

EXPLORING LITERACY PRACTICES IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Abstract: There has been a consensus in research and practices that social and cultural aspects of lives contribute to literacy development, particularly in second language learning. The conception of literacy has been shifting from the lens of formal literacy learning in school settings into broader opportunities in sociocultural contexts, and some may exclusively look at the intersection between the two. In this article, I discuss the concept of continuities of literacy development and out-of-school literacy practices by carefully interpreting empirical research that have been done in the last decade. The discussion in this article enriches the notion of literacy learning that diverse settings of literacy practices, parents' role, and various available texts are significant predictors to the continuities of literacy development. I argue that ESL learners independently mediate their own literacy development either at school or community by taking advantages of rich opportunities available at the environment, which explained novice-expert relationship, hybridity, and intertextuality.

Keywords: literacy practices, family literacy, language socialization, ESL

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A growing body of research has informed the continuities of language and literacy practices across spaces or contexts including schools (Cardinale, 1999; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Chiu, 1999; Heath, 1983; Heer, 2016; Larson, 1995), community-based programs (London, Gurantz, & Norman, 2011; Tan & Richardson, 2006; White-Farnham, 2012), and religious based community programs (Chao & Mantero, 2014; Duranti, Ochs, & Ta'ase, 1995, Garcia-Sanchez, 2014, & Moore, 2006, 2008). Other studies have also focused on the

significant role of parents or adults in providing opportunities for children's literacy skill development (Lily; 2011; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Wiseman, 2009). Those studies hold the premise that literacy practices are never impartial; it is closely tied to larger sociocultural contexts, societal system, which is dynamic over times.

Frankel, Becker, Rowe, and Pearson (2016) argue that the conception of reading involves interaction between the reader and the text, the reader's knowledge about the world, and the context in and through which the reading occurs. In school settings, literacy practices may vary across disciplines and structure of the class, including how the teacher interact with the students over texts, how students learn, and what it means to read in school. However, the conceptualization of reading situated in social practices requires students to engage in reading practices beyond school's life like in community, neighborhood, and home setting. As such, it is crucial to look at what empirical studies have discovered on literacy practices out of school setting. I argue that a growing number of empirical studies on literacy practices involving out of school settings have not yet considered together as a body of knowledge, particularly studies that focus on ESL learners. This literature review is then served to continue intellectual dialogues on such issues.

Since experts and researchers have taken sociocultural perspective of language learning in addition to cognitive and psychological point of view, it solidified the focus of language on cultural reproduction and transformation. Thus, it placed language as a mediating tool for literacy development, which can be investigated by means of social interactions and participation structures (Duff & Anderson, 2015). This idea informs scholars to consider literacy development in terms of everyday practices. In the paradigm of sociocultural perspective, literacy practices refer to a course of social practices that can be inferred as events mediated by written text (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). It may include the construction of knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings correlated with the use of text in particular time and space (Gee, 1990; Street, 2000).

Through continued literacy practices, e.g. at home and community, children and other novice newcomers may have opportunities to develop their social and cognitive growth, particularly by their changing patterns of socialization through and into oral and written language use (Heath, 2010). They might renegotiate and challenge their new cultural perspectives, identities, as well as language skills when they socialize in heterogeneous contexts (Garrett & Ba-

quedano-Lopez, 2002). For example, Bartlett (2007) studied transnational students' educational trajectories shaped by social relations and identity formations. She argued that social interactions across classroom contexts and students' perspectives on their own identity broaden opportunities for English language learning in both spoken and written forms over times.

Yi (2007) who studied Korean students' composing practices outside of school also suggests that diversity and richness involved with multiple literacies in multiple contexts play a significant role in growing and being a competent bilingual writer. A great amount of engagements with writing out of school settings enables the focus participant to experience swift, constant, and comfortable multiple literacy practices in multiple sites and genre of texts. Furthermore, Hull and Schultz (2001) argued that looking at out-of-school settings to support successful learning either in terms of physical spaces or times does not mean to disregard the conceptual dimension of schools. It is rather to find the continuities from out-of-school context to the school context or the other way around.

This review, as such, seeks to conceptualize the continuities of literacy development by considering out-of-school literacy practices and opportunities available at the environment for ESL learners to develop their literacy skills. The framing is derived from a corpus of empirical research that were considered together as a body of knowledge. Theoretically, this review informs and enriches the notion of literacy practices, particularly in the discussion of family literacy environment that language and literacy learning are temporally, socially, and spatially situated and contingent, and that novices or ESL learners also independently mediate their own socialization into academic and community by their own ways (Duff & Anderson, 2015; Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002; Heath, 1983, 2010; & The New London Group, 1996).

The review began with discussion on ESL literacy practices under the concept of novice-expert relationship, hybridity, and intertextuality, which guide the search process, analysis, and interpretation of studies published in the last decade. I then review studies organized in three themes: diverse settings as family investment, parents' role, and text forms and sources. These themes emerged based on the coding analysis of the studies that out of school literacy practices mostly revolve around multiple settings, the role of parents, and multiple modalities. Finally, I conclude by considering implications for educational practices and directions for future research.

CONTEXT FOR ESL LITERACY PRACTICES

As mentioned previously, literacy practices are technically defined as day-to-day activities of learners that take into account the values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships correlated with the use of texts in particular time and space. Since it involves activities around people, texts, and languages, I draw upon the concept of novice-expert relationship, hybridity, and intertextuality to explore diverse settings of literacy practices and opportunities available at the environment that help ESL learners develop literacy skills. Those three concepts are based on the underpinning perspective of reading as a social practice, which goes beyond different socialization, cultural capital and language use.

Novice-Expert Relationship

In the literatures of language socialization, Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez (2002) defined socialization as “the process through which a child or other novice acquires the knowledge, orientation, and practices that enable him or her to participate effectively and appropriately in the social life of a particular community” (p. 339). Departing from this definition, family status itself has been central to the issue of what forms a community, which then leads to the necessity of adopting family literacy related activities (Heath, 2010).

Immigrant or refugee families, for example, have a difficult time struggling with their economic or financial conditions that make it even harder for them to learn a new language and assimilate into a new culture. Not only are these parents financially struggling in building life in a new environment, but they are also struggling in supporting their children’s schooling and language skills (Garcia-Sanchez, 2014; Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2015). In Bourdieu’s notion of habitus (as cited in Erickson, 2004), social status of family treats different cultural capital in which lower middle class have more difficulties with social arrangements, language use, and academic content than the upper middle class. This condition challenges who counts as an expert and a novice in the interaction between an adult and a child, particularly in a family. Is it parents who are the experts that mediate their children literacy learning or their children?

Heath (2010), furthermore, defined family as a single space of the home of a student where biological heterosexual parents are the responsible caregivers. In a broader sense, family is “both a legal institution and a social achievement” in which “talk” has a prominent role in its formation (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik,

2015, p. 88). In the language socialization paradigm, family is where children or “novice’s agency” are recognized to have social interaction with parents as “experts”. A child is considered a novice because they are acquiring and learning microgenesis of communicative competences through interactions with older or a more experienced person (Garrett, 2008). Duff and Anderson (2015) called more experienced persons as mentors reflecting on Vygotskian principles and constructs of community, and more knowledgeable others, including old-timers’ peers, teachers, tutors, or caregivers. To this end, the terms are used interchangeably and refer to the same concept of relationship of interactions.

This novice-expert relationship is reciprocal, bidirectional, or multidirectional, in which novices are not always dependent on the expert. Experts or mentors also learn new perspectives, skills, and practices from the novices, and that interaction among peers or other adults can also count as expert-novice role (Duff & Anderson, 2015). It is in the essence that socialization comes into play where “novices acquire the knowledge, orientations, and practices that enable him or her to participate effectively and appropriately in the social life of a particular community” (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002, p. 339).

Hybridity

As the socialization of ESL learners engages dynamic cultural practices, which typically take place in two different cultures and traditions, the process of hybridization becomes substantial to the ongoing and changing repertoire of individuals and communities (Rogoff, Moore, Correa-Chavez, & Dexter, 2014). Hybridization can include both hybrid language use and practices where expert and novice create a third space of learning, and where none of dominant practices and languages are privileged (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 1999). For example, in Garcia-Sanchez’s work (2014) with Moroccan and Spanish children in Vallenevo, high intensities of code switching are salient between Spanish and Moroccan Arabic, which is evident to dual language use. Their discursive practices are also varied in their hybrid nature, such as word play, arguing, negotiating, reciting, gossiping, and explaining game rules in both Spanish and Moroccan cultures, values, and traditions. Hybridization, thus, is part of cultural practices in which ESL learners try out their dual language use in dual cultural repertoire.

Intertextuality

Wortham (2005) argued that studying socialization by unfolding recurrent types of events between expert and novice is crucial, but it might neglect the complexities of how novices move across certain trajectories and how these trajectories are linked together. Thus, examining intertextual processes among events across time is also important in literacy socialization. In the New London Group's manifesto (1999, p. 20), intertextuality is conceptualized as making connection of meanings through the relationships to other texts (real or imaginary), text types (discourse or genres), narratives, and other modes of meaning (e.g. visual design) in varied complex ways. Understanding intertextuality then yields possible chances to unfold both individual practices and collective resources used to accomplish such practices across times.

As mentioned earlier, the main goal of this article is to review empirical studies in the last decade. I focus on out-of-school literacy practices and opportunities available at the environment that help ESL learners develop their literacy skills. My central argument is that continuities of literacy development between school, home, and community matter in a second language learning. I have construed those studies in three themes: diverse settings as family investment, parents' role, and text forms and sources. In the following, I explain each theme by considering similarities and differences across studies and make specific cautions that future researchers or practitioners should take into account.

DIVERSE SETTINGS AS FAMILY INVESTMENT

Studies have pointed out that diverse settings of literacy practices, such as school, home, and community count as a significant contributor to language and literacy development (Bialostock, 2014; Chao & Mantero, 2014; Cumming, 1991; Johnson, 2011; Johnson, 2014; London, Gurantz, & Norman, 2011; Shiffman, 2013; Tan & Richardson, 2006; White-Farnham, 2012; Wiseman, 2009). Community-based ESL program, interaction with peers, and community involvement are a range of literacy practices where students have literacy-related activities. Some interesting findings from the studies I reviewed concerning these diverse settings are discussed in the following paragraphs.

After conducting 16 months of ethnography study, Chao and Mantero (2014) found that church-based ESL program was important for immigrant families to promote literacy practices in everyday activities. Church here was a

mediator that empowered parents to improve their own literacy skills and to exercise parental authority and agency in their family literacy practices. Similarly, White-Farnham (2012) interviewed 6 women whose children were K12 ESL learners. He found that the participants actively engaged in Red Hat Society in California to incorporate their literacy practices at home with their children with their own professional success and personal interest of being literate women that can make broader personal impacts.

Another study by Tan and Richardson (2006) found that students' literacy practices outside of home and outside of school are usually about building friendships with their peers, and they are closely related to adolescent's identity like going fishing, going shopping, and having online chats. This finding was derived from a qualitative study of 31 tenth ESL graders in Penang, Malaysia, which investigated students' short messages as literacy practices. These findings are crucial in informing how those practices would contribute to the success of school literacy. In terms of online chats, for example, although the form and content of the chats were not related to schooling, the researchers suggested that students' expressive skills and engagements through this chats should be linked to literacy practices at school.

In school settings, Johnson (2011) investigated secondary school students' perception on young adult's literature through a survey analysis. From this study he concluded that any sites in which the students learn young adult literatures influenced their perception or beliefs, and intellectual abilities. In addition, multiple selves like adults in the environment who help them learn the materials also influenced students' thinking and abilities. However, this study suggested that regardless the materials, place and people surrounding the students were more influential for their literacy development either related to literacy skills or their thought.

Although empirical studies included in this review indicate important roles of outside of home literacy practices on students' literacy development, it cannot be concluded yet how far diverse settings of literacy practices are significant for students' ESL literacy development, particularly how those factors are beneficial for spoken and written forms of literacy. It is not only because of the wide variant of the factors, but also limited studies found in respect to this issue.

PARENTS' ROLE

Interaction between parents and their children at home, regardless of what language they use, can promote opportunities for students to improve their literacy skills (Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Chao & Mantero, 2014; Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008; Jasinski, 2012; Lily, 2011; Ngo, 2012; Shiffman, 2013; Wiseman, 2009). The interaction is crucial for both spoken and written literacy of the students. Because family is the smallest social unit, it serves as the first environment for children to learn and to develop language skills.

Wiseman (2009) conducted a five-month ethnographic study that examined family involvement in a poetry program at home of 22 eighth graders, and concluded that students whose parents have greater participation in their children's poetry project, made meaningful interaction in reading and writing with their children. This study also proved that poetry activity at home is more comfortable and safe for students and parents to engage with literacy practices. Another meaningful interaction was parents' involvement in checking their children's homework as reported by Lily (2011) who studied an African-American middle school student and members of her family during eight years of an ethnographic study. She found that low economic parents who were illiterate tend to be uninterested to their children's homework and not to have literacy-related interaction with their children. It affected the student's literacy interest and achievement across time and space.

The above studies showed that although students have entered school and have developed their knowledge in the school system, parental involvement in children's learning is still significant to improve literacy (Jasinski, 2012). Continued program for family support might be required because some parents, particularly from low economic family, have not enough knowledge on how to assist their children at home (Shiffman, 2013).

In accordance with limited knowledge of parents, Jasinski (2012) conducted a survey study involving 25 women whose children were K-12 ESL learners in Canada. He reported that parents have difficulty engaging with their children's literacy activities, such as helping their children's homework. Bokhorst-Heng's survey (2008) on 180 parents of secondary school students in Singapore also suggests the same finding. However, this suggestion remains unclear in terms of family characteristics because interaction in family is a cultural-bond activity where each family might have different cultural backgrounds and patterns of interaction (Erickson, 2004). As such, there is a need for further in-

vestigation that can describe global patterns of family interaction across cultures, so comprehensive understanding on how the interaction should be in different family can be drawn. Ethnography study seems to be more appropriate in discovering thorough and detail family characteristics as showed in Wiseman (2009) and Lily (2011).

Concerning language use during the interaction between parents and their children in home literacy activities, ESL literacy practices are determined not only by frequent use of the target language, but also by how students use their L1 literacy to move into a more sophisticated L2 literacy (Choi, 2010; Lily, 2011; London, Gurantz, & Norman, 2011; Sarroub, Pernicek, & Sweeney, 2007; Tan, 2006; Wilson, Chavez, & Anders, 2012; Yi, 2007, 2010; Yi & Hirvela, 2010). At this point, parents do not necessarily have good second language mastery. They can activate meaningful interaction with their children by using L1 to help their children's learning at home. This interaction also fits the Krashen's notion of optimal intake for second language acquisition (1981) that the more input of second language the students obtain, the better opportunities they acquire second language.

Through a case study on four Asian high school English language learners, Choi (2009) found that the hybrid use of L1 and L2 as well as multicultural materials available in both L1 and L2 not only improved students' literacy skill, but also created their identity academically, socially, ethnically, and culturally. A strong identity and an established L1 literacy yielded rich L2 literacy. This statement is in line with Yi and Hirvela (2010) who conducted a case study on a high school Korean student found that their participant was often confused to choose which language to use for improving literacy skills because this student lived in an immigrant family with dual languages. But the blending use of L1 and L2 was a significant marker of how the student experienced and made progress through L2 literacy.

To this end, I argue that although it is important to use heritage language and English at the same time in literacy activities, what form of the language, spoken or written, can have more gains is still inconclusive. London, Gurantz, and Norman (2011) said that dual language use improved more English listening and speaking skills rather than English reading and writing. But Wilson, Chavez, and Anders (2012) through an ethnographic study of eight middle school students underlined that since students used written English in multiple frames and interacted in written language more often than in spoken form, native language was more important to improve written English literacy. As such,

I argue that empirical studies have not yet come to a consensus whether hybrid language use is beneficial for spoken form or written form of language. Although Krashen (1981) pointed out that productive English skills, i.e. speaking and writing, are theoretically not important for acquisition, they are practically urgent.

TEXT FORMS AND SOURCES

Referring back to the definition of literacy practice mentioned in the beginning of this article, availability of print-materials such as story books, magazines, and newspapers as well as access to literacy activities at home also have significant impact on students' literacy skills (Askov, Kassab, & Weirauch, 2005; Choi, 2009; Lee & Croninger, 1994; Lily, 2011; Perry & Moses, 2011; Sarroub, Pernicek, & Sweeney, 2007; Tan & Richardson, 2006; Teo, 2008; Wilson, Chavez, & Anders, 2012; Yi, 2007, 2010, 2015; Yi & Hirvela, 2010). Studies revealed that print materials and access to literacy are important for students' written language development. Access to literacy here means opportunities given to students to have literacy activities at home or outside of home which also includes the use of technology such as podcast, YouTube, WIKI, or Internet for literacy practices.

For instance, Perry and Moses (2012) studied how television was related to language and literacy development in three Sudanese families through 18 months of ethnography. They concluded that both adults and children in the family used television as a resource available at home to recognize new English vocabularies and cultures. Television was a medium that facilitated their learning towards new literacy. The same conclusion was derived from an ethnographic study conducted by Wilson, Chavez, and Anders (2012) that Podcast helped eight middle school students developed their English writing in a more comfortable way because Podcast allowed them to learn English at which they felt proficient. Moreover, internet also has a significant role for literacy practices where students can use it to experience online reading and writing as well as engaging in online communication with other peers without feeling shy (Yi, 2005, 2007, 2010; Yi & Hirvela, 2010).

Building on the point above, children whose families support their literacy learning by providing more print materials at home tend to have better literacy skills than those who do not receive support (Sarroub, Pernicek, & Sweeney, 2007). Providing print materials such as storybooks, magazines, and newspa-

pers, also increase students' interest on literacy practices especially reading and writing activities (Yi & Hirvela, 2010). What students do at home in terms of literacy practices is compatible with school-based literacy as long as opportunities and access for literacy are provided.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Having analyzed empirical studies on literacy practices at home and out-of-home settings, excluding schools, which affect ESL literacy skills, I arrive at several conclusions. Firstly, researchers on second language acquisition, literacy development, and language minority learners agree that sociocultural aspect of language learning is important to be considered in respect to ESL literacy development. Nowadays research on roles of environment in second language literacy has reached a consensus that second language development is achieved not only through cognitive process, but also more importantly through social interactions in the environment (i.e. home and community).

Secondly, underlying the above paradigm, this review concluded that there are three key features in relation to literacy practices of ESL learners outside of school settings that are important to consider. They are: (1) diverse settings of literacy practices at the environment, (2) parents' role and parent-child interaction around literacy activities, and (3) various available texts, sources, and access for literacy activities. Studies agree that community-based ESL program and interaction with adults or peers outside of home are significant predictors for later literacy skills. Because literacy is contextualized as social and cultural practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1996), studies have proved that community and adults or peers outside home shape literacy development of ESL learners in different ways.

Another point is that meaningful interaction between parents and their children at home (e.g. homework assistantship, home-poetry project, and reading-writing together) can support the development of children's ESL literacy skills, even when parents use their L1. Besides meaningful interaction, the provision of print-materials and access to literacy including technology can also promote greater opportunities for ESL learners to have literacy practices at home. It is found that there is a strong connection between students' home literacy practices and their school literacy achievement when parents provide sources of literacy at home.

Therefore, I argue that ESL teachers should find a link between in-and-out of school literacy activities that students can accomplish. This connection is crucial so that students can make use of their community and peers for better ESL literacy skills, in line with school literacy activities. In doing so, teachers can encourage schools to organize literacy activities that involve parents. Unlike young children, incorporating home-based literacy activity might build barriers between adolescents and their parents, particularly when the activity deals with expressing feelings and thoughts. Adolescents tend to hide some parts of their feeling to their parents, as it is an act of being adolescent. Wiseman (2009) suggested that teachers can encourage parents to engage in a poetry program or other parent-child shared activities to shed the barrier.

This review also proposes some recommendations for future research. First, there is a need to study the role of community-based literacy programs and out-of-school literacy practices that improve ESL students' literacy skills. Future research can focus on literacy components such as vocabulary development, word recognition skills, comprehension, and phonemic awareness across languages. Focusing on the nature of research method, future researchers might employ either qualitative or experimental research to provide more comprehensive characteristics of the events and the participants, or to draw causal claims between literacy practices and the environment.

Other possible research questions that can be drawn from this review are: if culture in family matters in developing ESL literacy, how do parents engage with cultural sensitivity across L1 and L2?, if spoken form of L1 can be used to improve written form of L2 literacy, how can the use of L1 is mediated to develop spoken and written form of L2 literacy? And if out-of-home activities are significant in improving ESL literacy, how does the result differ across different levels of proficiency? These questions are worth exploring in future research, so that the social context of the students and their literacy can be extended.

Finally, I conclude that empirical research on home literacy environment devoted to adolescents or seventh to twelfth graders is still needed, particularly studies employing statistical methods to measure environment as an extra linguistic support for ESL learning. The three sociocultural factors mentioned in this review support the paradigm of language socialization, second language acquisition and literacy as social and cultural activities.

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