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Introduction to Art as Voice: Creating Access for Emergent Bilingual Learners

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Introduction to Art as Voice:
Creating Access for Emergent Bilingual Learners

Introduction

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Abstract

In this introductory chapter, we share our positionalities in the hope of providing readers with the knowledge as to why this special issue is so close our hearts. We then share current demographic information regarding emergent bilingual learners to further explain the importance of this work today. After contextualizing these realities, we touch upon theories that drive this work, specifically relating to the arts, literacies, and language acquisition, and demonstrate how we have put these theories into practice by providing rich examples of using the arts as voice with emergent bilingual students, families, and communities. Finally, we conclude with an invitation to read onwards, to review the final chapter that includes multiple resources for those working with EB learners, and to develop and share your own bank of resources.

Keywords: emergent bilingual learners, multiliteracies, arts, family and community engagement, sociocultural ways of knowing, heritage language as a resource, funds of knowledge, access, representation

> *Bienvenido a Team 212, our 2nd/3rd bilingual Spanish/English classroom! It's January 2004 in Chicago. It's cold out. There is snow on the ground, but we are warm inside our neighborhood school, in the midst of practicing a reader's theatre script of "Chato's Kitchen" by Gary Soto and Susan Guevara. It's an exciting book! Chato, the coolest cat in East L.A., has brand-new neighbors who are the plumpest, juciest, and tastiest looking family of mice. Chato and his best friend, Novio Boy, invite the new neighbors from the barrio over for dinner and cook a huge feast. What the mice don't know is that they are the main dish! What the cats don't know is that the mice are bringing a surprise guest of their own, one who may be more than any cool cat can handle, a big old dog. In our Language Arts block every day we practice reading the script and do writing-and-acting-in-role activities to bring depth to each character and understand their different perspectives*

The picture above is but one example of how we, the three editors, and the many inspirational authors within this issue and our forthcoming edited volume, *Art as a Way of Talking* (in press),

have connected to student's *funds of knowledge* while utilizing the arts for language-learning with *emergent bilingual* (EB) students (García, 2009), families, and communities (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006). In this introductory chapter, we begin by introducing ourselves, so that you immediately know our positionalities—who we are and the lens we see the world through— and in the hope to provide you with knowledge of why this special issue is so close to our hearts. We then share current demographic information regarding emergent bilingual learners to further explain the importance of this work today. In the current political context, the topic of displaced populations, immigration policies (such as The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA]), refugees, as well as those who are undocumented is very alive in classrooms and relevant to our students' lives. Case studies within this issue address the needs of displaced groups in a way that is inclusive and validates their lived experiences, providing a sense of belonging through the arts. After contextualizing these realities, we touch upon theories that drive this work, specifically relating to the arts, literacies, and language acquisition, and demonstrate how we have put these theories into practice by providing rich examples of using the arts as voice with emergent bilingual students, families, and communities. Finally, we conclude with an invitation to read onwards, to review the final chapter that includes multiple resources for those working with EB learners, and to develop and share your own bank of resources.

Our Journeys: Multilingual Students, Artists, Activists, Teachers, Researchers, and Scholars

The three of us—Berta, Vivian and Amanda—come from distinct walks of life, with overlaps and similarities. We have been teachers, specializing in one of the three areas of arts, literacies, and language acquisition; however, we view these distinct areas as interwoven within the broader domains related to emergent bilingual learners. We continually seek to further educate ourselves, each other, and reach out to a broader community in these realms. This drive led us to form our collaborative and seek out other voices in the field. In order to understand the lens that we bring to this special issue, we provide our histories and lived experiences as an entry point.

Berta's story

Recently, as I searched for documents of our move to the United States, I came across this poem stitching my identity in my passion for dance, the land I left behind, as well as the constant presence of *mi Abuelita*, named America. *Abuelita* is my spirit guide as I move through new contexts, challenges, and landscapes. I wrote this poem as a dancer taking a leap into the world of public education. In my view, artists were the original teachers. We are the ones who observed nature (scientists) and created ritual celebrations (philosophers). Artists documented everyday life experiences in drawings, stories, song and costumes (historians). Storytellers captured traditions, values, advice, humor and passed them on to communities (healers).

a dancer

all that she could
bring to the night
dance
was a dress
she stitched
for time
in preparation

carefully
in again out
with her
Grandmothers' own needle
she stitched
appliqués
of people
rich red
brown earth
under their feet
their skin
next to sun blue air
working
tending to one another

familia
        hermana
                compadre

on silk she painted
creatures weaving
days and nights

spiders
    humming birds
                star fish
                        alacrán

the earth life weave
bonded with the heavens
rivers flowing
marshes sucking moisture
fish flipping

in the nets

gathering

flechas
       lanzas
              machetes

maracas
       marimba
             tambor

renewing in the weapons
her own firmness
reliving the soft song
reworking the tools
massing seeds
pounding the dough

casabe

enmeshed
in a thick
knotted border
a tight thread
encircled
still spinning
flaring
to meet the night dance

I still have my Abuelita's needles.

I moved to this country from Cuba at the age of eight. As a third grader I was compelled to give up my country, my language and my name. In many ways, I am my students; I have felt their confusion, embarrassment and anger firsthand. I understand how the imposition of a new language and culture can profoundly affect the process of identity-formation, self-esteem and the capacity of learning for a young child. My immigration story motivates my *activism* as an artist and educator. My journey as a bilingual teacher has included dual language and native language literacy settings including African American students and also exclusively Latinx students in transitional bilingual and special education programs in severely segregated public-school contexts. Critical awareness of socio-structural impositions and limitations placed on my

students required that I discard standardized curriculum in favor of engaging my learning community in a critical analysis of their own potential to excel and make their mark in a changing world. My teaching experience necessitated a deeper look at the relationship between my students' identities and their academic progress.

Stepping out of my classroom into the world of research at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, I searched for answers regarding the persistent racial and ethnic disparities among third-grade student academic achievement (BPS Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation, 2003). I was both held and led by pioneers in the anthropology of education, George Spindler and Carola Suárez-Orozco, who focus on the psycho-social impact of immigration on those called 'other' in school. Children's drawings centered interviews exploring the relationship between the cultural identity and academic performance of these emergent bilingual youth. Voices from my qualitative ethnographic study at Harvard stay with me. Families are the foundation of a sense of belonging for my students that define their engagement with mainstream society. As Pedro, a third grader in my study, put it, "family is part of the heart." Language is an important part of staying close to family. Toña, another student, visited her grandmother in the Dominican Republic and spoke to her in Spanish, "I love it there." Pedro describes how he thinks about language, "Yo le hablo en ingles a mis amigos y a los que no saben ingles, yo le hablo en español" *I speak English with my friends and I speak Spanish with those who do not speak English.* Pedro also gives us insight to the importance of Spanish in his life. "We speak Spanish because in my family, my parents do not speak English. My mom wants me to speak Spanish and it feels good to speak Spanish" (Berriz, 2005).

Keeping this history close to heart my hope for *Art as Voice* is to empower teachers, families, and communities with a guide for subverting the *limit situations*. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paolo Freire characterizes *limit situations* as barriers imposed on the oppressed that prevent them from being humanized. They can be effectively eliminated by educating those who are oppressed by these *limit situations* using the *problem posing method* of education. It is our intention that *Art as Voice* broadens possibilities for young scholars of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Vivian: An artist's journey through her family history.
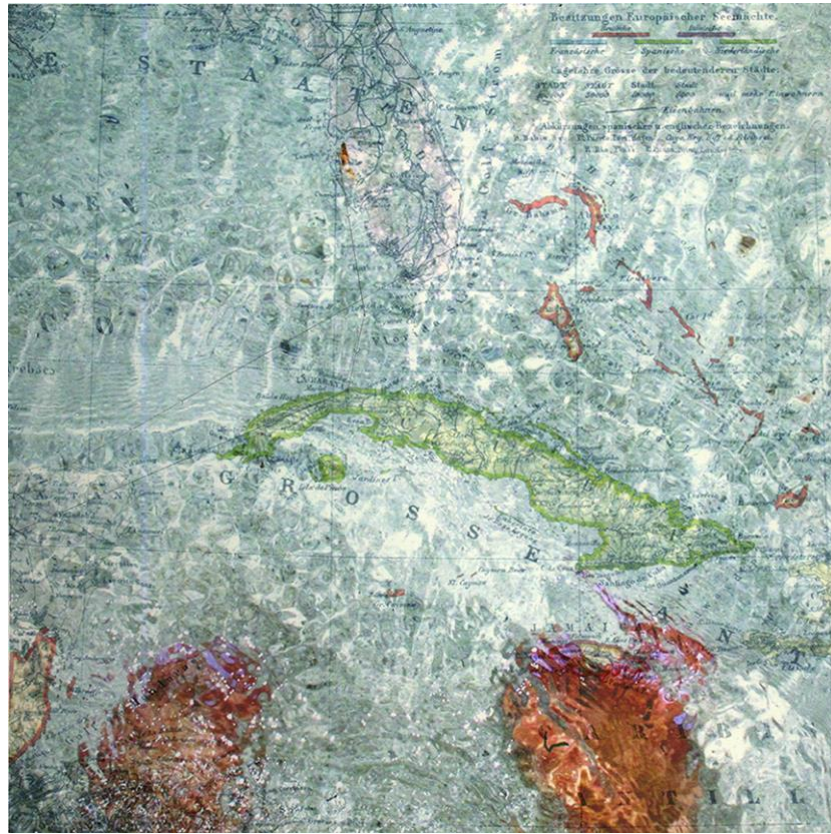
As Berta describes above, history matters a great deal to who we are today. Every generation as far as I can trace in my father's family has spent time abroad—mostly in exile—due to political upheaval. This image represents my grandfather's trajectory. He was born in Tampa in 1900 while my great grandfather was in exile during the Cuban War of Independence (known in the United States as the Spanish American War). The faint pencil lines show his trajectory from his birth in Tampa to Havana followed by his exile in Mexico City and finally Miami, Florida, where he settled until his death. I have included this as part of my own history by layering an image of my feet in the ocean at Varadero, Cuba - a place described in family stories as a paradise where "la arena es como el azúcar y el agua tan transparente que puedes ver hasta la mugre de las uñas" *the sand is like sugar and the water so clear that you can see the dirt under your nails*.

I was fourteen and entering 9th grade when I moved to the United States. Before moving to Miami, I had lived in three different countries, sang three national anthems, and learned three different versions of history with varying historical figures and geographic regions. Everything I knew seemed irrelevant to my education in the United States. It was not until I took a photography class in community college that I began to understand that my own experience was relevant, and that I could explore and share it though my art work. While looking at

contemporary photographers I began to feel connected. I was inspired by the work of Latin American artists, such as Graciela Iturbide and Manuel Alvarez Bravo, to look deeper into my own experiences and further my learning — not just about photography but about everything. Photography provided both a thirst and a language to make meaning of the world. I began to connect with the work of other artists too, such as Fred Wilson, who created an alternate historical narrative by reorganizing and re-presenting the collection of the Maryland Historical Museum; Mary Beth Meehan, who photographed the bedrooms of immigrants, bringing an intimate view of a silent community (Meehan & Nora, in press); and to poets like Gustavo Perez Firmat whose bilingual poetry says more than even two languages can speak.

Through my work I have been investigating my family history and its place in the larger history of Cuba, tracking my father's family history and creating a visual biography of past generations, leading up to my daughter who is a trace, a document, of Cuban, Haitian and American history (https://www.lesley.edu/stories/vivian-poey). This work led me to do historical research, to read news archives and to unearth family stories. Trying to connect to and represent places that are far away and stories that happened long ago, I researched maps during the time of my ancestors. I went back as far at the 1700s when my great great great grandfather moved from France to Cuba. Creating these photographs forced me to connect to the details of my ancestor's lives. The times and places became real and alive, and the stories I learned made visible how those who came before me shaped my present context. These stories, both extraordinary and in some ways shameful, create a personal connection across time and space that resonate in ways that are still relevant today.

Amanda: Playing with languages and places.

Connecting to Vivian's use of maps to tell her history, my "Life Map" collage (above) is the accumulation of the many different places I have lived; reflecting the space of displacement—of neither being here nor there, from this place or that place—that I often feel. My family history, through our various moves and displaced moments in time, has made me able to adapt to new locations and languages quickly. Being a White, cisgender able-bodied English-speaking woman from the middle class, I come to this space of displacement with a great deal of privilege.

My name is Amanda Claudia Wager. My late father is Peter Polland Wager of Chicago and my mother is Marilyn Dee Pincus of Los Angeles. Both sides of my biological family stem from Jewish Ashkenazi ancestry. In the beginning of the 20th Century, my great-grandparents came to the United States from Poland/Russia—the borders were constantly shifting—fleeing the Jewish genocide of the Russian Red Army that massacred the rest of our family. My grandparents spoke English and Yiddish at home and we spoke English and eventually Dutch in our house. My stepfather Paul Logchies, from Amsterdam in the Netherlands, raised me from age twelve onwards. Growing up in Amsterdam, a small global city surrounded by countries that speak many other languages, we learned and heard languages everywhere. We played with languages by moving in and out of one on to another. Language learning was an art form in itself and has led me to where I am now, with a passion for teaching languages and literacies via the arts.

Growing up in Los Angeles, the Spanish language was everywhere, and I learned it through school and everyday urban living, as well as through later experiences of living in Spain and Peru. When I was five years old my family moved to London for a year, where I was told my first day of school to "Queue up for the loo!" and was the only child who stayed sitting on the rug with no idea that I was supposed to line up for the bathroom. This is only a tiny taste of how emergent bilingual learners feel much of the time. During my formative years growing up in Amsterdam, where I was still learning the Dutch language, I gained the values of humility and a deep respect for humanity, nature, and myself, which guided me through my life as an educator, student, researcher, director, friend, sister, partner, and now, a mother.

In seventh grade, I watched a drama performance about two people stranded on a desert island. They spoke different languages and at first were petrified of each other. Eventually they were able to communicate without words and survive together. This was the beginning of my interest in using drama in education in order to communicate across differences. From my experiences as a student and educator, drama can be used across cultures, languages, and perspectives (Schroeter & Wager, 2016; Wager, Belliveau, Beck, & Lea, 2009). In high school, I began to tutor children, and spent much time with a Pakistani family, while also working as the high school theatre stage manager. I often used role-play with the family to communicate. These experiences led to my decision to become an *ESL* and bilingual elementary educator in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Peru, Chicago, and Vancouver.

As an educator, I draw from critical and feminist pedagogies (Ellsworth, 1989, 1997; hooks, 1994, 2010) where collectivity, reciprocity, and reflexivity guide my teaching; that I may learn as much from others as they might learn from me through revealing who we are in relation

to our histories and the contexts within which we work. Working through the arts, valuing and building off of the languages and literacies of those we work with, are key to the success of bi/multilingual individuals. This is my hope for *Art as Voice,* that readers will recognize the importance of supporting bi/multilingual learning through the arts, and become activists in promoting these efforts in their own work spaces. Creative, culturally responsive and community-based ways of knowing within formal and informal education are essential to support all students, families, and communities, and the arts provide vital pathways to achieve this.

The Educational Realities of Teaching Emergent Bilingual Learners, Families, and Communities in the United States and Canada

Now that you have a better idea of who we are and why this subject matter is important to us, we expand on these ideas in this next section by providing current data that further support the need for the arts, literacies, and language learning to be prominent in classrooms and communities today. As history shows, the United States and Canada have always been multicultural and multilingual countries. Bilingualism has existed in North America since the 17th century European invasion (Wright, 2015). Facilitated by the imposition of European cultural domination, the original colonizers seized the land and lives of native peoples, which resulted in the silencing of native voices and the erasure of indigenous languages (Crawford, 1995; Wright, 2015). The enduring legacy of these policies is most evident in the longstanding resistance to language and cultural diversity, particularly in education. And yet, cultural and linguistic diversity continues to grow in our schools and communities today.

Demographic trends of emergent bilinguals below further this call for authentic ways of meaning making to be shared, collaborated, and communicated by educators today:

- Emergent bilinguals have increased as a distinct group in all but 11 states in the US between the years of 2003 and 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

- In 2012-2013, on average, emergent bilinguals in urbanized areas were 14 percent of total public school enrollment and 8.5 percent in large suburban areas, with as many as 10% to 25% of students being emergent bilinguals in California, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Texas, and the District of Columbia (Immigration Policy Institute Fact Sheet, 2015).

- Segregation by socioeconomic status, residential location, and language has increased since the 1970's. The Civil Rights Project (http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/) notes that on average, Latinx emergent bilinguals attend schools where 60% of students are of Latinx descent.

- The number of refugee children, as a percentage of all refugees resettling to the US, has increased over the past decade. For example, in 1998, only 13% of all refugees resettled by the US were children, but in 2008, 37% were children. http://www.brycs.org/publications/schools-toolkit.cfm

- In California, Latinx students constitute more than half of all K-12 students (California Department of Education https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp)

- In the US 77% of the emergent bilinguals in grades K-5 and 56% in grades 6-12 were born in the United States and are simultaneous bilinguals, who learn two languages at once before the age of five.

- In Boston, Massachusetts, 35% of students are African American, 42% are Latinx, 30% first language is not English while 62% of their teachers are White (2016-2017 demographic student data https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/238).

- As a result of language subordination and marginalization of indigenous communities in Canada, speakers of Indigenous languages are in alarming decline (Moseley, 2010).

- Native American languages are distinct in political status and history, and are the object of school- and community-based reclamation and retention efforts aligned with the Native American Languages Act of 1990 (NALA) (Commission on Language Learning, 2017, p. ix).

- Over 350 languages besides English are spoken in US homes today (https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-185.html).

- The United States lags behind most nations of the world, including European nations and China, in the percentage of its citizens who have some knowledge of a second language (Commission on Language Learning, 2017, p. viii).

- One of the biggest obstacles to improved language learning is a national shortage of qualified teachers. Forty-four states and Washington, D.C., report that they cannot find enough qualified teachers to meet current needs (Commission on Language Learning, 2017, p. ix).

This dramatic change in the faces and cultures of our students suggest that teachers, teacher educators and community workers must develop new epistemological frameworks broadening the scope and depth of research supporting innovative literacy practices. Particularly relevant are the stories of effective practitioners using the arts to create new linguistic pathways to learning for all students, families, and communities, especially the most marginalized.

Weaving the Disciplines: Interdisciplinary Critical Pedagogy & Integrated Arts

So, how does art serve as voice to these populations of emergent bilingual learners above? Borrowing a metaphor from Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) director Emily Style (1996), art is an expressive form that is simultaneously a "window and mirror." Dialogue, which may include storytelling and art making, is essential to language learning. It is through art that we are able to access and honor authentic stories, lived experiences, and knowledge of diverse peoples. For students who are in process of learning a new language in a

new land, while still holding on to their native language, the ability to investigate, reflect and share this knowledge through rich multimodal literacies (i.e. through textual, gestural, visual, spatial, audio, and digital ways) that are not oral language dependent, is crucial (Franks, 2008). Applying a critical lens through the arts engages students through a wide range of literacies as they make meanings dependent on social, cultural and historical contexts (Ajayi, 2015; Schroeter & Wager, 2016).

The arts, therefore, not only provide multiple entry points demanding complex problem-solving skills, but also provide tangible scaffolding for language learning and academic success. No test-driven, scripted curricula, pacing guide, or English-only-inspired set of standards can provide the rich relationships necessary for the learning process. The arts and dialogue create fertile ground for inspiring a sense of belonging in school, cognitive growth and communication. The arts also call on students to draw from and contribute their cultural knowledge and linguistic background as they enhance their communication skills. *Art as Voice* is a call from fellow artists, educators, community organizers and practitioners to co-construct learning using critical multimodal literacy tools through the arts.

Untangling the Disciplines

In this next section we hope to expand on the foundations of the arts, literacies, and language acquisition by untangling the disciplines and providing a theoretical background to support this call. We elaborate on each of these foundations by providing practical examples of our individual experiences.

Why the arts?

The arts are an integral part of our lives that represent our values, connect us with one another, provide avenues for research and learning, stimulate our imagination, provide us with a sense or agency, and the power to create positive impact in our communities and the larger world. In addition to the richness of the process, a final product/performance also plays an important role in community building. Communities, families, staff and teachers gather for exhibitions and performances, providing an opportunity not only to celebrate the community members' artful accomplishments but also to engage all participants in teaching and sharing their knowledge and culture in both schools and wider community settings.

The arts are more than an added benefit in any educational context, they are foundational literacies that engage participants in the process of observing, connecting, finding solutions, making meaning and communicating/expressing (Kennedy Arts Center, 2015). For individuals who rarely see themselves or their experiences represented in schools or the media, the arts provide a way to make these hidden narratives and perspectives visible. When we are invited to 'play' in art, we build on the complex and important work of translation through *code switching*, which in the arts can be represented not only through oral and written language (as in poetry and music) but also in images, gesture, tone, movement, etc. In a world fraught with challenges it is helpful to have art to help us understand, translate and transform both our place in the world and our vision of a better future (Greene, 1995).

In spite of the obvious benefits that the arts bring to schools and communities, arts funding in- and out-of-school settings are always at risk (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/15/arts/nea-neh-endowments-trump.html). Fewer students get access to arts education now than before *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. The disappearance of arts from public school curricula is listed first among the four areas of concern reported by the National Latinx Education Research and Policy Project Council (http://opencuny.org/nlerap4ne/casa/) (Valenzuela, 2016). Ironically, access to the arts has declined for students in the least privileged schools, where both randomized and longitudinal research points to this being the greatest benefit for these communities (Bowen, Green, & Kisida, 2014; Caterall, Dumais & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Strengthening access to the arts is particularly crucial in this context. Whether as its own subject, integrated into the general curriculum, in afterschool programs or integrated into community practices, the arts are a powerful pathway for creative educators committed to tapping into their students' *funds of knowledge* (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006), while opening doors to a sense of agency in their communities and their own lives, imagining new possibilities and developing academic excellence.

Vivian: Museums as storytelling.

My work as an artist has always been bigger than the product. For me, its power comes from the process of creating/transforming and the conversations that follow when sharing the artwork. It was this passion for sharing with others, particularly young people who also felt dislocated, that drove me to teaching. First, I shared my experience, work and expertise as a photography mentor with teens, then as an artist teacher with young kids, and finally as a professor with teachers in a graduate program. As a teacher, I bring both my artwork and the voice of other living artists into my classroom. Before we visit a historical museum, I share the work of Fred Wilson from his installation *Mining the Museum* (http://beautifultrouble.org/case/mining-the-museum/), where he re-presents historical narratives making silences visible, such as in a piece that confronts visitors with three busts, on white pedestals, representing historical figures rarely connected to the history of Maryland: Henry Clay, Napoleon Bonaparte and Andrew Jackson on one side, and three empty black pedestals with the names of key historical (African American) figures in Maryland: Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass and Benjamin Banneker, on the other.

Mining the Museum also represents objects and photographs by and about Native Americans, providing alternative stories that we are not used to viewing in a museum. As we look at the work, we discuss absences and misrepresentations. We talk about curating as creating narratives: museums tell stories. We consider who gets to tell the story and to whom, who is left out and how the narratives connect with our own experience and the experience of others in our communities (Hetland, 2013). I ask students to think about how they curate their curriculum, what readings do they assign? What images do they share? Whose voices are included? This work has proved fertile and its power is evident not only in the conversations but also in the work my students do with their students.

One of my former students, who taught in a school with a majority Mexican population, visited his town's museum whose literature stated, "We hope you will enjoy learning about the

people who have lived in this region from the Ice Age to the present." He was surprised to see that there was no representation of the Mexican population, which comprised half the region, and whom had also contributed greatly to the agricultural industry. For his project, "Giving Voice to the Other 50%," he developed a plan to revitalize this representation by using his ties to the business community and the museum. He proposed a permanent educational exhibition guided by his students' gathering of stories and photographs of their communities. After multiple conversations with the museum, he was unable to get the project off the ground, but believes that the "seeds were planted". I contacted him years later and he responded, "After a few years spent overseas I returned to visit the museum and found they had completed a nearly identical program."

He wrote that this project was particularly beneficial for his emergent bilingual learners because, "I see this as a means for gaining ownership over their artwork and confidence in public speaking. Many of the English Language Learners don't often get the opportunity to do this. It isn't just about sharing our story, it is about visually framing that story with this rich art project." Students began to co-curate the curriculum with their own images. By photographing and curating cultural narratives through images, students used images as a way of speaking and used English to translate and re-tell others' stories. This work made visible the stories of *all* students and empowered them to tell their stories, sharing valuable information teachers may not have been familiar with, and making their student's knowledge relevant within the curriculum.

Eclectic approaches to literacies: Multiliteracies, new literacies, & multimodality

Vivian provides an important foundation of the importance of the arts and brings to life powerful examples of how the arts engage folks in creative critical thinking and expressing silenced stories—solid ground for deepening literary understanding. Moving on to the foundations of literacies, many of our first thoughts probably turn to reading and writing. Jewitt (2008) and others, expand on these traditional forms of literacies by highlighting that:

> Multiple literacies projects build stories based on and arising from young people's lives and experiences and cultural forms of representation to engage with and gain access to student agency, cultural memory, and home and school learning within local contexts. . . This makes it increasingly important for schools to attend to the literacy practices of students and diverse ways of making meaning, in particular, the multilingual, the multimodal, and the digital. In short, there is a need for further investigation of literacy practices as an intertextual web of contexts and media rather than isolated sets of skills and competences. (p. 255)

As in *Mining the Museum*, literacy as a sociocultural practice encompasses the myriad of different spaces of student lives; homes, schools, playgrounds and similar public and private spaces. As well, literacies include the diverse representations that students use to interpret and represent their daily lives, such as through the modes of visual arts, song, dance, and drama. Informed by social semiotic theories that emphasize how the relationship between form and meaning is socially constructed with texts (Halliday, 1978; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996), these concepts have recently been explained through the pedagogical theories

of *multiliteracies* (New London Group, 1996, 2000)*, new literacies studies* (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Street, 2003) *and multimodality* (Jewitt & Kress, 2008; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress, & Jewitt, 2008; Rowsell, 2013), which are a direct response to our growing multilingual and multimodal world with respect to technology, globalization and the many English language variations spoken today (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Luke & Carrington, 2002).

The pedagogy of *multiliteracies* recognizes that we are 'designers' of our meaning making processes. In schools, this begins and continues with immersion into rich learning environments that may include a diverse multilingual and multicultural classroom library, multilingual word walls, student multilingual and *multimodal* work, interactive teacher-student responses posted and digital representations within blogs and wikis. This pedagogy focuses on a student *situated practice* based on learning that is grounded in students' own life experiences that include their *funds of knowledge* (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006), a *critical framing* that supports students in questioning common assumptions, *overt instruction* where the teacher supports the student in learning information by building off of what the student already knows, and a *transformed practice* where students recreate and recontextualize meaning according to the lifeworld of the learners (Cope & Kalantzi, 2000; New London Group, 1996, 2000). Our contributors recognize that these four factors interact to engage emergent bilinguals in rich learning environments that foreground what they already know and care about.

Multimodality brings these ideas together to consider how each element, or mode that we use to 'read the world' (Freire & Macedo, 2005) is situated historically, culturally, and socially, and contributes to the entire meaning of the text; the text now being a body, a book, a visual art work, a comic, a song. These meanings are made and mixed through various modes of meaning making, such as gesture, gaze, image, sound, speech, writing, body posture, music, and so on. Multimodality places emphasis on how the many different modes within any given text intersect, interrelate, are interpreted and remade to make up new meanings (Kress, 2000; 2003).

Each of these conceptions of literacy acknowledge that students, especially emergent bilinguals, bring a range of resources to meaning making in and outside of the classroom. These multiple forms of literacies challenge traditional forms of schooling that merely spotlight restrictive print and language-based notions of literacy (Gee, 2004; Lam, 2006; Sefton-Green, 2006). A multimodal approach to literacy, as described via the arts and articulated within this special issue, advances the call to deconstruct these restrictive forms of literacy assuring that educational settings connect to, and bring in our students' *funds of knowledge*— their homes, communities, and languages — to enrich schools and communities.

Amanda: Bringing stories to life.

After returning to the United States with a passion to teach, specifically through arts-based multimodal literacies within a public school setting, I taught elementary and middle school students in a Spanish bilingual school in Pilsen, a vibrant artistic Mexican-American community on the Lower West side of Chicago.
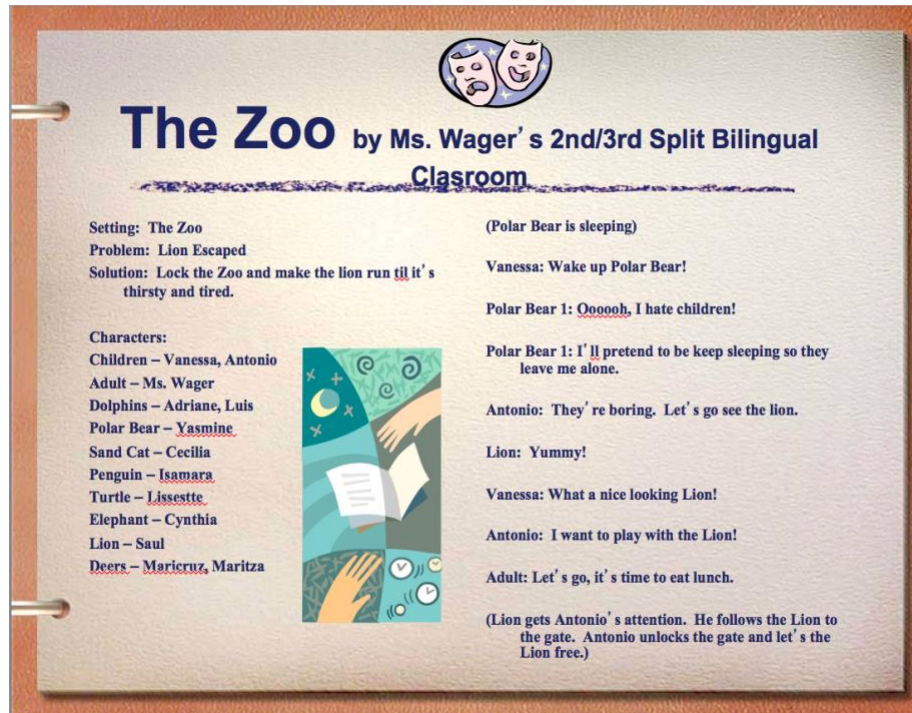
Family Building Mural in Pilsen, Chicago, IL (https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/364862007282016581/)

The elementary school had a 99% emergent bilingual population of Mexican American students. Due to NCLB's focus on assessment and standardized testing, the school had been at risk of closing for over four years, largely due to language differences. As standardized tests were in English-only and culturally biased (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994), only 30 percent of students met the expected Illinois yearly-annual-progress goal. To engage students in English literacy practices and connect to their backgrounds, I used readers' theatre and role-play throughout my English Language Arts block. According to classroom literacy fluency assessments in English, my elementary grade students increased their literacy levels by one year in a 6-month period, through the daily use of these multimodal literacy tools. This led to a grant that funded an after school and summer literacy program in which students continued practicing readers theatre and created scripted stories based on field trip experiences. This work was so powerful that one of the second graders, Monica, began speaking for the first time in her school life by whispering the lines of the script to her peers. The following year I partnered with the reading specialist to create a school-wide "Family Reading Night", where families first watched a play together in the auditorium and then were able to choose which readers theater classroom they wanted to participate in based on chosen bilingual children's literature books, such as *Chato's Kitchen* mentioned above. Children created masks of their characters, practiced reading the scripts, and performed the script for their families. Through the use of multimodal literacies students were engaged, motivated, and were able to share this passion with their families.

My ultimate goal in using reader's theatre was for students to script their stories bringing in their own *funds of knowledge*. Our first collaborative scripting experience was directly after a field trip to the zoo, the setting for their play. We all sat on the rug together, while I reiterated how a play often has a problem and a solution. They came up with the problem being that the "lion escaped" and the solution being to "lock the zoo and make the lion run until it is thirsty and

tired". Each student chose an animal to be and then we began the collaborative script writing process, where students developed the scenes as I typed their script on a projected screen. Below is the first page of the script:

The Zoo by Ms. Wager's 2nd/3rd Split Bilingual Classroom

Setting: The Zoo
Problem: Lion Escaped
Solution: Lock the Zoo and make the lion run til it's thirsty and tired.

Characters:
Children – Vanessa, Antonio
Adult – Ms. Wager
Dolphins – Adriane, Luis
Polar Bear – Yasmine
Sand Cat – Cecilia
Penguin – Isamara
Turtle – Lissestte
Elephant – Cynthia
Lion – Saul
Deers – Maricruz, Maritza

(Polar Bear is sleeping)

Vanessa: Wake up Polar Bear!

Polar Bear 1: Oooooh, I hate children!

Polar Bear 1: I'll pretend to be keep sleeping so they leave me alone.

Antonio: They're boring. Let's go see the lion.

Lion: Yummy!

Vanessa: What a nice looking Lion!

Antonio: I want to play with the Lion!

Adult: Let's go, it's time to eat lunch.

(Lion gets Antonio's attention. He follows the Lion to the gate. Antonio unlocks the gate and let's the Lion free.)

During the last weeks of school, the students turned the classroom into a rainforest to perform the reader's theatre script of the *The Great Kapok Tree* (1990) for the rest of the school and their families. *The Great Kapok Tree,* by Lynne Cherry, tells the story of a young boy who walks into the rainforest to begin chopping down the trees. He takes a nap and while he is sleeping different animals come to him, begging him not to destroy their homes. When he rises, he looks around, and then walks out of the rainforest. I read the story to the students and they practiced reader's theatre during the language arts block while we did a social studies unit on rainforests, and eventually visited the Field Museum to examine a simulated rainforest exhibit. For the last month, whenever the students had a thought that connected to the theme of rainforests, they would take a leaf or flower template and record their thought, connecting to their *funds of knowledge*, and tape it to the wall. We draped brown yarn around the classroom and constructed a large, papier-mâché tree in the center of the room, transforming our classroom into a beautiful rainforest. Each child had a part in the reader's theatre script of *The Great Kapok Tree* and without being pressured, they memorized their lines overnight, embodying their characters for their final performances for friends and families. This example of a multimodal learning environment, where the students are learning about a subject matter via multiple texts, viewing the visuals in the children's' and social studies books, reading the script, embodying the characters, participating in an experiential field trip, and writing their own connections to these pieces, all contributed to furthering their literacy and language skills.

Navigating the institutional borders to language acquisition.

This next section explains the foundations of language acquisition, and the importance of promoting bilingualism and family/community involvement throughout this process. We have all noted that many young students arrive and seem to be able to learn a new language in just a few months. We marvel at their ability to 'soak it all in'. But language acquisition is hardly that simple, and theories for how language is acquired have developed over time, from a purely cognitive understanding that sees the brain as a blank slate needing to be filled (Skinner, 1965) to a more transactional perspective that sees language as developing through a social context (Chomsky, 1972). Additionally, there is the notion that there are two systems through which we acquire language: the subconscious process of learning language when we are babies, and language "learned" through more formal instruction, such as grammar, syntax and vocabulary building. Furthermore, Cummins (2008) introduced the idea that there are great differences between language that we use socially *(BICS)* and a more challenging academic language that is vital for academic success *(CALP)*. While the former can take as little as 6 months to develop, explaining our perception that kids learn quickly, the latter can take between 5 and 7 years to master.

Language is at the heart of teaching and learning because all classrooms and community settings are language-learning environments for both primary English speakers and emergent bilingual learners. Educators use knowledge of language as communicators, evaluators, educated human beings, and as agents of socialization. Drawing from Krashen's (1981) theory of *comprehensible input*, we see language acquisition being built and expanded upon input that is already understood at a certain proficiency level—much like Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* (1962, 1978, 1987)—and that students acquire language best in a non-threatening and low anxiety environment, as well as through interaction. Engaging pre-existing knowledge encoded in family languages encourages a deep understanding of concepts and factual knowledge for emergent bilinguals. The arts promote this kind of cross-language transfer and give students agency over their learning process while supporting *biliteracy* (Cummins, Baker & Hornberger, 2001).

Second language teaching methods and approaches today.

There are various methods and approaches to second language acquisition in schools today. There is content-based instruction, which is a type of communicative language teaching where a selected content area becomes a meaningful context for authentic communication as learners collaborate to complete carefully designed academic tasks. For example, teachers might use math, social studies, or science as vehicles for language instruction. ESL instruction, both pull-out and push-in, is utilized in schools as a means of specifically teaching the English language to support students to understand the content-area instruction in the mainstream classroom. *Sheltered Instruction*, which is also called *Specially-Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE),* involves content-area teachers to custom-design their instruction to make it comprehensible for emergent bilinguals, while supporting students' English language development. Some popular models known today are the *Cognitive Academic Language*

Learning Approach (CALLA) (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) and *Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model* (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

There are also numerous models of bilingual education, such as transitional bilingual education, dual language programs, native language literacy programs, and language-immersion programs. A *Transitional Bilingual Education* (TBE) program facilitates the transition of emergent bilingual learners into the all-English curriculum. Instruction in the students' native language ensures that students learn subject matter in the language they understand best. Classes in the native language continue as students acquire English language skills sufficient to function successfully in English-only mainstream classrooms. Transition to the English-only classroom is expected to occur within three years. A *Native Language Literacy (NLL)* program constitutes a safe space for literacy development of emergent bilinguals who have had limited or no schooling in their home countries. The program is for students between the ages of 9 and 21 and is designed to help students eventually enter and succeed in the *TBE* program. The focus of the program is on developing native language literacy and *ESL* skills as well as subject matter knowledge. A *Two-way Bilingual* (TB) program develops full bilingualism for all participants, regardless of their linguistic background. These programs serve emergent bilingual learners, both English language learners and native English speakers, who are seeking to learn a language other than their first language. All students receive instruction in English and a second language from the outset. Typically, native English-speaking students come from middle-class homes where parents understand the long-term value of investments rendering their children bilingual. And *language immersion* programs are designed for the learner to be immersed into another language 100% of the time.

Due to the results of the *Unz Initiative* in the early 2000s, California, Arizona, and Massachusetts restricted the implementation of bilingual education until recently. As a result of this short-sighted and misguided policy, in 2011 the US Department of Education and the US Justice Department found that Massachusetts had failed to adequately prepare teachers and school departments to implement English-only instruction (Berriz, 2006; Vaznis, 2011). Fortunately, California recently voted for the return of bilingual education in November 2016 and in Massachusetts, the bilingual education LOOK Bill passed in November 2017. It also passed a bill that puts the Seal of Biliteracy (https://languageopportunity.org/seal-of-biliteracy/) on graduation diplomas of high school students, in recognition of those who speak, read, and write proficiently in a language other than English. Progress on recognizing multilingualism as an asset is slowing emerging in the United States.

Out-of-school programs that support families and communities allow educators to break out from many of these rigid structures imposed on school systems. As educators, we all have a responsibility to work with students as human beings regardless of the systems we find ourselves in. The arts humanize these spaces and the work of teachers, administrators, community educators and university professors can support this framework. In this issue we bring together educators who work in a wide array of settings, from classrooms and summer programs, to school districts, adult ESL programs and higher education, making visible the important contributions of teaching across each of these contexts.

Fostering bilingualism: The hArt of literacy development with emergent bilingual learners.

Engaging the home language in school as a learning and teaching tool gives emergent bilingual students an academic advantage. This in turn creates access and accelerates both content area and basic literacy skills (Cummins, 2000). Teaching materials inclusive of home language and culture enhance proficiency in both the language of home and that of academic English (Kioko, 2015). This invitation to integrate all that each student has to offer to the learning process inspires a sense of belonging in school and other community settings. Motha (2014) explains that:

> English is increasingly commodified, racialized, and globalized, it is implicated in the persistence of racial inequalities, in cultural and economic domination, in heritage language loss, in the extinction of less-commonly-spoken languages and their inherent epistemologies, and in inequitable distribution of global wealth and resources (p. xxi-xxii).

To the extent that researchers have found a direct correlation between bilingual education and staying in school (Feinberg, 2002), home language is an asset, a valuable treasure worth preserving and enhancing. As teachers and community organizers we are critically positioned as agents of multiliteracies.

In regards to cognitive benefits, the Commission on Language Learning (2017) sites various studies that have found that:

- bilingual children have stronger working memory— the ability to retain and manipulate distinct pieces of information over short periods of time—than do monolingual children (Morales, Calvo, & Bialystok, 2013).

- the Utah Dual Language Immersion program showed that children in the program gained improved memory and attention, problem-solving capabilities, primary-language comprehension, and ability to empathize with other cultures and people (Utah State Office of Education, 2013).

- bilingual children have greater executive functioning— focus, planning, prioritization, multitasking —than monolingual children (Bialystok, 2009).

- "multilingual exposure may promote effective communication by enhancing perspective taking," a fundamental component of empathy (Fan, Liberman, Keysar, & Kinzler, 2015).

- bilingual patients at a memory clinic presented dementia symptoms four years later, on average, than their monolingual counterparts and that bilingualism delayed the onset of Alzheimer's disease (Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007). (p. 13)

The notion of *dynamic bilingualism*, intermingling of past and present language practice, or the multi-competence of holding two languages at the same time, pushes us to understand the complexity of languaging in an increasingly multilingual global village. *Translanguaging*

includes code-switching but goes beyond, for example, reading in one language and using another language to take notes, discuss, or write (García & Kleifgen, 2010). *Translanguaging* practices open up the pedagogical space to the imagination, knowledge and linguistic gifts of emergent bilingual students. Since there are a wide range of language variations represented in North America, educators can benefit from pedagogically sound and culturally sensitive methods for helping students learn academic English while honoring home languages and cultures.

Summoning family and community voices.

Tapping families and community as valued sources of cultural knowledge, and rooting learning in the histories and traditions of students' home communities embeds new knowledge in the fiber of everyday life while supporting rigorous academic standards. Students are engaged in constructing new knowledge from a position of strength — as one of Berta's third graders described it: "I am a student teaching and a teacher learning" (Giroux, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016).

Teaching and learning in this manner also enhances cross-cultural understanding, particularly since the diversity in most educational contexts includes a variety of languages, nationalities, and family immigration histories. This affirmation of cultural groups and their languages strengthens the transition between home and school (García & Kleifgen, 2010). The arts invite students to bring their histories and culture to express their ideas. Moreover the arts support agency (Hanley & Noblit, 2009). Taking a social justice stance beside families turns the cultural deficit model, which blames students for their own deficits and lack of cultural capital, on its head, establishing a mutual base of support for students, families and teachers (Berriz, 2002; Bourdieu, 1986). This stance, which Cummins (2000) calls *Transformative Intercultural Pedagogy*, requires educators' appreciation of family involvement as a mutual border crossing and a shared responsibility (Bartolomé, 2006; Nieto, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012). When an educator utilizes and invites home languages and cultural resources, students are not compelled to choose one over the other, rather they experience how education enables them to learn from and contribute to their communities (Moll & González, 2004). We are proposing that the arts provide venues for exploration of ideas, making meaning of challenging concepts and weaving missing cultural knowledge in our curriculum and pedagogy.

Berta: The family map.

I remember the first year that I used this world map project. Listening to my students, I discovered that it is easier for some of the third graders to learn their home addresses when they see the relationship of their new neighborhood to their old neighborhood on the world map. The global helped to make sense of the local. The opening of the school year offers the ideal climate for establishing who is in the classroom. This is an opportune time to encourage student relationships between one another and to their own cultural background. Both of these bonds support student learning. The visual and research aspects of this project are expressed in our classroom exhibits. For example, a central welcoming piece at the beginning of the year was a blank world map. This is quickly transformed into a family map featuring where children come from and what they know about the places they have lived (Brice-Heath, & Roach, 1999). For their first social studies assignment, students go home with an enlarged map of their state or

country of origin to fill with locations of family stories, celebrations, and memories of the first days of school. The students bring photographs or draw pictures of their families. Family pictures soon framed the large world map. This exhibit visually intertwined the personal with the academic in the classroom community.

This insight influenced me to revisit the way that I taught other subjects. For example, in mathematics, I now teach the whole number before I teach the sum of its parts. I teach the concept of division by having twenty-eight students sit together in their desks. Then I ask them to move the furniture around to make four equal groups, embodying this mathematical function. In science, I teach the concept of matter before getting into its different manifestations of solid, liquid and gas. Responding to my student's different ways of learning was making my classroom more effective.

The Family Map project opens a yearlong series of family interviews on varied topics, such as: What are the names of rocks and minerals in your country/neighborhood? What is your favorite story that your grandmother or other friend or family member tells you? What advice would you give your child to keep for their future? How does sound travel? The answers to these curricular questions bring responses that illuminate family culture.

For example, José's father is an engineer. He can tell José that sound travels in waves through matter. José gave us an example from the experience of swimming in the ocean, "You know how you can hear your sister screaming at you even when you are under water at the beach?" Jamar gives us an example from urban life, "You know how you can hear the neighbor's radio through your wall?" Both of these answers reflect ways of knowing embedded in daily life. In the former, the knowledge of wind and waves from the island-based Caribbean experience; the second response reveals knowledge derived from urban life. All students have heard sound travel in many different kinds of settings. Echoes of their knowledge reverberate around the room. This conversation relates directly to soundscapes and highlights the importance of sounds to our memory, even when this memory of home is found only in our students' imaginary (Suárez-Orozco, 2004; Valenzuela, 2017). Listening, with our ears, eyes, bodies and minds is a first step in discerning a new context and learning to navigate in a new language.

The image of the Family Map becomes part of every subject over time. Keeping its presence alive in the school is at once an affirmation of, and invitation to families. Other examples that arise from this exploration of family cultural knowledge related to landscape-enhanced science learning as well. To introduce a science unit on minerals, I ask children to bring in their favorite rocks. Our eclectic classroom rock collection encouraged learning the names of rocks and minerals from many lands. For example, one girl brought in a crystal from the caves near Utuado in Puerto Rico. Kevonia told the story of the pudding stone from her neighborhood. Kevin and Kaweisi both brought a stone from traditional games of China and Africa. Geological classifications, like sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic seemed easier to learn for students with the personal connection to friends in the class. One of the assignments for the rock unit is a city walk where children find examples and describe in their own words the different types of rock formations. The structure of this unit begins with the prior knowledge of students and families, and it concludes with an application in their neighborhood. The family

map creates a place of prominence for the knowledge that students bring into social studies. Through these and other projects linking family knowledge to content knowledge, I legitimize the many languages of my students while raising their critical awareness of the issues relating to language, culture and power.

In Conclusion: An Invitation

In this introduction chapter, we have described the context, set the stage and made the case for much needed *activism* to engage the resources of our multilingual communities. The chapters included in this special issue accentuate the power of artful teachers and community organizers as agents of multiliteracies. Read on! You will discover innovative ways to invite students, and all that they represent, to enter the learning experience. We hope that you will find inspiration in the democratic spaces presented here where everyone is able to speak and be heard in the process of understanding how what is taught is connected to their communities and everyday lives. Our final chapter includes a range of resources of diverse artists and arts-based organizations that teachers can draw from as they curate their curriculum to support the learning of all their students.

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