

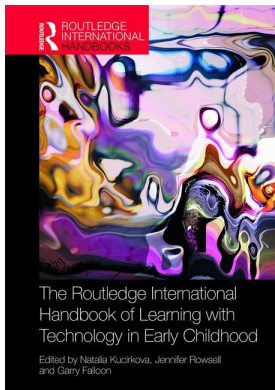
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5

TRANSCULTURAL APPROACHES TO LITERACY, LEARNING, AND PLAY

Rahat Zaidi

Exploring transculturalism and literacy through culturally sustaining pedagogy and play

In the 1940s, Afro-Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz first defined transculturalism as the “re-inventing of a new common culture” (Ortiz, 1995). The resultant phenomenon, or perspective, is a direct consequence of the natural, migratory nature of human beings. Today, human migrations are facilitated by so many forms of transport that the rate of movement around the globe is unprecedented. Transculturalism, then, refers to the resultant ‘new culture’ that is developed because of this. An accelerated means of crossing borders implies that humans are rapidly transcending geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries because of their mass migrations around the globe. Vertovec (2007) coined the term *super diversity* and Pratt (1999) referred to *cultural contact zones* where we experience transculturalism in real and virtual spaces.

To realize the potential that this ‘super diverse’ time in history can offer, we must ensure that all voices are being heard, suspending the human tendency to judge, oppress, or be afraid of people who we consider different from ourselves. Literacy imports words and ideas across time and space; it gives us the opportunity to cross borders and travel between mind and heart, opening them, and taking the reader into the experience of people whose lives are very different from our own. Elements of play can be included in this diverse landscape as students engage in various activities that go beyond the rigour of literacy instruction and to a dynamic, energetic form of learning. In this super diverse era, literacy education gives a necessary voice to a super diverse range of human experience.

Orellana (2016) uses an example of how an educational setting can provide the opportunity for a linguistically and culturally diverse classroom to come together in a play situation. This initiative is called the B-Club, a multi-age, after-school program where immigrant children in Los Angeles, California meet with undergraduate students from a local university, and form a community in which they “play with linguistic and cultural border crossings.” The complexities that arise when work is explored through transculturalism are mediated through the B-Club’s fostering of the experiential nature of the children’s learning. The B-Club positions the children to explore their linguistic and cultural knowledge through its collaborative learning method. Orellana reiterates the importance of tapping into the transcultural capital of immigrant

children, encouraging and inspiring diverse ways of thinking, doing, acting, and being, all to prepare future citizens to co-exist in a global society. In effect, encouraging children to ‘play’ with the language they are using through the use of traditional texts as well as different types of media texts helps them meaningfully navigate linguistic and cultural borders.

Gutiérrez, Bien, and Selland (2011) promoted and valued social relationships and the use and integration of playful imagination. Their argument revolved around how ‘social and located’ relationships helped to develop literacy practices through an after-school club setting designed to put these principles into practice. Gutiérrez et al. (2009) followed Hall’s (2004) ‘cultural flows’ that occur as people and practices transcend time and cultural spaces. Their strategy focused on a particular learning ecology where multi-modality and design helped engage children in play and the imaginary while producing hybrid texts that formed part of the everyday, school-based knowledge and conventions. The concept of using multi-modal texts invites and values oral, dramatic, embodied, written, and graphic art responses and connects the children to the text with depictions of topics that are diverse, culturally relevant, and incorporate a global perspective.

Where traditional approaches favour scripted and English only methodology, Gutiérrez and Vossoughi (2010), and Orellana (2016) emphasized children’s interests, experience, expertise, and “repertoires of practices” (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). This club approach helps to create social dynamics that focus on literacy and identity development among children, using language to help make meaning mediated through technology and new social arrangements. With this particular strategy, culture became an interactional accomplishment, rather than a simple individual trait of the student. Cole (1988) refers to this response to diversity as a polycultural strategy and solution. For instance, capitalizing on young ELL students who enter the school system with a whole repertoire of cultural capital gives teachers the opportunity to go beyond traditional literacy acquisition practices. Cole et al. were able to establish that cultural games, music, and dance enhanced school children’s literacy experience by attending to what students individually and collectively brought to the classroom. The activities that took place worked together in game play and language, literacy, and problem solving, all of which contributed to the goals of the program. Each activity entailed students drawing on their full linguistic toolkit in order to enable maximum learning and make meaning.

Lotherington (2017) expounded multi-modal practices as foundational to early childhood education. She emphasized the child’s multisensory engagement in activities such as tracing a sandpaper alphabet, finger painting, playing with puppets, choral singing, and rhythmic clapping, all embodying the use of play to learn language development and alphabetic awareness. Similarly, Stein (2008) expressed her interest in multi-modal teaching and learning through exploratory, culturally sensitive, and plurilingual methodology, working with young South African children during the apartheid era. She invited her students’ culturally rich forms of expression into her classroom using drama, songs, music, a hope tree (a representative means of allowing students to demonstrate a way of building democratic culture and making meaning), and storytelling. She reiterated, “What began as a fairly loose, unstructured language activity was transformed over a year into a sustained project in a narrative across multiple semiotic modes in which students drew heavily on cultural forms and resources familiar to them” (p. 8). Her success in this project demonstrated how exploratory, culturally responsive pedagogy could be used as a successful strategy in the post-apartheid years.

By taking into account the new demographics of schools, researchers have successfully demonstrated how the very makeup of a classroom in terms of cultural diversity provides the opening for cultural expansion and strategy building to enhance traditional literacy learning experiences.

Transculturalism and language awareness

Researchers focus on language awareness (LA) as a process that assumes literacy acquisition takes place when children treat language as a form, an object they can manipulate that is neither 'natural' nor 'innate.' In addition, Coelho (2012) maintains that the extent to which a learner learns is dependent on his/her sense of agency, self-worth, and motivation to achieve within his/her class and beyond.

Carter (2003) argued that language awareness is not a new concept but does in fact have a long tradition in European countries (van Essen, 1997); he wrote that it goes beyond a focus on language alone to encompass cognitive abilities such as reflection, attitudes to language, language learning, and features of language. Bolitho et al. (2003) identified core definitions of the term, and basic language awareness paradigms. Their research centred on the intersection between language awareness and critical social dimensions, including how language awareness connects with current theories of language teaching and learning. While there was admittedly no consensus on all points raised by the authors, emphasis was placed on communicating with teachers about being aware of how the process of language awareness can aid with literacy engagement.

Cummins and Early's (2011) research recognized students' language awareness and how it expanded as their abilities to think and design collaboratively and creatively through identity texts. They explored "the instructional spaces that opened up when the definition of literacy was expanded beyond its traditional focus on linear print-based reading and writing skills in the dominant language" (p. 3). Not only does language awareness (García & Menken, 2015) empower students, it also brings a new multicultural/multilingual dimension to the teaching context of a language that no longer represents a single culture. This infers that educators need to recognize the important role languages and cultural practices play (language awareness) in the classroom in Canada and all other multilingual classrooms.

In addition to language awareness, researchers, including Pennycook (2006), have been intrigued by the ways in which transcultural flows can produce new forms of localization and how the manner by which people speaking English (through accents, gestures, etc.) results in new and different forms of global identity. Different means of provoking language awareness give the opportunity to unite cultures irrespective of classes, economies, and localities. Levy (2001) suggests hip hop music as an example of encouraging language awareness, where the music itself implies 'a global urban subculture' permeating cultures around the world.

Today, more and more emphasis is being placed on the nature of interaction between students' language and cultural repertoires and the ways in which they negotiate and make meaning in their literacy experiences. Those who work with ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students have increasingly examined socio-cultural perspectives to inform teaching. Socio-cultural perspectives put the emphasis on the role of culture in human learning and development (Au, 1998; Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Rather than 'fix' non-dominant students to 'fit' into classroom literacy practices, these approaches highlight the need for educators to explore how they can best capitalize on their students' cultural, linguistic, and intellectual resources to enhance their academic potential.

D'Warte's (2014) study demonstrates that building on students' linguistic knowledge, skills, and experiences through language brokering and leveraging in the classroom has a positive impact on the classroom cultures, as well as students' identities and teachers' expectations of both monolingual and multilingual students. In addition, promotion of literacy development in a child's first language can help children acquire second or third language literacy (Cummins, 2000; Taylor et al., 2008). As an example, English language learners are able to utilize higher order vocabulary skills from their first language (such as the ability to provide formal definitions

and interpret metaphors) when speaking a second language, and conceptual knowledge and skills transfer across languages (Cummins, 2001; Roessingh, 2004). Thus, evidence is mounting that indicates children's early literacy learning should be contextualized within their cultural and linguistic experiences (Naqvi, 2009). In the past decade, research has indicated major literacy successes using cultural amplification within the context of early literacy development. This includes multilingual literacy interventions, exploring pedagogic opportunities involving reading in several languages, and establishing multilingual connections and community engagement within mainstream curriculum (Naqvi et al., 2012a, 2012b; Zaidi, 2018). In essence, the classroom has become a linguistic landscape that reflects and glorifies the multilingual nature of its occupants.

Research demonstrates methodologies that include linguistic diversity as a key component of the literacy acquisition experience enables participants to experiment with languages. Cultural amplification through the presence of scripts, visual cues, and multilingual community involvement give students the opportunity to experience languages, play with linguistic sounds and forms, and demonstrate awareness through repetition, questioning, reading, and writing activities. As a consequence, a paradigm shift is occurring today that is responding to super diversity, giving much more credence to the ideas revolving around (a) languages, (b) language groups and speakers, and (c) communication. Where, previously, homogeneity, stability, and conformity were at the forefront, today mobility, collaboration, and the dynamism of politics are central concerns in the classroom (Blommaert & Rampton, 2015).

Language awareness and dual language books

Perhaps one of the most effective language awareness approaches is used in conjunction with dual language books (DLBs). Educators today are increasingly teaching through a multilingual lens, engaging with classes comprised of groups of students with a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Learning through a multilingual context while valuing and drawing upon the various and rich communicative repertoires of learners has been found to be a powerful tool for literacy acquisition (Norton, 2014). Educators are seeking to reconcile linguistic diversity and literacy engagement in meaningful and authentic ways while also meeting the needs of linguistically diverse students. Results confirm (Naqvi et al., 2012a, 2012b) that using DLBs creates opportunities for learners to draw upon their multilingual repertoires to create successful educational experiences. Such experiences increase language awareness and encourage students to find overlaps and interconnections between their primary language and any secondary or tertiary languages in their lives.

DLBs have also been found to greatly benefit an inquiry-based approach toward teaching and literacy engagement beyond the acceptance of linguistic and analytical frameworks. In fact, a research environment in which language awareness is incorporated to scaffold the literacy experience can be greatly enhanced through the use of DLBs. Compared to monolingual learners, those students who are already unconsciously overlapping and switching between two or three (or more) languages use DLBs to discuss word sounds and the role of different languages in the literacy process, while simultaneously sharing their own knowledge of language. In addition, for students with a monolingual background, strategies that promote language awareness, such as the use of DLBs, encourage cultural awareness in their day-to-day life.

Projects involving DLB intervention clearly validate the importance of an education that provides students an access to tools that will give them, as well as scholars, teachers, parents, and the general public, insight into their linguistic lives. The effects of allowing students from kindergarten to high school to bring their linguistic/cultural expertise into the classroom

has rarely been acknowledged or utilized in academic contexts. If educators can acknowledge the fact that all language use is intimately bound to social, cultural, and political processes, we believe that a student's literacy experience and success in their educational journey will be more effective.

It therefore becomes paramount for school systems to create curricula in which young people who are sitting in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms are given the opportunity to use language awareness for the purpose of greater literacy engagement. Learners are coming into the classroom with communicative repertoires that are rich in linguistic features from the various languages spoken and are able to draw upon these features in order to incur a successful educational experience. Language and literacy experiences are further enhanced by juxtaposing two or more languages (Hornberger & Link, 2012).

Dual language books give students the opportunity to use their shared knowledge of words and phrases from their respective languages and also move in and out of English to enhance their literacy learning. As they incorporate language awareness, a sense of interconnectedness is cultivated, offering a vision of literacy in mainstream schools that is grounded in action and equity. This makes it possible for learners to explicitly notice language features and become aware of what is needed to develop linguistic and literacy abilities. This chapter acknowledges that language awareness is a powerful tool for literacy engagement in the multilingual classroom, especially when used hand-in-hand with the introduction of DLBs.

The process of implementing a dual language book program

Several examples of research exist involving DLBs in a literacy intervention program. One such DLB project aimed to set up a dual language reading intervention in kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms over a ten-week duration. Typically, the DLBs (Urdu-English, French-English, Punjabi-English) were read to the student participants three times a week in fifteen- to twenty-five-minute sessions. Each page of the books was read simultaneously in the target language (read by an adult volunteer) and in English (read by the teacher). Strong emphasis was placed on the juxtaposition of the teachers and readers standing side by side while engaging in the reading process. The student participants were encouraged to discuss the story content, vocabulary, pictures, and language content.

The project placed a special emphasis on curricular outcomes and content, and linguistic/intercultural goals. Before direct implementation, I met with the teacher participants to discuss and determine the preliminary steps necessary to make this project a success. We discussed curricular alignment, research protocols, and the student participants' role in the project. The project was divided into four stages.

During the first stage, the DLBs were sourced from school libraries, the nearest public library, and from the Mantra Lingua publisher. Of the entire inventory, the teachers chose ten pertinent titles that were of particular relevance to the current program of studies in which they were involved, the demographic of their classrooms, and the availability of guest readers to support the project. Included in the process was a recruitment letter directed at guest reader volunteers that included parents, families, and community members (see Figure 5.1).

The second stage involved the planning and design of the teaching sequence and student tasks. Over the span of four to six weeks prior to the implementation of the project, the teacher participants met regularly to design specific tasks for the student participants. These included activities promoting linguistic/cultural awareness such as listening activities, noticing scripts, and visual cues. A follow-up information letter, email, and newsletter were sent to all parents to explain the impending DLB project.

Tagalog, Urdu and Spanish Storybook Readers Needed! Education Assistants, Parents, Community Members

A dual language book reading study is about to be undertaken at _____ School. It is being conducted with researchers from the University of Calgary and has been approved by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

The reading program incorporates a guest reader who, with a classroom teacher, reads a storybook written in two languages: English and a second language (Tagalog, Urdu and Spanish).

The classroom teacher will read the English text whereas the guest reader will read the second language text.

What are we asking you to do?

- attend a reading workshop
- read the assigned book ahead of time
- read the book alongside a teacher to middle/junior high school classes
- take part in discussion

Please contact: _____ (teacher) at ()-_____.

Figure 5.1 Sample letter inviting parent and community member participation

The third stage involved researchers constructing a reading schedule and an orientation session in which they discussed the guest readers' role, and introduced them to the concept of dialogic and dual language reading. The DLBs to be used in the study were scanned for viewing on a smartboard, and teachers began pre-reading activities with the students. Discussions revolved around identity, the concept of language awareness, and the role of language in their everyday world. These ideas were developed through play and an introduction to the genre of dual language books. Teachers built anticipation for the project by allowing the students to leaf through the books, ask questions, notice pictures, and share their linguistic knowledge.

During the fourth stage, feedback was gathered from students and guest readers in order to tweak and adapt study tasks as necessary during the research period. I gathered evaluations and reflections about the effectiveness of the DLB tool as it is related to outcomes and feedback.

Examples of practice

The examples of practice showcased in the next paragraph provide snapshots of teachers, students, and guest readers interacting with DLBs, in which play and language awareness provided instances of transcultural awareness. The reading of the DLBs explored the transcultural capital of immigrant children and encouraged and inspired them to think, do, act, and be within diverse paradigms. In effect, children were encouraged to 'play' with the language, exploring the use of text as a way to accomplish this. Through the whole process, playful imagination and social relationships were highly valued as part of the development of literacy practices. Hall's (2004) 'cultural flows' came to life in this project as the students and the DLB project merged to transcend time and cultural spaces. The next section provides examples of the reading of two DLBs that demonstrate the power of transcultural experiences through dual language reading.

The Swirling Hijab

The Swirling Hijab (read in Urdu, Punjabi, French, and English) was written by Na'ima Bint Robert (2002) and illustrated by Nilesh Mistry. The book was included in the DLB reading study because of its rich cultural and linguistically diverse content and because we intended that it would develop children's cultural and linguistic awareness. The book is a colourfully illustrated story of a young girl's imaginative uses of her mother's hijab. In terms of cultural content, the hijab is not only a head covering in Islamic cultures, it is also a religious garment worn during prayer. The Hindi and Sikh equivalent of the hijab is the dupatta, which is a longer and narrower scarf that is sometimes worn as a head covering during prayer, and is also worn on the shoulders. Events in the story are linked in a chain (Botvina & Sutton-Smith, 1977) through the main character's imagination.

The Swirling Hijab (Urdu/English reading) was read twice to a group of eighteen student participants in kindergarten, once in Urdu/English and once in French/English. For the purpose of this example we focus solely on the Urdu reading. The Urdu guest reader, Mrs Zahid, had immigrated with her husband to Canada from Pakistan several years earlier. She had two children, both of whom were born in Canada and spoke Urdu at home, and she had tried to educate her children to be proud of their heritage language and customs. Her elder son was part of the student participant group.

During the course of the reading of *The Swirling Hijab*, Mrs Zahid made several comments. Mrs Zahid (discussing the book in Urdu):

Yeh kitaab hijab key baray main hai. Hijab patta hay kiss ko kahtay hain? Yeh dekho jaisay mein ney sar peh lya hoa hay. Sar dhaka hoa hay hain na! Is ko Arbi main kehtay hain hijab. Hain na! To yeh ud raha hey, lehra raha hai. [This book is about the hijab. Do you know what the hijab is? Look (pointing to her head). It's what I am wearing on my head. You see my head is covered. In Arabic we call this hijab. So this is swirling (hand gesture depicting the floating motion of a scarf). It's flowing in the air.]

In the analysis of this vignette, the children's attention was brought to her garment using playful gestures, smiling, and voice inflection. Making explicit references to the linguistic origins of the word ('Look. It's what I am wearing on my head' and 'In Arabic we call this *hijab*' – literally translated hijab means cover), she continued her explanation of the meaning of 'swirling' through gestures, words, and body language that inspired giggles and acknowledgment from the student participants. Through her explanation of the book's title, Mrs Zahid was able to normalize the cultural and linguistic nuances of the hijab within the classroom, and point to the rich transcultural nature of the DLB. This example of DLB dialogic reading offered an inclusive form of linguistic and cultural experience for a minority group of children that enabled them to build on a variety of linguistic and cultural repertoires (Taylor et al., 2008) through play and language awareness.

The reading of *The Swirling Hijab* highlights a prime example of how DLBs provide for powerful moments of language/cultural awareness (Naqvi et al., 2012a, 2012b), promoting an atmosphere of cultural sensitivity, identity sharing, and a sense of playfulness. Gutiérrez et al.'s (2011) research helped me call on her observations wherein multi-modality and design engage children in play and the imaginary. This was further amplified by the guest readers' comments regarding the word used in Punjabi to represent *hijab* (dupatta). South Asian students had an opportunity to discuss and share the various ways in which women covered their heads in their cultures. Through engaging with this particular book and through the presence of the two very

different guest readers (a Sikh grandfather from India and a Muslim mother from Pakistan), students experienced a range of cultural norms particular to different languages and countries.

Grandma's Saturday Soup and the patka

A second example involves a Grade 1 class reading a book called *Grandma's Saturday Soup* (Fraser, 2005). This book is about a girl named Mimi who goes through the week reminiscing about her grandma's soup, which she eats every Saturday. She goes through each day seeing things such as sky, snow, sand, and plants, which remind her of her grandma, who would tell Mimi stories of what Jamaica is like. The accompanying illustrations colourfully provide the reader with insight into what Jamaica is really like. There are many different ingredients inside Grandma's soup: yams, dumplings, potatoes, and cho-cho – similar to ingredients used in Jamaica in food preparation. The reader gains knowledge of the cultural foods in Jamaica.

Grandma's Saturday Soup (Punjabi/English reading) was read thrice to a group of eighteen student participants in kindergarten, once in Punjabi/English, once in French/English, and once in Urdu/English. For the purpose of this example, I focussed solely on the Punjabi/English reading. The Punjabi guest reader, Mr Patel Singh, had immigrated to Canada from India to join his son and his family in Calgary a few years earlier. Mr Patel Singh was a former school principal and his grandson Vikram was a student in the current kindergarten class. Mr Patel Singh was an enthusiastic guest reader who enjoyed sharing different aspects about his language and culture with the students. He wore a turban and was familiar with the Hindi and Urdu languages. Mr Patel Singh was very aware of the linguistic interconnections between Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi, and during his reading sessions he shared various facts about Punjabi. For example, the Punjabi spoken and written in India was derived from the Gurumukhi script, whereas the Punjabi spoken and written in Pakistan is influenced by Urdu/Farsi and Arabic. He drew the student's attention to various linguistic facets of Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu, pointing to the similarities in pronunciation and the different scriptures. During the reading, Mr Patel Singh stopped to discuss how the word *dupatta* had been used instead of the word *hijab* within the Punjabi/English version of *The Swirling Hijab*. Many students nodded and enthusiastically shared how their mothers wore the dupatta and not the hijab. Such experiences and dialogue provided the student participants with cultural amplification, offering windows into different ways of being.

The Grade 1 class read *Grandma's Saturday Soup* in Punjabi and English. They had already heard the story in French and English, and Urdu and English. Vikram's grandfather, Mr Patel Singh, read the book in Punjabi, and the class teacher, Mrs Brown, read it in English. During the reading, a student named Sonali pointed out that the Jamaican grandmother's bandana looked like the traditional head-covering worn by men in the *gurdwara* (i.e., Sikh temple). Chen (a Mandarin speaker) agreed with her and pointed to Mr Singh's turban, commenting, "Look, this is what it looks like." Imran (a speaker of Urdu) spoke up and said his father wore a *kufi* (i.e., the traditional prayer cap worn in a mosque) while offering his prayers. Mr Patel taught all the students how to say *turban* in Punjabi. Repeat after me, he said, "*Patka*".

This example clearly demonstrates how Mr. Patel's reading embodies, by virtue of being who he is, the authenticity by which he could demonstrate what it meant to be Sikh and wear a turban. Textually, the cover page of the book has a picture of a Jamaican grandmother wearing a bandana. This bandana, in fact, triggered the whole conversation around the concept of head covering, the conversation provoked by one student's question around the various types of head coverings. This was demonstrated by insider knowledge, with Mr Patel exclaiming how his *patka* was in fact the word for another type of head covering, sometimes used on the head for religious purposes. This led to further discussion and play with the vocabulary around the

various forms of head covering, demonstrating powerful moments of transcultural exchange through the dialogue that occurred between the guest reader and the student participants, who were provided an opportunity to ask questions around various cultural practices. While I did not focus on the resultant conversation that continued among the student participants, it did, through my one example, demonstrate how the dialogue opened and the various participants had numerous reference points to talk about the hijab, the linguistic comparisons, the embodiment of the head covering through the presentation of the Pakistani mother and her reference to the Arabic language, and the distinction made between the word *dupatta* and *hijab*. Finally, the grandfather's comments around the Sikh turban provided further insight into the question of head coverings.

In summary, the reading of the two books clearly established the link between culture and language, and the opportunity such books afford to early literacy practices. I am leveraging the guest readers' linguistic and cultural repertoires, noting that the students who do share the practices can associate and empathize with the conversation undertaken. Conversely, those who did not belong to those cultural groups were given the opportunity to ask questions and be answered by their peers, providing rich cultural and linguistic conversation. Even though conversation dominated most of the verbal exchanges, multi-modal forms of communication also were presented, including pointing to illustrations, demonstrating physical artefacts in the class outside the book (e.g., the head coverings), and student participants identifying with what was being discussed because they had personal experience with it.

In a normal Language Arts class in kindergarten or Grade 1, had I not brought these texts into the classroom, the student participants would never have had the opportunity to engage in such a discussion, a dialogue that envelops cultural artefacts and conversation involving intercultural exchanges with parents, grandparents, and other family members. Language and cultural awareness emerged as key points in the learning processes as the guest readers' interacted with the children, their presence in the classroom providing powerful moments of cultural amplification and further opportunity to 'play' with the structures and meaning of words and sentences.

Other implementations of DLBs

Language awareness is increased by involving DLBs, visual dictionaries, or personal translation devices. For this particular study I chose to resource the DLBs from Mantra Lingua's website, some school libraries, and the public library system. The Mantra Lingua collection includes stories written in English and sixty-three languages, sorted by age group, language, and reader language level. Teachers chose the particular DLBs they would use based on demographics of the school community in which they worked, the curriculum they were using at the time, the ages of their students, the culture and dynamics of their particular classroom, and any other relevant learning objectives. Guest readers came from families or community members who had been identified through school or classroom communications. Other students in the school also became potential guest readers. Their role in the study was to demonstrate the language and answer any pertinent student questions. As the purveyor of the culture associated with the language, the guest readers' role was very powerful. Videos produced of the DLB reading sessions showcased the diversity of the reading process.

The research project identified other innovative approaches to using DLBs. For example, DLBs could be integrated with a second language program in the school by using a number of translations of *Cinderella* to enable the teacher to highlight various cultural and linguistic features in diverse languages. Another method could identify a physical space in which teachers and new arrivals with limited English language skills could use the DLBs as a means to practice

and communicate. DLBs can be used to make connections with the curriculum, allowing for a multilingual lens that can be used as a unit opener. Dual language books can be explored using an inquiry approach, whereby a conversation is instigated around culture, language, and other content. Discussions can promote metalinguistic awareness focusing on alphabet, directionality, sounds, phonemic awareness, and the like. DLBs can also be used in bilingual settings where the native language of ELL students is compared and contrasted with English or with the school's Second Language Programming, or with a language that is particularly relevant within the curriculum. Including DLBs in the classroom can also permit a curricular thematic focus, for example choosing a book about a certain animal, a moral, or a geographic context. Skills such as concept visualization and story structure analysis, as well as imagery, can be revisited through DLB reading. Using DLBs also creates the potential for cross grade buddy projects, and the likelihood of inviting a guest reader includes school–community interaction. The very nature of DLB reading invites the targeting of a variety of authentic audiences and encourages student writing, publishing, and sharing (Bernhard et al., 2008).

Conclusion and summary remarks

I began this research project posing the question: How can dual language books promote transculturalism and multilingual play in the classroom to allow all participants to better appreciate and understand transcultural identities? The dual language books provided an occasion to showcase a methodology that allowed student participants and the guest readers to answer this question in a real and participatory manner. They interacted with the texts and, in fact, the specific nature of the DLBs used gave rise to extraordinary conversations around transculturalism and identity.

Student participants' use of multilingual play clearly demonstrated the power the DLBs had in engaging the literacy process far beyond the traditional practise of reading books solely for the purpose of understanding the words. The juxtaposition of the languages and the readers embodied the richness of text and culture, and the use of technology enabled the guest readers to interact visually with the text and the student participants. The role of the teacher also changed, transcending that of an instructor of literacy into more of a facilitator. The teacher's role became to provide opportunity to point out various characteristics of the English language compared to the other languages being read, drawing student participants' attention to the different sounds of both languages, alphabet formation, and the like.

The methodology used in this research project mandated that books were read to the student participants in French/English, Punjabi/English, and Urdu/English. This process highlighted the innovative nature of this type of reading, removing the traditional, linear progress of reading words, and replacing it with an opportunity to expose the student participants to a richer, more culturally diverse resource to begin their journey to literacy. It gave the student participants a non-judgmental ambience in which they could relax, ask questions, play with the words they found interesting, and explore the diverse cultural richness of the texts, all the while affirming identity and leveraging cultural and linguistic repertoires and expanding language awareness for all participants.

Using technology and resources, such as Google translate, Google images, and online databases/encyclopaedia fosters an inquiry-based mindset in students. If a particular word is repeated throughout the book, students can ask the guest speaker to elucidate and then search for images online. Such investigative practice extends students' thinking through technology. Conducting research online is an essential tool in the toolbox for student inquiry. If needed or desired, teachers can plan a mini lesson on how to find reliable resources, what kind of research can be done to

supplement interviews conducted at home, and how to present the show and tell online (Prezi, PowerPoint, and blogs are good examples). The possibilities are manifold, and students can be given a short list of reliable resources before they begin. It would be important to ensure that this list has multilingual resources and includes as many sites as possible. Sites that cater to multiple languages include Newsela, which has features allowing articles to be delivered in Spanish and English. PBS has multiple bilingual resources as well. The power of such work lies in incorporating technology in dynamic ways, so students can live linguistic experiences in different forms accompanied by sounds, images, and texts.

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