Cultural Dialogue as Identity-Work

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I don't want to feel out of place (pauses, searching for the "right" words). *I don't want to have my difference hinder me. But, help me if anything.* So, I want to express myself so they can understand me—so, that I can communicate.

But, in Jamaica, when I was a little kid, you always heard crazy little things when you're a kid (laughs). And, you're like: "Oh, they act like this, and they do this. They're so silly: They spell color without the u." And they didn't necessarily seem to make it a bad thing to be that way, but it was understood that we were different. *And, I liked being different. I liked being Jamaican.*

And, so I got here and um . . . It's like *it didn't seem that weird.* And, then I was worried that it doesn't seem that weird because *I'm LIKE THEM!* So, when I lost my accent, I was worried that I would lose being Jamaican. *I was afraid that I'd lose my identity.* (LeeAnn [pseudonym])

In many ways, the above vignette from an interview with LeeAnn, a first-generation Caribbean immigrant high-school student, reflects issues of identity, literacy, and culture in the contemporary classroom. For youth like LeeAnn, migration involves more than a physical movement from her native country of Jamaica to the United States. Migration is more than a geographical concept; rather, migration represents the social repositioning and cultural negotiation that take place across Home

spaces (i.e., native and adopted countries, societies, and identity groups). With the physical relocation of migration come demands that migrants renegotiate and redefine the notion of H/home (McLean, 2010). Similar to Gee's (1999) notion of (big D, little D) D/discourse, I offer the concept of H/home to make a distinction between and show interrelations among the native Home, the adopted or host country, and the residential local communities that immigrant youth negotiate. Immigrants or newcomers to sociocultural contexts are compelled to address and respond to multiple contexts that span host (the United States), Home (native country), and home (households in the host country) settings.

Each social context has its inherent cultural resources (social networks, psychological and cultural models) represented in its literacy practices, texts, discourses, values, and ideologies. With migration comes the work of unpacking complex and sometimes different ways of knowing and being. In attempting to understand immigrant adolescents' identity-making practices, it is important to see the young person as belonging to local and global contexts. For these adolescents, their literacy practices span transnational spaces, each with its respective ways of knowing and being that include language use, social group memberships, ideologies, and cultural models. As members of and active participants in transnational spaces, young immigrants engage in literacies in ways that reflect their critical use of various cultural resources to negotiate diverse cultural contexts and to frame their identities and literate practices. Because individuals shape and are shaped by discursive practices, cultural resources, and social structures, when migrant youth move within and across contexts, the youth are engaging in dialogue. Dialogue requires young persons to move beyond mere passive reaction to situations, events, and contexts. Instead, the youth must critically negotiate D/discourses (Gee, 1996), contexts, and their inherent cultural resources. The negotiation of these D/discourses and contexts is identity-work.

In this chapter, I look at the social nature of learning through a lens that sees literacy as social practice. Drawing on the notion of identity and literacy as socially situated (Gee, 1991, 1996; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984), I explore the concept of cultural dialogue as the active and critical negotiation of spaces and resources that takes into account the multiple social contexts (public and private, physical and virtual) that immigrant youth inhabit and the ways in which social forces shape the young person's literacy practices and identities. In the final section, I discuss possibilities for classrooms as sites for cultural dialogue where a culturally responsive pedagogy (Delpit, 1988, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994) creates opportunities for a greater valuing of learners' respective cultural resources as a defining character of the 21st-century classroom.

LITERACY AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

A critical look at contemporary society reveals the complex and diverse knowledge bases, communication and meaning-making tools, and practices that are increasingly becoming an integral part of the way in which we learn and interact. Language and literacy, and meaning-making and communication are no longer confined to traditional formal languages and printed text (Collins & Blot, 2003). Modern-day society with its digital technology and relatively fast-paced and easy flow of information and movement of peoples has allowed for a reconceptualizing of literacy. A broadening of the traditional notions of literacy opens up opportunities for greater valuing of diverse individuals, their practices, and the contexts in which meaning-making occurs. Literacy has now moved beyond a narrow print-centric conception (Goody & Watt, 1968; Olson, 1977/1994) to a more ideological and socially situated perspective (Gee, 1996; New London Group, 2000) that acknowledges literacy practices as multiple forms of texts, communication, and social relations that are based on sociocultural and linguistic diversity.

Literacy is now seen as a social and cultural practice (Delpit, 1988; Gee, 1991; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984) that is situated in individuals' local contexts, environments, and communities, and includes individuals' use of and responses to multiple texts. It is here that the ideological model of literacy advocated by Brian Street and the New London Group, and, even further, multimodality (Kress, 2003) provides a broader, more inclusive view of literacy that takes into account multiple ways of knowing, and tools and modes of communication. Such a contemporary view of literacy allows educators to move away from a narrow approach to literacy, as traditional reading and writing of printed text, to *literacies* as socially and culturally situated practices and funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, & Amanti, 1995) that individuals and groups use to make meaning.

Linked to the redefinition of literacy as situated in and shaped by social contexts and interactions is Gee's (1996) view that literacy is directly tied to identity. For Gee, each specific context and its inherent literacy practices help to purposively define and confine D/discourses, group memberships, and ways of communicating. Gee (1999) defined the concept of D/discourse as "ways of acting, interacting, feeling, believing, valuing, together with other people and with various sorts of characteristic objects, symbols, tools, and technologies—to recognize yourself and others as meaning and meaningful in certain ways" (p. 7). Gee argued that literacies are "differently and distinctly shaped and transformed inside different sociocultural practices [that] have inherent and value laden,

but often different implications for what count as 'acceptable' identities, actions and ways of knowing" (p. 356). This socially situated notion of literacy suggests that persons, practices, and contexts are inextricably linked and directly shape individuals' identities.

LITERACY AS DIVERSITY

Implied in the expanded view of literacy is the acknowledgement that there are diverse ways of reading the word and the world (Freire, 1987). For Freire, individuals respond to all texts and contexts out of their own experiences, literacies, and worldviews. The movement away from a single form and practice of literacy to an approach that values multiple texts, practices, and modes also demands simultaneous revisioning of the concept of diversity. In accepting that individuals and groups make sense of and represent the world in different ways, I am acknowledging a diversity-as-norm (Genishi & Dyson, 2009) framework where literacies—multiple as opposed to single—signal diversity rather than homogeneity. In addition, the valuing of many practices and representations cannot be separated from the individuals and groups who practice such literacies. As suggested by Genishi and Dyson, individuals' backgrounds and experiences play critical roles in people's literacy practices.

Particularly in the context of schooling, certain literacy practices are given legitimacy while others are devalued. Ethnographic and historical research on schooled literacy (Collins & Blot, 2003; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Heath, 1983) have highlighted what Collins and Blot refer to as a particular institutional negotiation of approved genres of reading and writing in correct forms of language, a mode of contemporary power connected to dynamics of subjectivity and identity formation. All socio-historic and economic contexts and linguistic forms are not necessarily valued and legitimized. From Heath's (1983) seminal work *Ways with Words*, which looked at divergent literacy practices and their connections with social class and school literacy, to more recent research (Delpit, 1996), we see that multiple ways of knowing are not always acknowledged or validated in schools. Heath's ethnographic research on community literacy socialization practices in the home and school found that when home literacy mirrored the practices valued in school, it increased the opportunities for children's academic success. Similarly, Delpit's (1996) research on linguistic diversity in the classroom highlights the disconnection between the language practices used by students and their communities and the politically popular dialect of Standard English accepted in school. According to Delpit, forcing speakers to monitor their language typically produces silence. In such contexts, even if there are

opportunities for dialogue, the very language that is used or valued can in fact shut down dialogue. For some groups, particularly those within an historical and social hierarchy, socialization, assimilation, and adaptation of new social spaces bring with them the tensions of changes in identity (Fanon, 1967; Gee, 1996; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

SITUATING IDENTITY

One way of exploring and representing identity is through the use of language as a way of placing oneself in relation to others. Holland et al. (1998) offered important approaches to understanding the concept of identity, which the authors defined as the fluid interconnections between the intimate and public venues of social practice. The individual's view of self is intimately linked to his or her relationships and group memberships. The persons with whom the individual interacts help define who the individual is and, by extension, who the individual is not. This view of the world implies that, as persons engage in various social practices, they make meaning and construct identities in response to their experiencing of the specific social worlds.

Through language, knowledge is constructed collaboratively, and any culture embeds meanings and values that frame articulations, understandings, and projects that constitute a way of life (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Gergen, 1995; Goldberg, 1993; Hruby, 2001). From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, meaning-making occurs through active participation in collective activities that are mediated by cultural tools (Galda & Beach, 2001; Wenger, 2004; Wertsch, 1998). This view suggests that all meaning-making involves active, contextual, collaborative, and reciprocal construction of knowledge. Identity-construction becomes a process that involves negotiating and organizing self around discourses and practices with the aid of cultural resources and relationships (Holland et al., 1998).

Individuals' identities—their sense of who they are in the world—are, therefore, always being coconstructed in collaboration with their historical, social, and cultural contexts. In situating identity, it is helpful to see an individual's sense of self as taking on private and public dimensions. The private or intimate identity can be found in the native D/discourses and practices. The public dimension of self can be found in the achieved identities, as well as the practices and labels proscribed or imposed by the dominant culture that inform the broader social contexts in an individual's life. Depending on the context in which an individual is interacting, the respective private or public dimensions of an individual's identities are foregrounded.

The process and product of identity-construction and the meanings coming out of events and activities "reflect in their various negotiated structures, outcomes that people have fastened on between themselves in history as important for social, political or economic reasons" (Shotter, 1995, p. 44). This sociocultural view of identity also allows for an exploration of the individual, the social, and the cultural layers either simultaneously or separately, with the understanding that, while one may be in the foreground, the others are still present and influential (Matthews & Cobb, 2005). The intersection of literacy and identity reinforces the view that all communication is grounded in social situations and that the lived experience shapes how meaning is made and what meaning is made.

CULTURAL DIALOGUE

The notion of the dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981) is based on the key assumption that meaning-making is a process that involves the active and dynamic interaction and transaction of the multiple and diverse meanings and intentions of the speaker and the listener through language. Kalman (2004) stated that dialogue has to do with mutual shaping of meanings between speakers sharing a specific communicative context:

> What is said to the listener is shaped by the participants' biographies, their past encounters and conversations, and their purpose for interacting. It is also a way of positioning oneself in a community of speakers or in this case, of readers and writers. (p. 255)

Through this social dialogic process, there are the formulation, expression, and impression of meaning. The meanings that are given, taken, and made are filled with the speaker's sociohistoric ideologies. If the speaker intends at any point to make himself or herself understood, then he or she uses language to orient toward and impose personal ideologies. Bakhtin (1981) argued that because language is populated by intentions, words are not neutral; rather, words are contextualized by experiences, purposes, and worldviews. In rejecting the innocence of language, Bakhtin stated that the word and, by extension meaning, "taste[s] of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intention" (p. 293). I argue that openness to the harmony and dissonance of diverse words, worlds, and intentions offers possibilities for mutual shaping of meanings.

Identity-work takes place within and across the multiple cultural and social spaces that migrant youth straddle. Identity in this context can be

viewed as taking place within an individual's private view of self in native groups and the related practices, and public practices (local and global). I offer the concept of cultural dialogue as a way to represent the active negotiation of multiple and often competing cultural models of the home, Home, and host environments. According to Gee (1999), "cultural models tell people what is typical or normal from the perspective of a particular Discourse" (p. 720). In taking this view, I am suggesting that each context has its shared and accepted ways of being in the world. As newcomers to any given context, individuals are required to learn and engage with the D/discourses that are valued within that specific context.

In this case, the immigrant adolescent is compelled to negotiate multiple contexts that span host (the United States), Home (Caribbean nations), and home (households in the United States) settings. The young person's D/discourses highlight her fluid movements across multiple and often contested social spaces. LeeAnn's comments in the opening vignette highlight such tensions: Her relocation to the U.S. forced her to confront conflicting worldviews and find ways to negotiate the perceptions, expectations, and practices of her various H/home spaces. In the recognition, negotiation, and practice of ways to cross and connect the various sociocultural boundaries, literacies, and worldviews, cultural dialogue occurs. The range of responses and levels of participation across the host and H/home societies would suggest that this immigrant youth is consciously and actively engaging in cultural dialogue.

To get a richer sense of the immigrant adolescents' perceptions of themselves, it is important to see their lives and their worlds not as one-dimensional, but in flux, and as complex and dynamic contexts (Bakhtin, 1981). Because adolescents' various contexts are not discrete, adolescents draw on their collective experiences across the multiple spaces. Dyson (2003) offered the view that negotiating social spaces involves "processes of transporting and transforming material across symbolic and social borders" (p. 10). Thus, any attempt to understand how immigrant adolescents adjust to school and life in the United States in general needs to attend to the social, geographic, and cultural border-negotiation and transformation taking place.

CULTURAL DIALOGUE AS IDENTITY-WORK

With thumbs moving deftly across the keyboard, LeeAnn quickly records her latest track and field performance statistics and workout routine on her cell phone before returning to the open journal with her musings for a poem inspired by the recent Dan Brown novel that she just finished reading. Poem on pause, she

docks her phone to her desktop computer while she downloads the SAT prep module online. Pulsating Reggaeton fills the air as she posts a comment on her older sister's Facebook page and checks e-mail, her eyes periodically following the close-captioned scenes on the muted TV. An alert sounds, and she quickly begins a Google chat with a friend in the Caribbean. Patois fills the text box on the computer screen. The phone rings. Quick glance at the caller ID: her classmate, Kristie. She responds in Standard English to the caller's question: "What am I doing? Nothing much. Just the usual." (Field notes, July 26, 2007)

In light of increasing migration trends and cross-cultural exchanges, an individual's public and private identities and D/discourses cannot be separated from his or her contexts. Consider LeeAnn, the Caribbean immigrant student described here and introduced at the start of the chapter. LeeAnn spoke of the challenges of having to negotiate her identity across her native and adopted homes. Yet, as seen in the above vignette recorded in my field notes observations of LeeAnn at home, LeAnn moves across multiple identities and affinity groups. She is simultaneously athlete, student, reader, poet or writer, bilingual youth, viewer, and speaker. Within the physical home space, she crosses dual linguistic codes (Patois and English), while navigating visual and semiotic modes. Her home space becomes a site where she constructs her identities mediated by digital and technological literacies.

The literacy events described in the vignette above highlight the complexities of the intersections among literacy, culture, and identity. LeeAnn's H/home is simultaneously local, global, private, public, physical, and virtual. Based on my observations and interviews with LeeAnn, her digital literacy plays a pivotal role in facilitating movement across and connections with H/home. Through digital technology, LeeAnn can communicate with family and friends in the United States and in other countries. Her ability to connect with persons in different environments, spaces, cultures, in addition to the cultures, resources, and practices of her local context help to globalize her local context. In this sense, the Freireian notion of the adolescent's reading of the word and the world becomes much more than the immediate physical space or traditional print literacy, it extends to the global. The notion of the H/home in which youth live reflects the physical and material world, the geographic (local and virtual), and the practices produced and consumed through the individuals' participation in these worlds. Henry (2001), in her study on Caribbean female immigrant adolescent students, argued that immigrant adolescents cross physical and psychological boundaries in

traveling north to the mainland. Here, digital technology affords LeeAnn the space and support to travel across her H/homes. However, to even begin to find ways to cross sociocultural boundaries, she must first recognize the D/discourses and cultural models of her native and adopted homes and use her digital literacies to facilitate this transition.

Applying the concept of a cultural dialogue becomes a way of to think about the literacy practices of adolescents as they work through the challenges of new schooling and new social and cultural contexts. In examining the ways immigrant youth go about their lives, I am suggesting that young persons are actively negotiating multiple and sometimes conflicting practices and worldviews. For example, Ogbu (1995) and Hintzen (2002) stated that immigrants arrive in the United States with previously learned cultural values and acquired cultural ways of behaving and communicating, which Hintzen refers to as "cultural baggage" (p. 10). Because each society has its own cultural models, new or prospective members have to be socialized into their adopted communities' sociocultural practices. The socialization process involves coming to understand the cultural models, values, and worldviews within each social context. Identity-construction for immigrant youth involves strategic negotiation of these collective values and worldviews.

By interacting with various contexts, adolescents are actively engaging in addressing and responding to discourses across geographic and sociocultural spaces (Bakhtin, 1981). The movement and transplanting involved in migration create cross-cultural, intercultural, and transnational spaces that compel adolescents to actively respond to multiple and sometimes conflicting cultural models. More importantly, young persons' sense of themselves, the choices that they make regarding their literacy practices and identity groups, are in direct response to these intersecting spaces and their sociocultural networks (physical and virtual, local and global).

According to Freire (2003), "Dialogue is a way of knowing," and he characterized dialogue by saying, "I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing" (p. 7). When an individual code-switches and participates in multiple identity and discourse groups, he or she is demonstrating a tacit awareness that the meaning-making process and communication are inherently social. The adolescent learner is not only responding to the individual or internally persuasive (private) discourse but is also aware of the pull of the broader authoritative (public) discourse of the wider group. Communication and meaning-making come out of the dialogic and dynamic movement between and across the individual and group, the private and public, local and global. Engaging in cultural dialogue in

classrooms, communities, and wider societies demands a willingness to enter that tension-filled space where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide (Bakhtin, 1981). Within this heteroglossic space to which Bakhtin refers, individuals are forced to confront, acknowledge, and call into question the range of discourses, values, and privileges afforded to certain meaning-making practices. However, the conscious decisions and acts of engagement, compliance, and/or resistance are all part of the dialogic process and product of communication.

CULTURAL DIALOGUE IN CONTEXT

> Jamaica influences me all the time. When I learn, I'll pull something from what I learned in Jamaica. So, I'll bring stuff from there. It is just the way I think, and how things come to me, and the ways I see things. So, it's always kind of there. I'm always thinking about it—I'm always connecting it to where I am now. From where I'm from, to where I am now. I'm always trying to bring connections in the way I think, how I think, and what I think. (LeeAnn)

Any framing of cultural dialogue must take into account the fact that the process and practice of meaning-making and identity-construction are situated and relational—interdependent on and responsive to individuals' lived experiences and cultural competences. What this means for learning is that how individuals come to understand or make meaning cannot be separated from their contexts, experiences, and relationships (Gergen, 1995; Sfard, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). In many ways, LeeAnn's reflection on her learning process represents the ongoing dialogue she has with her H/home spaces. This adolescent draws directly on what she has learned in her various H/homes, as she negotiates the challenges of migration and social and cultural transition. To make sense of the present experiences, LeeAnn tries to make connections with prior knowledge and former local contexts and experiences in her native home. She does not experience learning in a vacuum; rather, learning and meaning-making are a dialogic process that allows her to recognize, value, and use the knowledge she brings to her adopted home.

When applied to immigrant youth, a cultural dialogue framework brings key spaces together: H/home spaces (native, adopted, and residential), schools, and communities (physical and virtual). Each space represents an important primary context in which the young person directly engages. This framework acknowledges that the nature, complexity, diversity, and salience of each space may vary in individuals'

lives. The social dynamic is further complicated because migration represents geographic and sociocultural transitions that challenge the adolescent's knowledge, literacy practices, and sense of self. As noted elsewhere (McLean, 2010), primarily, the young person's immigrant or native identity is an initial, salient aspect of his or her perceptions of self. The values and practices within the H/home contexts become resources for negotiating other social spaces.

CONTEXTUALIZING LANGUAGE

For migrant youth, language signals membership and acts as an identifier. Specific social group members are able to identify and recognize the speaker or language-user based on the individual's facility with language conventions and norms, discourses of that given context. The ability to code-switch is particularly significant for immigrant youth, as language use usually extends beyond the semantic (denotative and connotative) to include sonic (aural-oral or phonetic) and dialect (formal-informal), inherent in oral and multimodal (digital-technological) communication. In this sense, manipulation of language becomes a form of cultural empowerment.

Through language, identity shifts in context. Awareness of the power of language allows immigrant youth to access multiple affinity and identity groups. Through language, LeeAnn, the focal adolescent in this chapter, has a heightened awareness of self and group memberships. On one hand, her language positively signals her global citizenship. On the other hand, within the local context of the classroom and school, she also learns that in her new home language reinforces her status as nonmember, newcomer, and global citizen. This young person shows a dialogic awareness of herself in relation to others, and she uses language as an identity kit (Gee, 1991) to signal her membership.

Immigration moves language out of a narrow conception and singular, immediate geographic space to a broader global and international space. Yet the immigrant is often faced with the limits of the local. In one sense, language helps connect the adolescent to her heritage, but in another sense, language becomes a barrier to identity-group membership because the language is not valued. As seen with LeeAnn, language use is no longer limited to communicating with her family, teachers, peers, and fellow citizens in the native Home. While the immigrant adolescent may have competence with two codes (written and spoken Standard English and dialects of English), this competence does not necessarily ensure cultural capital in spaces outside the Home country and region. In many cases, young persons find that their pride in and respect for the language

of intimacy and the local value attached to their identity does not always garner similar respect on the global stage.

When issues of language are placed within the context of schooling and socialization, sociocultural differences in expectations between students and teachers contribute to communication breakdown and impede school learning (Au & Mason, 1981; Obidah, 1998) because the cultural models associated with language use can be seen as problematic for the immigrant learner. Take, for example, LeeAnn, who finds that being able to read and write in Standard English are not enough. The oral element becomes equally important. When LeeAnn said, "I don't want to have my difference hinder me" (quoted at the outset of this chapter), she was alluding to the fact that she recognizes the expectation that in order to achieve academic success she must silence her native tongue—that there is no place for the cultural identity reflected in her language. Such conflicting cultural models regarding the use and purposes of language pose challenges for young persons transitioning and adapting to new contexts. In research on immigrants and their children, Kirova (2007) pointed out that "language can help them to know how best to become what they may become in the new country" (p. 189). For immigrant youth, their language (standards, accents, and dialects) and how it is viewed by the members of the host country have the power to misrepresent and position them as outsiders or members of particular social groups and, by extension, to hinder their success.

PLACELESSNESS

Linked to the possible gains that come with negotiating the host society is the loss experienced in the sense of placelessness that the immigrant experiences. Placelessness, which represents the loss of meaningful connections with home and host countries, can come about as a result of migration. According to Foner (2005), for an immigrant, place matters. I extend the concept of place to include the physical or geographical relocation but also to encompass relational and virtual dimensions. In thinking about immigrants, the geographic relocation is central. However, for a social relocation to occur there needs to be meaningful connections that help positively ground the immigrant within the host country. For example, LeeAnn and her family made the physical journey from Jamaica to the United States more than 4 years ago with the purpose of making a metropolitan city in southern United States their new home. However, as illustrated in the vignettes, LeeAnn's physical movement to her adopted home does not necessarily equate with automatic or seamless acceptance by and identification with the host society. Similarly,

the family's decision to leave Jamaica and LeeAnn's subsequent language adaptations may also be viewed by the Home community as LeeAnn's lack of identification with Home.

Fanon (2004) made the point that as long as individuals live in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be the oppressor, liberation from oppression is impossible. Here, Fanon argued that successful adaptation to a new context places the individual in a position of self-inflicting oppression. For example, code switching to a U.S. accent helps to identify the young person as "belonging" to the United States. However, for LeeAnn, "belonging" and identification with her adopted home place her in apparent conflict with her native Home, since adaptation of native language or adoption of the language of the adopted Home signals betrayal and/or loss of native identity. LeeAnn's change of accent suggests a rejection of her ethnic, cultural, and national identities—something that the newcomer adolescent is forced to grapple with privately and publicly. Adaptation results in the silencing of the young person's voice through the loss of public space to practice aspects of her identities in the form of language and cultural knowledge.

Migration puts the newcomer in the precarious position of being *without place* and of continually trying to find place and space. LeeAnn found herself having to give up not only her language, and some cultural practices in order to belong, but also the physical geographic space of native Home. She no longer lived in her native Home, nor did she interact intimately with the social and political landscapes. This physical, and to some extent sociocultural, distancing signals the magnitude of the loss of place that such young persons experience.

The tensions of possibly no longer being seen as belonging to the native Homes are heightened by the adolescents' awareness that, in many ways, they are not seen as belonging to the U.S. despite efforts to assimilate or adapt. By extension, immigrant adolescents are often unable to fully express their native voice, yet are unwilling to completely deny their native voice and embrace the mainstream cultural models of the U.S. Consequently, I argue that these youth experience a sense of placelessness because they are no longer viewed as fully belonging to the native or adopted Homes.

FACILITATING CULTURAL DIALOGUE

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Facilitating cultural dialogue means allowing students' uncompromised voices to enter, critique, query, challenge, and alter conceptions of

school knowledge as knowledge "taught" to them (Obidah, 1998). If learning is constructed in dialogue, then the notion of a "culturally responsive pedagogy" is one where the learners' backgrounds are central to their learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2002), and the learners' literate currency (Obidah, 1998) is valued. Students' interests, background, and competencies must become the bases for learning in the classroom. According to Ladson-Billings (1994), and Delpit (1998), culturally responsive teaching offers a way of opening up communication across cultural worlds by acknowledging and addressing the cultural needs and literacy practices that all learners bring to the classroom.

As shown by the experiences of the focal participant, LeeAnn, however, this movement toward creating opportunities for dialogue in the classroom is not without its tensions. While researchers and theorists (Freire, 1970; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Hooks, 1994) advocate an approach to classrooms, teaching, and learning that is dialogic and that incorporates meaningfully the learners' sociocultural contexts, making space for these practices within the traditional classroom is fraught with challenges. In multisite research of teachers entering teacher education programs, Freedman and Ball (2004) noted:

> Teachers bring with them very limited perspectives on what literacy is, what it means for a person to be literate, and ways they can strategically use the diverse language and literacy practices that students bring to the classroom as a resource. (p. 12)

Obidah (1998) supported this view when she stated:

> Every day they come to school they enter uncomfort zones— zones where their own thoughts about the knowledge they learn in school is mostly challenged and often dismissed; and zones where the act of challenging the long-held beliefs of the teacher is potentially an act with very dire consequences for them. (p. 68)

As Freedman and Ball (2004) pointed out, a diverse classroom population brings a range of perspectives and ideologies to the classroom. In interpreting texts and contexts, learners do so from and in response to cultural and ideological forces. A sociocultural approach to classrooms can help create a fluid, active, and elastic environment that provides opportunities to engage in discussion, encourages a range of voices through the authoring of responses, and is open to the (re)authoring of meanings. How each learner gives, takes, and makes meaning depends not only on the environment in which learning occurs but also on the

experiences he or she brings to the context. Within this reconceptualized social space of the classroom, knowledge is not static or fixed. Rather, the classroom must be seen as a fluid and dynamic experience that allows all individuals to interact with it based on their personal background and literacies, and, in return, offers a response. Learning becomes what Steffe (1995) called a dynamic cultural apprenticeship—a "dynamic process of internalization of shared social behavior" (p. 507). Steffe stated that this "internalization" is more than social transmission of preformed knowledge, but involves building of bridges from personal concepts to cultural concepts with the assistance of other members of the culture.

CLASSROOMS IN CULTURAL DIALOGUE

From a Bakhtinian perspective, meaningful learning will not take place unless students are invited to see themselves as active participants in a social dialogue where all words and worlds interanimate, where beliefs are integral to the classroom context, and where diverse perspectives and practices are supported and not sidelined in favor of a single "truth." In arguing for students to engage as readers, writers, and literate individuals in multiple discourse communities, the classroom must become a space where multiple voices, texts, and perspectives can coexist, transact, and engage in dialogue. Valdes (2004) stated that "students must be encouraged to see themselves as having something to say, as taking part in a dialogue with teachers, with students in their classroom, with students in their school, with members of their communities" (p. 88). In making the case for dialogue in the classroom through talk and discussion, Peyton-Young (2004) suggested establishing classroom environments that encourage an open exchange of ideas where students who feel free to express themselves. However, the practice of talk and discussion is not as open or seamless as Peyton-Young's examination might suggest when faced with the power dynamics of the traditional cultural models of schooling and learners' diverse linguistic experiential backgrounds. As experienced by LeeAnn, oral-aural literacy practices, while having potential for development of self-concept, in that same classroom context, can also become a perceived threat to the minority culture, language, and identity when the sonic and phonetic language of the individual is misrepresented, labeled, or not valued. The text of the classroom, in relation to language and its inherent values, can confine and define what and whose voices are heard and the ways in which these voices are understood. Classrooms and schools must foster openness toward and create opportunities for classrooms that legitimize students' linguistic reservoirs, multimodal literacies, and sociocultural backgrounds.

DIVERSITY-AS-NORM PRACTICE

Similar to Genishi and Dyson (2009), I advocate for a revisioning of current learning and teaching spaces where teachers recognize a diversity-as-norm approach and see immigrant adolescent learners as multiliterate, cosmopolitan citizens. Such an approach does not come from a position of expectation that adolescents will adhere to a single standard. Rather, classroom interaction is characterized by "normalcy of difference" (Genishi & Dyson, 2009) around multispatiality, multitemporality, pedagogical flexibility, and spaces for adolescent voices. As Gavelek and Raphael (1996) reminded us:

> Language and language practices are crucial to student's intellectual, social and emotional development. But it is not simply the language practices that are inherently important. Rather, what matters greatly are the ways these different language opportunities connect among each other, the ways teachers mine these opportunities for their instructional potential, and the ways students come to understand that language is one of the most important tools of our culture. (p. 91)

Values, beliefs, and linguistic and cultural symbols place the immigrant or minority group learner in a highly vulnerable position if the cultural resources are not valued in the classroom.

The conception of the classroom offered by Morson (2004) as a discursive space where meanings are always in flux and teaching and learning are reciprocal and simultaneous processes is worth considering. This would mean that, for control, power, and authority to be fluid, the teacher, unlike in the traditional models and approaches, is no longer seen as the font of all knowledge to be transferred to or transmitted onto the *tabula rasa* but rather, is seen as someone who offers one out of many truths, forms of knowledge, and ways of being. For learning to be engaging, it must connect with learners' lives. When learners' voices are not allowed to become part of the active dialogue, the resulting conceptions of self and what it means to learn are consequently negatively constructed and shaped by such experiences. As Fecho (1998) so aptly cautioned:

> Until students are actively engaged in critique about the language and literacy that is so much a part of their lives, they will

    be at the mercy of those educational tools rather than masters of
    their complex, but much rewarding craft. (p. 98)

Classrooms and schools must become places that move beyond the view
of immigrant learners as lacking. Instead, teacher educators and teachers
must also engage in cultural dialogue by moving toward seeing immi-
grant learners as world citizens and sociocultural experts who navigate
and move across local, national, and international educational systems
and cultural practices, and who can practice this knowledge in class-
rooms. A culturally responsive pedagogy requires reconceptualizing who
learners are, how students learn, and what learning is valued. Such an
approach to pedagogical practice acknowledges and validates student dif-
ferences and advocates for a cultural integrity through the creative mod-
ification of curriculum, teaching, and learning practices and interaction.
Does this mean that we need a common language for difference, reci-
procity, transaction, and dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981; Geertz, 1983; Knoeller,
2004; Rosenblatt, 1995)? I would think that what there needs to be is a
welcoming of multiple voices, multiple ways of voicing—where "several
consciousnesses meet as equals and engage in dialogue" (Bakhtin, 1981,
p. 238). To do so, however, there must be a social space that affords these
possibilities and that approaches teaching and learning as valid opportu-
nities for individuals to think about identity and language and literacy in
more meaningful ways than they would otherwise have done.

CONCLUSION

Identity-work occurs within and across the language and literacy practices
of H/home as immigrant youth engage in dialogue with competing
D/discourses, values, and cultural models. This cultural dialogue, though
not without tensions, affords young persons opportunities to strategically
find ways to rearticulate and renegotiate their H/home spaces based on
their individual needs, literacy practices, and cultural resources.

In this chapter, I have argued for a perspective that considers learning
as a dialogic process that actively engages multiple and diverse perspec-
tives and experiences. Meaningful learning values and builds on the
range of knowledge, public and private identities, backgrounds, and
responses that learners bring to their social contexts. Any approach that
ignores or suppresses such a dynamic dialogic process of identity work
and meaning-making runs the risk of not fully engaging learners in the
world, with the world, and with each other.

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