Inés was reading about Colombia for her report and sharing her findings with the three other girls at her table: Vanessa, Ariana, and Isabella.

Example 7.5

1	INÉS;	The first Colombian city to get their independence form the Spanish.
2		((*reading from website*))
3		(H) Aweso:me!
4		Nation- ((*writing on worksheet*))
5		What is it called? ((*looks back at screen*))
6		Independence –
7	VANESSA;	"As a nation with a culture", ((*reading from a website on her tablet*))
8	INÉS;	Look it!
9		My country has their own holiday of like,
10		um,

11		Where it says:
12		"Colombian city to declare independence from the Spanish."
13		That's why they call it, ((*raising finger*))
14		Independence of Cartagena. ((*writing on worksheet*))

As Inés is reading about cultural traditions and holidays in Colombia she is noticeably excited (line 3) and eager to share her newly acquired knowledge with her peers. She seems particularly interested in a holiday commemorating the Colombian city of Cartagena's independence from Spain and quotes the website's description (lines 11-12). In this example, Inés displays ownership of her literacy and autonomy in pursuing the research required for the report. As she continued to read she makes other comments that indicate her engagement in the activity, such as: "There's so much culture, I can't fit it in one page!" When she begins to read about one of Colombia's oldest zoos she again expresses her interest to the other members in her group by exclaiming: "That's so cool! I'm going to put the zoo" (VID 3-27-16).

As part of the same unit, Mateo had been assigned Spain for his country report. During the following interaction, Mateo had asked me to help him identify problems in the Spanish government so that he could add them to his report. When I told him to read from the website he had open on his computer he replied: "But I don't understand" (VID 3-26-16). I then helped him look for another website about Spain that seemed to be written in more accessible language and began to scan it for information that might be useful to him.

Example 7.6

1	MATEO;	Oh,
2		I have a problem.
3		The Cata-
4		The *Catalunia*:
5		I remember now.
6		The *Catalunia*,
7	MARÍA;	Mhm,

8	MATEO;	Eh,
9		want uh,
10		(2.0)
11		turn not Spain.
12		Separated.
13	MARÍA;	Uh huh,
14		they want to be separated.
15		Uh huh.
16		So that's one of the problems they have.
17		Yeah exactly.
18	MATEO;	I have a problem.
19		Maybe I ##
20	MARÍA;	You can write about this.
21		They have a–
22		It's called a separatist government. ((*points at screen*))
23		so they have their own government,
24		they want–
25		They want to be separate–
26		As you're saying,
27		They want to be [separate from Spain].
28	MATEO;	[Ah,
29		this is here?] ((*moving finger on computer touchpad*))
30	MARÍA;	Uh huh,
31		See?
32		It says "Catalonia has a separatist government"
33	MATEO;	Oh!
34		I –
35		I don't –
36	MARÍA;	You were just remembering.
37	MATEO;	I think,
38		"Oh!
39		I really –
40		I remember this problem."

Mateo, who initially seemed discouraged by the task of having to find an issue in the Spanish government to write about, is able to think of a problem on his own based on his prior knowledge. As he begins to tell me about Catalonia and their fight for independence from Spain I show him how there is information about the same issue he has identified on the website (line 22). Mateo responds with excitement and appears surprised that his idea for one of the problems in the Spanish government is covered in the text. This excitement quickly

shifts his attitude towards the task he is working on from one that seems challenging to one of potential interest, in which he can employ his existing knowledge. Unlike Inés, who displayed confidence in how to acquire and assimilate the information she learned about her country from the website, Mateo initially did not seem to feel he had the tools and support necessary to accomplish the task. By receiving some additional guidance, however, he was able to reframe his position to take on a more participatory and active role in finding relevant information for his report.

Although Mateo frequently commented on how his English limited his ability to engage fully in some activities, in his interview he also suggested that the way learning was structured in room 6A required students to learn more independently than in Brazil. Mateo mentioned that in ELA there was a lot of reading and writing on the computer, which was different from Brazil where he did not have access to computers in school. He suggested that the teachers in Brazil seemed to spend more time lecturing and provided more detailed explanations for assignments. It must be noted that Ms. Anderson spent a great deal of time answering Mateo's questions and that she worked with him one-on-one whenever possible and would often simplify or shorten assignments in order to make them more manageable for him. Nevertheless, her ability to provide customized support was limited by the immediate demands of the other nineteen students in her class.

The times when Mateo seemed the most engaged were the moments when he was able to share his experiences and demonstrate his prior knowledge. During one ELA activity students were asked to think of as many pronouns as possible in teams. As an emergent bilingual who had studied English in Brazil Mateo knew a great deal of grammar and was very familiar with English pronouns. As a result, he was able to list many more pronouns

than the other students in the class in a short amount of time. Mateo's group won by a substantial margin and he celebrated by getting up out of his chair and raising his arms victoriously.

In another exchange, during the country report unit, he explained the Latin American trade agreement MERCOSUR to Ariana who was doing research on Argentina for her country report. He also told her about, "alfajores", a typical Argentine cookie, and helped her look them up on the internet. The ability to make connections to his prior knowledge, but also to demonstrate his expertise to his teacher and peers generated instances where Mateo was able to connect with class content more deeply.

Ms. Anderson also played an important role in creating some of these rare moments for Mateo. During the pronouns activity, for example, Ms. Anderson "held space" for Mateo and gave him the opportunity to share his knowledge about pronouns with his peers. As they went over the different pronouns as a class, she asked him questions about how they were similar or different from pronouns in Portuguese and allowed him to share his knowledge with the other students. During this activity, Ms. Anderson also emphasized the similarities between Portuguese and Spanish and how students' knowledge of both of those languages was valuable for learning pronouns in English "See? Can you hear how similar it is? My Spanish-speakers, can you hear?" (VID 3-8-18). Consistent with Hikida's (2018) findings, this was one of the few opportunities where Mateo was able to assert a literate identity in the class.

2. "You know what makes me sad?": Affective responses to text

In addition to demonstrating engagement by actively constructing new knowledge and building on prior knowledge there were numerous instances where students' engagement

with texts occurred through their affective responses. One of the students who often reacted to texts affectively was Natalia. Although Natalia self-identified as liking to read, at times she got caught up in side conversations with her peers during group reading activities. She often asked for help during ELA and described how one of the things she did not like as much about the class was that things were not always explained clearly: "Sometimes they don't explain how to do stuff very well but then the other times— sometimes they explain like how do you do it. Then you don't ask for help that much" (INT 6-1-16). Although she was vocal about feeling confused during some ELA tasks she also expressed enthusiasm and interest when working with certain texts.

During the following activity, students were reading in pairs from a short textbook on Mount Vesuvius. The book contained fictionalized accounts of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius told from the perspective of people living in a nearby village that was buried by the eruption. For this activity Natalia was working with Olivia, one of her closest friends in the class. As they took turns reading aloud about how the villagers were deciding whether or not to leave their homes Natalia paused to react to the account:

Example 7.7

1	NATALIA;	"An old peasant farmer was selling the first grapes of the season,
2		picked from the vineyards,
3		on nearby Mount Vesuvius."
4		Ok, you know what makes me sad?
5		The people—
6		The old people,
7		are going to die,
8		and that gets me sad.
9		And then the kid dies.
10	OLIVIA;	The baby ## ((*makes sad facial expression*))
11	NATALIA;	and the dog.

In the above example, Natalia interrupts her reading of the text to comment on how thinking about the people who will die makes her feel sad (line 4). She identifies “old people” such as the “old peasant farmer” (line 1) she was reading about as a group she feels particularly sympathetic towards. She also makes reference to a child and a dog who had both been mentioned earlier in the text. When she first saw a picture of the dog moments earlier she exclaimed, “I can just imagine that being my dog!” Natalia, consequently, engages with the text by envisioning herself in the same situation and imagining what it would be like to lose her dog or to be one of the people in the town who do not know what is about to happen to them. When, Lisa, another classmate, walks over to their table to comment on a poster she is working on, Natalia continues to engage with the text and points out to her how one of the characters in the story they are reading is “dumb” for not wanting to leave behind her home:

Example 7.8

1	NATALIA;	This person doesn't want to leave their house because they're dumb.
2		((*lifts book to show Lisa*))
3	LISA;	Because their dog?
4	NATALIA;	Dumb.
5		Because of their money.
6		<VOX> No!
7		I want my money </VOX>

The person Natalia is referring to is one of the wealthier women in the village who had planned a large celebration the next day and did not want to leave out of fear she would lose the money she had spent. In this second part of the conversation, Natalia not only reacts to the characters in the text, but impersonates the woman by acting out and mocking her attitude of being worried about her money. In Natalia’s case learning about Mount Vesuvius through a fictionalized and more personal account seemed to be effective in sparking her

interest and leading her to engage with the historical events described in the book.

3. “Confusion” as engagement

As previously mentioned, several of the emergent bilinguals in the class characterized ELA tasks, at times, as being confusing or unclear. On several occasions, Natalia stated that she felt confused during ELA and was quick to ask for help from both her peers and the teacher when this occurred. In the following example, she was working on writing a summary of the Greek myth, “Pandora”, for the Greek mythology unit with her friend Ariana. Natalia asked Ariana to tell her what had happened in the myth, but as Ariana began to summarize the events Natalia interrupted her to ask her to clarify one of the details in the text:

Example 7.9

1	ARIANA;	He also gave her curiosity.
2		To make her curious.
3	NATALIA;	Oh he—
4		but wha-
5		but [why do you want]—
6	ARIANA;	[It wasn’t a test].
7	NATALIA;	But why do you want the evilness to happen?
8	ARIANA;	No he—
9	JASON;	Ariana,
10		I'm going to crack my knuckles. ((*slaps left fist with right hand*))
11		Wait. ((*slaps knuckles again*))
12	ARIANA;	He- he trusted her. ((glances at Jason then back at Natalia))
13	NATALIA;	Uh huh.
14	ARIANA;	[But he]
15	NATALIA;	[But he] said “just like Zeus wanted it to happen”
16		“Just like Zeus wanted it to happen.” ((*Scanning text*))
17		See?
18		“Zeus in disgust decided to drown them.”
19		See?
20		Ok here.
21		Just—
22		Ok,
23		“But their sufferings made them wicked instead of good.” ((*reading*))
24		“As Zeus had evil”—

25		"As- as Zeus had evil"—
26		Wait.
27		Aah!
28		Ok here. ((*Pointing at text with her pen*))
29		"They lied, they stole, and they"—
30		Oh,
31		"But their sufferings"—
32	ARIANA;	He wanted them to be good.
33	NATALIA;	"They stung and bit the mortals,
34		as Zeus had planned."
35		What does it mean?

Here, Natalia appears to be troubled by Zeus' decision to allow Pandora to release all the evils into the world (line 7). Ariana argues that Zeus was not testing Pandora, but Natalia is insistent that "Zeus wanted it to happen" (lines 15-16). Natalia then begins to scan the text to find evidence for her claim. After reading aloud a few different excerpts and not finding what she is looking for, she eventually identifies a line from the text that demonstrates that Zeus had planned for "the evils" (i.e. envy, greed, vanity) to inflict harm on the mortals: "They stung and bit the mortals as Zeus had planned" (lines 47-48). Shortly after this exchange, Natalia called over Ms. Anderson who was at another table to ask her for further clarification about why Zeus had allowed Pandora to cause so much damage. She told Ms. Anderson: "I am very confused about Pandora" and added "why would Zeus want people to be evil?" Ms. Anderson explained that if she had read all the myths in the book it would have been clearer, however, since students were allowed to choose any five myths to read, most of them had not read them in any particular order. Ms. Anderson added that Natalia's question was "excellent" and after explaining the background on why Zeus was trying to get revenge on Prometheus she added: "I'm really glad you asked, because it makes better sense. 'Why is he punishing him?' Great question." In this interaction, Ms. Anderson validated Natalia's "confusion" and framed it as legitimate and an opportunity to learn more about the broader

context of the text. Although Natalia's "confusion" about the text could have easily led her to lose interest or disengage she instead initiated an analytic discussion with one of her peers and read the text "closely" in search of evidence that might answer her question. When she remained dissatisfied after talking to Ariana she was proactive about seeking out her teacher to continue investigating the issue. While it would not be surprising for a teacher in this situation to mistake Natalia's question for a lack of understanding or difficulty with reading more generally, Ms. Anderson addressed the source of Natalia's concern and praised her for trying to make sense of the events portrayed in the text.

Conclusion

There is clearly much to be learned about how student engagement can best be defined and examined in educational contexts. While this chapter only begins to scratch the surface of the broader implications of what it means to support students' engagement with reading, the examples analyzed suggest that engagement is neither a static attribute nor determined by a predefined set of factors.

Diego's case, in particular, suggests that students' engagement with reading can fluctuate substantially even within a short period of time and is co-constructed across various contexts and activities. In his experience, the characteristics of different texts and his affective connection to those texts seemed to have a strong impact on his ability and desire to engage in certain literacy tasks and assignments. For him, as an emergent bilingual, "The House on Mango Street", which Ms. Anderson herself identifies as a text more appropriate for older students, clearly presented some obstacles in terms of its language and structure. In contrast, "Bridge to Terabithia" offered a narrative Diego was able to relate to more easily and one in which the main theme of friendship seemed to resonate with him.

The issue of instructional support vs. autonomy also seemed to be relevant to students' experiences with texts. For the country reports, Inés was engaged with what she was learning through her reading, but also appeared to be motivated by the task of finding and selecting information independently. This was not the case for Mateo, who felt that he did not understand the information on the websites well enough to be able to complete the task on his own. Similarly, Natalia raised the issue of not always being clear on expectations for certain literacy tasks and frequently needing to ask for help as a result. While in both Mateo and Natalia's cases Ms. Anderson tried to create opportunities to work with them individually and to provide additional guidance there was only so much time she could spend with each student. This points to the larger challenge of what it means to create scaffolds and support students in becoming autonomous and engaged readers when there is a broad range of reading levels within the same class.

In terms of how students were positioned and positioned themselves, focal students at times acknowledged that there were aspects of the work they were expected to do during ELA that were confusing or challenging for them; however, they also actively pushed back against the "struggling" reader narrative by framing their lack of engagement as a choice and by identifying issues with instruction or the texts and assignments themselves. Ms. Anderson also played an important role in "holding space" for certain students, like Mateo, as well as by recognizing engagement as variable and influenced by factors beyond students' fixed "reading abilities".

VIII. Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings, followed by a discussion of the study's limitations and questions for future research. The final section of the chapter outlines some implications of the proposed sociocultural approach for theory and practice.

A. Summary of Findings

In terms of what resources students employed as they engaged in discussions about text, findings in Chapter 5 illustrate how students drew heavily from their funds of knowledge in order to make meaning and negotiate their interpretations and theories about the text with others. The use of various funds of knowledge, including politicized funds of knowledge (Gallo & Link, 2015), reflect the students' need to establish connections between their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and the text. While the novel "Bridge to Terabithia" did not present many obvious parallels to the students' lived experiences, they found ways to relate to the story and its characters and used assigned literacy tasks, such as comparing different characters in the book, as opportunities to engage in analytic discussions and examine their own social worlds and multiple communities of practice.

As part of their discussions, the students took initiative in carving out "third spaces" (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) in which they positioned their linguistic and cultural resources as valuable meaning-making tools. Their frequent references to experiences and narratives outside the classroom is further consistent with a sociocultural understanding of literacy in which reading cannot be understood independently from the contexts in which it occurs. The analytic work students were pursuing during close reading tasks, therefore, challenges the notion that engaging in "close reading" does not require or involve students employing their prior knowledge and experiences.

In Chapter 6, the analysis of students' academic language use as part of their discussions about text suggests that they were intentional and strategic in their application of different linguistic registers. While certain students, such as Vanessa, displayed competency at employing an "academic" register and adopting the associated linguistic forms expected within the classroom, students more commonly blended and combined registers in order to express their ideas more authentically to their peers. Most significantly, the choice not to use academic language did not seem to interfere with students' abilities to engage in analytic skills associated with close reading tasks, such as drawing on supporting evidence from the text or making predictions.

While students displayed varying levels of competence in employing the expected grammatical and lexical features commonly associated with "academic" language, focal students demonstrated strong awareness of the differences between linguistic registers and how they may be read by others. In their interactions, they frequently reproduced ideologies of "proper" and "standard" language through metalinguistic commentary and, at times, by more aggressively policing and mocking language practices they viewed as deviating from the "standard". Despite using features of Spanish in informal peer conversations, students did not generally use Spanish when communicating their ideas about texts. Being in a monolingual English classroom in which these practices were not modeled or supported undoubtedly influenced their access to these kinds of linguistic spaces as well as their ability to create opportunities to use their Spanish for the purpose of "academic" work.

Another important finding is that students' engagement in literacy tasks was not consistent over time and across different activities. Diego's experience, for example, suggests that reader engagement is not static, and that students' relationships with texts can vary based

on a number of contextual factors such as: the characteristics and the complexity of the text, students' interest in the content and themes presented in the text, as well as their affective connection to the text. As emergent bilinguals who had been classified as "English learners" students were also confronted with how their identities as readers were co-constructed in the classroom by their teachers and peers. Despite the clear presence of "itineraries of identity" associated with categories such as "English learner", the students and Ms. Anderson were at times able to disrupt the narratives that positioned certain students as less competent and reframe their participation in order for them to assert their "literate identities" (Hikida, 2018).

B. Limitations and Future Research

Given the study's qualitative research design it is not possible to generalize based on the experiences of the students observed or to establish any type of causality between students' reading practices and some of the factors that have been identified as potentially relevant to their experiences with different texts. My observations were not only limited to one particular classroom but within that classroom focused on one group of emergent bilinguals. Consequently, the analysis I have presented does not address the experiences of other students in the class in much detail. Due to the narrow and deep scope employed in this research, however, the interactional analysis presented sheds light on students' rich and complex meaning-making practices, which are often overlooked in larger scale studies that make comparisons between general categories of students based on specific academic outcomes.

Considering the limited empirical work on how students are navigating the language demands of the Common Core State Standards in the classroom, more research is needed on how students, particularly those in mainstream monolingual classrooms, are engaging in the

kinds of academic work the standards are mandating. This requires moving beyond taking standardized test scores at face value in order to examine students' language practices across various contexts and in its multiple expressions (e.g. through written, oral, and peer work). As other researchers have noted (Bunch, 2013; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2015; Santos, Darling-Hammond, & Cheuk, 2012), given the emphasis of the standards on language across subject areas, it is also crucial to further examine how the new language demands are impacting students' opportunities to actively engage with academic content and skills in areas such as math and science, which are not traditionally thought of as focused on teaching language.

C. Implications for Theory and Practice

1. Implications for Theory

In light of students' complex and fluid language practices, the rigid and dichotomous thinking that is often reflected in the language used to categorize students in school must be reconceptualized to capture the dynamic interactions that shape students' learning. The theoretical discussion on what counts as literacy is particularly crucial to shifting the discourse from understanding literacy as an individual cognitive achievement to a dynamic process driven by social action that occurs between individuals situated in specific sociocultural contexts and communities.

A related discussion is the one surrounding "academic language" and its conceptualization as an objective linguistic form that all students must master as part of their literacy development. Many scholars continue to adhere to the "academic" vs. "everyday" language dichotomy, which drastically over-simplifies the language used by students for different purposes within academic tasks. This perspective on academic language not only

serves to perpetuate monoglossic ideologies that privilege "standard" language practices, but also negates the complex work language realizes within social contexts. As the findings of this study and other research discussed suggest, "academic language" constitutes a set of locally defined practices that are used by students in conjunction with a wide range of semiotic resources. Further, while "academic language" can be employed in ways that are consistent with the expectations set for specific literacy tasks it can also be used instead (or simultaneously) to pursue a variety of social and identity-related goals. As numerous scholars have argued (Corella, 2016; Haneda, 2014; Valdés, 2004, inter alia), challenging these definitions and proposing alternative concepts that more accurately capture the sociocultural and interactional nature of language learning has important implications for educational practice.

Lastly, these theoretical questions point to the broader issue of how language is conceptualized and understood in education settings. As I discuss in Chapter 6, the notion of "translanguaging" is promising in terms of challenging established ideas about emergent bilinguals moving back and forth between discrete language systems and shifts the focus to the fluid and creative ways in which they employ the totality of their linguistic resources. Nonetheless, most of the translanguaging research to date has been concerned with how emergent bilinguals combine features of two or more languages. As the findings of this study indicate, the use of different linguistic registers is a form of "translanguaging" that deserves greater attention and is similarly influenced by issues of race and power that are often discussed within research on students' access to their native language in the classroom.

2. Implications for Practice

Although students in this study actively generated and sought out opportunities to draw on their rich funds of knowledge and repertoires of practice, teachers play a vital role in providing spaces in which these practices are consistently legitimized and positioned as valuable resources for learning within a community of practice. Given the strong push in the CCSS to teach students to read with the goal of extracting evidence and answers from the text, teachers need to ensure that this narrow focus on text-based analysis does not further restrict the already limited opportunities students have to build on their prior knowledge and experiences.

Due to the current high-stakes testing environment that has accompanied the implementation of the CCSS, more attention must be given to alternative ways of assessing students authentically, in order to truly capture students' analytic thinking and literacy development in context. Through their sociocognitive approach to assessment Mislevy and Durán (2014) propose: "contextualizing assessment locally so that all students, including ELs, can get formative feedback to guide learning at the varying levels and in the varying directions that a diverse population of learners inevitably displays" (p. 580). This perspective is also compatible with the notion of formative assessment, where: "participant-oriented practices provide the context in which ongoing evidence of language use and content learning can be obtained" (Heritage, Walqui, & Liquante, 2013, p.4). Walqui and Heritage (2012) further argue that the principal of scaffolding is highly conducive to working with emergent bilinguals and that learning must be "contingent" to the continuous flow of information gathered about learners' progress across various areas of language development, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Walqui & Heritage, 2012). As I argue in

this study, students' peer interactions present a particularly rich site in which to observe and gather information about students' ongoing progress.

For emergent bilinguals and students of color, engaging in discussions about text presents opportunities to participate in critical dialogue about issues that are relevant to their social worlds and are rarely addressed in school. Adopting culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies, can hence position these types of conversations as central to students' learning rather than maintaining them at the margins of academic activities. It is also vital for educators to address the role of students' linguistic backgrounds and practices in their learning and to design instruction that provides ample opportunities for them to use language in flexible and authentic ways, recognizing that: "[l]anguage is a crucial form of sustenance in its own right, providing the basis for young people's complex identities as well as their social agency" (Bucholtz et al. 2017, p. 44). As the findings of this study suggest, students' membership in and identification with different communities mediates their understanding of different texts and how they see themselves as readers of those texts, as students, and as members of the broader society. It is precisely this interplay between the multiple discourses and identities students navigate that provides them with unique lenses and ways of accessing and interpreting texts. Teachers must, consequently, leverage and pay close attention to the wealth of resources students employ as they search for meaning both within and beyond the words they read on the page.

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Appendix A

TEACHER CONSSENT FORM

PURPOSE

My name is Maria Aragon. I am a graduate student in the Education Department at UC Santa Barbara. I am working with my professor, Dr. Richard Durán, on a project called "Language and Literacy Practices in a Sixth-grade Classroom." The purpose of the project is to better understand the ways that students use language with one another and learn language and literacy skills in the classroom.

If you give permission, I would like to:

- Observe your classroom activities and interactions between you and your students during routine classroom activities.
- Audio- or video-record your students talking in class 2 to 3 times per week throughout the rest of the school year. I may ask your students to wear a small clip-on microphone during group activities (only if students give their permission).
- Interview you using an audio recorder for between 30 and 60 minutes about your perspectives on language and literacy practices, classroom activities, student interactions, and other school-related information.
- Collect copies of your students' regular classroom work.

BENEFITS

What I discover from this study about how students learn language and literacy skills in peer interactions will be shared with you and other educators, who may use the information to improve their teaching. What I find will also be shared with parents and children, at their request.

RISKS AND SAFEGUARDS

There is a slight risk of loss of privacy or feelings of discomfort because there will be a camera in the class. You may ask the recording to be stopped at any time or that any part of the recording be erased. The audio and video recordings will be treated as confidential material. I will keep all recordings and papers secure in my office and home office. In communicating research findings, I will use an invented name for you and your students and will remove any identifying information.

As a part of our research, if we were to learn something that gives us serious concerns about a student's health and/or safety, we would report this information. For example, if we have reason to believe a child is being abused (or has been abused), we are required by state law and university policy to file a report with the appropriate agencies.

CONSENT

Participation in this research is voluntary and will not affect your standing in the school or in any group or organization. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be given a signed and dated copy of the form to keep.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about the research, you can call me at XXXXXXXXXX or call Professor Richard Durán at XXXXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the staff of the UCSB Human Subjects Committee at XXXXXXXXXX.

USE OF DATA IN CONFERENCES, TEACHING AND FUTURE RESEARCH

My professor and I may want to present some of the data at education conferences and in classes at UC Santa Barbara and other universities. In addition, we would like to keep the recordings for possible use in future research on language use. We will always protect your privacy, and the data will only be used for academic purposes. We will not use any data that we consider sensitive in nature. If you like, we can further protect your identity in videos by making your image resemble a line drawing so that it will be less recognizable.

Consent Form
(Teacher)

Please check one choice for each statement and complete the information below.

I give permission to be audio or videotaped during class. I can ask that the recording be stopped at any time and that any part of the recording be destroyed.

Yes ________ No ________

I give permission for parts of audio or video recordings to be used in presentations at research conferences and in education courses at UC Santa Barbara or other universities. Any identifying information, like my name and my students' names, will be removed from the recordings.

Yes ________ No ________

Please check one option. Your checkmark indicates the highest level of use that you permit:
a. original video ___
b. video manipulated to look like a line drawing ___
c. audio only ___
d. transcript only (no public play of audio or video) ___

I give permission for my students' regular classroom work (e.g., worksheets, homework) to be collected. Any identifying information, like students' names, will be removed from the copies.

Yes ________ No ________

I give permission to be interviewed about my perspectives on language and literacy practices, classroom activities, student interactions, and other school-related information. I may skip

any question I prefer not to answer.
Yes ________ No ________
I give permission for recordings to be used in future research by Maria Aragon and/or Richard Duran on language and literacy practices.
Yes ________ No ________

Teacher name (print) _______________________________

Teacher signature __________________________________ Date _______________

Appendix B
PARENT CONSSENT FORM

PURPOSE
My name is Maria Aragon. I am a graduate student in the Education Department at UC Santa Barbara. I am working with my professor, Dr. Richard Durán, on a project called "Language and Literacy Practices in a Sixth-grade Classroom." The purpose of the project is to better understand the ways that students use language with one another and learn language and literacy skills in the classroom.

If you give permission, I would like to:

- Observe your child talking to classmates and the teacher as he/she would normally do in the classroom.
- Audio- or video-record your child and his/her classmates talking in class 2 to 3 times per week throughout the rest of the school year. I may ask your child to wear a small clip-on microphone during group activities (only if your child gives his/her permission).
- Interview your child using an audio recorder for between 10 and 30 minutes about school, their friends, and extracurricular activities.
- Collect copies of your child's regular classroom work.

BENEFITS
What I discover from this study about how students learn language and literacy skills in peer interactions will be shared with Ms. Anderson and other educators, who may use the information to improve their teaching. What I find will also be shared with you, at your request.

RISKS AND SAFEGUARDS
There is a slight risk of loss of privacy or feelings of discomfort to your child because there will be a camera in the class. Your child will be told that he or she can ask the recording to be stopped at any time or ask that any part of the recording be erased. The audio and video recordings will be treated as confidential material. I will keep all recordings and papers secure in my office and home office. In communicating research findings, I will use an invented name for your child and will remove any identifying information.

As a part of our research, if we were to learn something that gave us serious concerns about your child's health and/or safety, we would report this information. For example, if we have reason to believe a child is being abused (or has been abused), we are required by state law and university policy to file a report with the appropriate agencies.

CONSENT
Participation in this research is voluntary and will not affect you or your child's standing in school or in any group or organization. If you and your child agree to participate in this study, I will give you a signed and dated copy of the form to keep.

QUESTIONS
If you have questions about the research, you can call me at XXXXXXXXXX or call Professor Richard Durán at XXXXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the staff of the UCSB Human Subjects Committee at XXXXXXXXXX.

USE OF DATA IN CONFERENCES, TEACHING AND FUTURE RESEARCH
My professor and I may want to present some of the data at education conferences and in classes at UC Santa Barbara and other universities. In addition, we would like to keep the recordings for possible use in future research on language use. We will always protect your child's privacy, and the data will only be used for academic purposes. We will not use any data that we consider sensitive in nature. If you like, we can further protect your child's identity in videos by making your child's image resemble a line drawing so that it will be less recognizable.

Consent Form
(Parent or Guardian)

Please check one choice for each statement and complete the information below.

PARENT / GUARDIAN: I give permission for my child to be audio or videotaped during class. He or she can ask that the recording be stopped at any time and request that any part of the recording be destroyed.

Yes ________ No ________

PARENT / GUARDIAN: I give permission for parts of audio or video recordings of my child to be used in presentations at research conferences and in education courses at UC Santa Barbara or other universities. Any identifying information, like my child's name, will be removed from the recordings.

Yes ________ No ________

Please check one option. Your checkmark indicates the highest level of use that you permit:

a. original video ___
b. video changed to look like a line drawing ___
c. audio only ___
d. transcript only (no public play of audio or video) ___

PARENT / GUARDIAN: I give permission for my child's regular classroom work (e.g., worksheets, homework) to be copied. Any identifying information, like my child's name, will be removed from the copies.

Yes ________ No ________

PARENT / GUARDIAN: I give permission for my child to be interviewed about her/his participation in school, friends, and extracurricular activities. My child may skip any question he or she prefers not to answer.

Yes ________ No ________

Child name (print) ______________________________

Parent/Guardian name (print) ______________________________

Parent/Guardian signature ______________________ Date ______________________

Appendix C
CHILD ASSENT FORM

Hi! My name is Maria Aragon. I am a volunteer in your class and I am also a student at UCSB. I am working on a project for school and would like to invite you to take part in a study about how students learn language together in school.

If you decide that you want to participate, I would like to observe and video tape you a few times a week while you are working on English Language Arts and Academic Language Development activities so that I can see how you learn. I might also ask you if I can interview you to ask you some questions about school, your friends, and things you do outside of school. I would also like to make copies of some of your worksheets and other writing. Hopefully my project will help me and other teachers learn how to be better teachers.

Being part of this project is your choice. If you do not want to be part of it, you can be in a different area of the classroom while I am videotaping, and I will not interview you or make

copies of your work. If you decide you want to be part of this project, all you would have to do is participate in class the way you usually do. If you ever want me to stop video-taping, you can tell me or Ms. Anderson and we will stop video-taping you. Or if you ever want me to delete any part of a video you are in just let me or Ms. Anderson know and I will delete it. If I ask you questions you do not want to answer during an interview you can tell me you want to skip the question or stop being interviewed at any point. You can also tell me or Ms. Anderson if there is a worksheet or assignment you do not want me to make a copy of.

I am also going to send a letter to your parents to ask them if they will give permission for you to be part of this project. No one will be upset if you or your parents decide you should not participate. If you do decide to be part of my project, you can also change your mind and stop participating anytime you want.

You can ask me and Ms. Anderson questions about the project now or at any time later on.

Please check one statement below to say if you want to participate in the study and sign your name below.

___ I would like to participate in the study

___ I would NOT like to participate in the study

____
Your Signature

____
Print Your Name

____
Date

SCRIPT FOR CHILD ASSENT

1) Explanation before handing out assent forms

Hi everyone! My name is Maria Aragon. I am a volunteer in your class and I am also a student at UCSB. I am working on a project for school and wanted to tell you a little about it today to see if you would like to participate. The project is about how students learn language together in school.

If you decide that you want to be part of the project, I would like to observe and video tape you a couple times a week while you are working on English Language Arts and Academic Language Development activities so that I can see how you learn. I would also like to make copies of some of your worksheets and other writing. I might also ask you later on if I can interview you to ask you some questions about school, your friends, and things you do

outside of school. Hopefully my project will help me and other teachers learn how to be better teachers.

Being part of this project is your choice. If you do not want to be part of it that is completely fine and won't change anything about your participation in the class.

I am also going to send a letter to your parents to ask them if they think it is all right for you to be part of this project. No one will be upset if you or your parents decide you should not participate. If you do decide to be part of my project, you can also change your mind and stop being part of it anytime you want.
Does anyone have any questions?

2) Explanation about Interviews
Remember my research project I told you about a few weeks ago? Another part of my project is doing short interviews that will help me understand how you learn. If it's okay with you, I'd like to interview you, which means I would ask you some questions about school and things you do outside of school.

Being part of an interview is your choice. If you don't want me to interview you just let me know. If you decide to be part of the interviews, we would sit at the table in the corner for 10 to 30 minutes and I would ask you some questions about school, your friends, and things you do outside of school.

I also sent a letter to your parents to ask them if it's all right with them for you to be part of the interviews for this project. No one will be upset if you or your parents decide not to part of the interviews. If you decide that you want to be part of them, you can also change your mind and stop being interviewed at any point.

3) Interview description (for children for whom assent and consent has been obtained)
Thank you for letting me interview you! I just have some questions about school, your friends, and things you do outside of school. There is no right or wrong answer to any of these questions. I am just interested in knowing what you think. If there's any question you don't want to answer, just tell me and we can skip that question. Or if you decide you want to stop the interview, just tell me and we'll stop. Do you have any questions about the interview before we start?

I'd like to record our conversation with this audio recorder. If you decide that you want me to stop recording, or if you want me to delete any part of the recording, just tell me and I'll do it. Is it all right if I record us talking?
Do you have any other questions?

Interview Questions (Ms. Anderson)

1) What were the goals for ELA/ALD this year?
2) What are some areas you think have been most challenging for students?
3) What are some areas your students have excelled at?
4) What is the role of group work and discussions in your classroom?
5) What criteria do you use to group students?
6) How do you handle multiple levels within the same class?
7) Could you describe the transition process for students moving from ELD to ALD?
8) How is it decided that students are ready to graduate from ELD?
9) How have the CCSS changed/influenced your teaching?
10) What are some of the key literacy practices taught during ALD/ELD this year?
11) How would you define "close reading"?

Interview Questions (Students)

1) What do you enjoy doing outside of school?
2) Who are your friends at school?
3) What are your favorite/least favorite subjects? Why?
4) What languages do you speak? Who do you speak them with?
5) Which projects have you enjoyed the most in ELA/ALD? Why?
6) How is ALD similar/different to ELD?
7) How did you like being in ELD?
8) What kinds of activities did you do in ELD?

Appendix D

Transcription conventions

Symbol	Meaning
;	Speaker attribution
.	Terminative intonation
,	Continuative intonation
?	Appeal
:	Prosodic lengthening
=	Latching
-	Truncated/cut-off word
—	Truncated intonation unit
@	Laughter
(1.1)	Measured pause of greater than 0.5 s
[]	Overlap (first pair)
[2]	Overlap (second pair)
#word	Uncertain
<u>words</u>	Emphasis stress
(H)	Inhale
(Hx)	Exhale
((*words*))	Analyst comment on gestures or gaze
words	Spanish word
(*words*)	Translation
<MISC> </MISC>	Manner of speaking
<VOX> </VOX>	Voice of another

Adapted from Du Bois et al. 1992