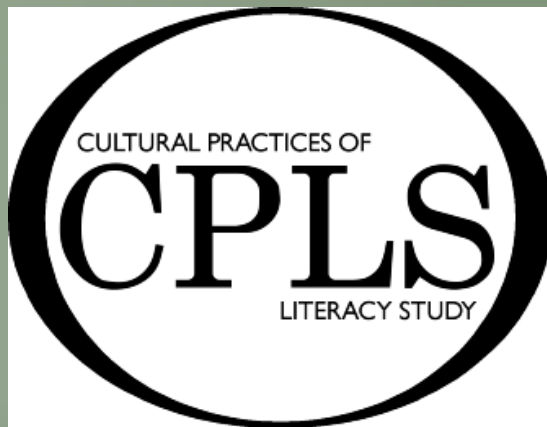


Culture, Text & Genre: Literacy Brokering Among Sudanese Refugees



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Many Issues

- The ways in which...
 - literacy practices differ across contexts
 - people learn about new practices and new texts
 - young children participate in, and learn about, family literacy practices



Conclusions: Preview

- Sudanese refugee families rely on *literacy brokers*
- Brokers pass on knowledge regarding:
 - Language
 - Culture
 - Genre
- Literacy brokering is an important *family literacy* practice



Culture & Language

- Cultures represent patterned systems of making sense out of the world (Duranti, 1997)
 - Behaviors, beliefs, values, norms, artifacts, etc
 - Patterns are dynamic & malleable
- Language (and literacy) are cultural patterns and practices
 - Speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986)
 - Discourses (Gee, 1996)
 - Habitus (Bourdieu, 1991)

Culture

Language

Genre

**Written
Genres**

**Lexico-
syntactic &
Graphophonic
Systems**



Literacy as a Social Practice

- Literacy practices are:
 - Historically and contextually situated
 - Dynamic and malleable
 - Multiple and purposeful, and some are privileged above others
 - Informed by values, beliefs & attitudes
 - Deeply enmeshed in social, cultural & power structures

(Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 2007; Street, 2001)



Emergent & Family Literacy

- Children learn much about literacy before entering school
 - Concepts about print
 - Functions of print
- Family provides foundation for literacy development
 - Intergenerational model: *children* also influence family practices

(Clay, 1998; Teale & Sulzby, 1986)



Genre Theory

- How people create & use texts, and for what purposes
- Connections between:
 - Genre & context
 - Function & form
- Genres are inherently political
 - “Sharing the code”—Bhatia (1997)

(Bazerman, 1988; Halliday, 1973; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Miller, 1994)



Language & Literacy Brokering

- Language brokering: translation that is...
 - Informal
 - Mediates communication
 - Involves power differences (Halgunseth, 2003)
 - May involve printed texts
 - Often involves children brokering for parents in immigrant families
 - Latino-American and Asian-American communities
- (Halgunseth, 2003; Mazak, 2006; Morales & Hanson, 2005; Orellana, Dorner & Pulido, 2003; Tse, 1996)



Research Foci: Parents

- How do the language and literacy practices of these Sudanese refugee families in the U.S. reflect the different layers of their experiences as refugees?
- How do these refugees negotiate, appropriate, and/or transform literacy practices through these experiences?



Research Foci: Children

- How are the young Sudanese refugee children from these families negotiating, making sense of, appropriating and/or transforming school-based literacies and the literacy practices of their homes and communities?



Researcher's Position

- Peace Corps service in Lesotho, Africa
- Multiple community roles
 - Tutoring
 - Community mentor
 - SSRRA board member
- Reciprocity with participants
 - Academic tutoring for children & parents
- Broker in brokering events



Data Collection

- Ethnographic methodology for data collection
- Participant observation
 - Homes; community contexts; classrooms
- Audio-taped interviews
 - Parents; focal children; teachers
 - Semi-structured; open-ended; demographic
 - All interviews occurred in English
- Textual artifact collection
 - Printed texts (both read and written); photographs



Data Analysis

- Unit of analysis: Literacy Event (Heath, 1983)
- Coding*
 - Texts, languages, domains, contexts
 - Emerging themes: literacy brokering
- Content Analyses (Tusting & Ivanič, 2004)
 - Historical/cultural contexts
 - Meanings
 - Sense-making

*Using AtlasTi qualitative data analysis software



Participant Selection

- Reputational selection (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999)
- Three families, all of whom sojourned in Middle Eastern countries (Egypt and Lebanon)
 - Families had been in U.S. from 2-5 years at the start of the study
- Families differed by parents' level of education
 - All parents spoke English, although to differing degrees
- Participants' insisted that real names be used (Perry, 2007)

Participating Families

	PARENT	EDUCATION LEVEL	JOB IN MICHIGAN
High-education parents	M: Viola	Law degree	Factory line
	F: Isbon	Some college	Hospital janitor
Medium-education parents	M: Falabia	Nursing degree	Hospital janitor
	F: Primo	High school	Hospital janitor
Low-education parents	M: Akhlas	7 th grade	Seamstress
	F: Amin	Some high school	Dishwasher



Focal Children

	FIRST GRADE	KINDERGARTEN
BOYS (Brothers)	<u>Boni</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High-education parents• Oldest child (of 4)	<u>Samuel</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High-education parents• Second child (of 4)
GIRLS	<u>Juana</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Med.-education parents• Fourth child (of 5+2)	<u>Remaz</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low-education parents• Oldest child (of 2)



Parents' Literacy Practices

- How do the language and literacy practices of these Sudanese refugee families in the U.S. reflect the different layers of their experiences as refugees?
- How do these refugees negotiate, appropriate, and/or transform literacy practices through these experiences?
 - Explains why brokering was necessary in this community



Parents' Literacy Practices

- Practices in Sudan shaped by:
 - Experiences with formal education in Sudan
 - Religion (Christianity and Islam)
- U.S. practices characterized by:
 - Languages: Arabic & English
 - Domains: Religion, Education, Work, Parenting/Family Life
 - Digital texts




Navigating Literacy Practices

- How do the language and literacy practices of these Sudanese refugee families in the U.S. reflect the different layers of their experiences as refugees?
- How do these refugees negotiate, appropriate, and/or transform literacy practices through these experiences?



Navigating through Brokering

- Sudanese refugee parents used literacy brokers as a resource to learn about language, literacy and texts in the U.S. context
- Brokering occurred on three levels: lexico-syntactic & graphophonic, cultural, textual/genre
- Brokering involved passing on knowledge about:
 - Encoding/decoding of written English
 - Cultural content
 - Genre/form of the text
 - Functions/purposes of the text



What did parents need to know about texts?

- Lexico-syntactic & graphophonic knowledge
 - How do I spell/pronounce this word?
 - What does this word mean?
- Cultural knowledge
 - How does the sweepstakes work?
 - Is this parent meeting important?
- Genre knowledge
 - Where am I supposed to sign?
 - How do I find a number in the phone book?
 - What information should I include in my resume?
 - What do hyperlinks do on the Internet?

Lexico-Syntactic & Graphophonic (ESL) Knowledge

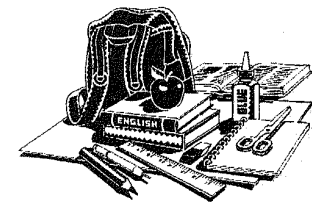
- Encoding/decoding
print
 - Spelling,
pronouncing,
sounding-out
 - Transliterating
from Arabic



Lexico-Syntactic & Graphophonic (ESL) Knowledge

- Vocabulary
 - Word meanings

CURRICULUM NIGHT



Scheduled for
Tuesday, October 18, 2005
has been

CANCELLED

due to low response.

The School District complies with all federal laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination and with all requirements and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education. It is the policy of the School District that no person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age, gender, height, weight, marital status or disability shall be subjected to discrimination in any program, service or activity for which it is responsible, or for which it receives financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education.



Lexico-Syntactic & Graphophonic (ESL) Knowledge

- Syntax
 - “Correct” English
 - Writing that “sounds nice”



Cultural Knowledge

- Cultural information
 - e.g., U.S. holidays, traditions, organizations, institutions

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

100 Typical Questions

1. What are the colors of our flag?
2. How many stars are there on our flag?
3. What color are the stars on our flag?
4. What do the stars on the flag mean?
5. How many stripes are there on the flag?
6. What color are the stripes?
7. What do the stripes on the flag mean?
8. How many states are there in the Union?
9. Why do we celebrate the Fourth of July?
10. What is the date of Independence Day?
11. Independence from whom?
12. What country did we fight during the Revolutionary War?
13. Who was the first President of the United States?
14. Who is the President of the United States today?
15. Who is the Vice-President of the United States today?
16. Who elects the President of the United States?
17. Who becomes our president if the President should die?
18. For how long do we elect the President?
19. What is the Constitution?

Cultural Knowledge

- Expectations
 - e.g., how parents should interact with schools

Date Sept. 29.05

To the Parents of Abdelhrman Remaz

Your child owes for the breakfast and/or lunch he/she ordered on 9-6-9-28

at _____ school.

Amount Due \$27.00

Lunch is \$1.75

Breakfast is \$1.00

Lunch is .40 cents (reduced)

Breakfast is .30 cents (reduced)

School District policy states that no more than 2 meals (\$3.50 fully paid, 80 cents reduced) can be charged at any time.

If arrangements are not made to pay the amount due, your child may be refused hot lunch and will need to bring a sack lunch until payment is made.

Your prompt attention in this matter will be appreciated.

If you have any questions, please call me at _____

Thank you,

Cashier

Principal

*I did receive the \$17.75
your child lunch tot. is at
\$27.00. I need at least
\$20.00 By 9/30/05 Before
I serve your child. Hot
lunch.*



Genre/Textual Knowledge

- Purpose of the genre
 - *Why* a genre exists and *what functions* it serves in the world
- Examples:
 - Yearbooks, sewing patterns, phone books, crossword puzzles, coupons, and Internet websites



Genre/Textual Knowledge

- Use of the text
 - Knowledge about *how to use* a particular genre of text
- *“I always see people use the coupons from the newspaper, but I don’t know how they get it... Or how they can use it... I have always seen people, they shop and they give a lot of coupons, but I don’t know how.”—Falabia*

Genre/Textual Knowledge

- Specific features of the genre
- Organization of features within the genre

Viola Lupai

Objective:

Seeking a position in a factory/assembly, hospital, housekeeping, labor or entry level clerical environment, where my experience and skills can be best applied.

Employment History:

Comfort Inn
Okemos, MI
04/2005 - 07/2005

Housekeeping

Custodian, cleaning rooms, upkeep of premises, etc.

Self - Employed
Lansing, MI
01/2005 - 04/2005

Homemaker

House wife, maternity, taking care of new-born child, etc.

Trinity Evangelical Luthern
Church
Lansing, MI
06/2004 - 12/2004

Director Social Work/Refugee Assistance

Help refugees with clothes, food, job seeking, errands, etc.

Popeye's Chicken
Lansing, MI
10/2003 - 06/2004

Cook and Food Preparation

Prepared rice, biscuits, salads, etc.

Education:

Degree
Major: Law
Ain Shams University Cairo, Egypt
MI

Skills and Abilities:

Bi-lingual, Arabic and English

Notes and Other Information:

Dependable, on-time, precise in duties.



Genre/Textual Knowledge

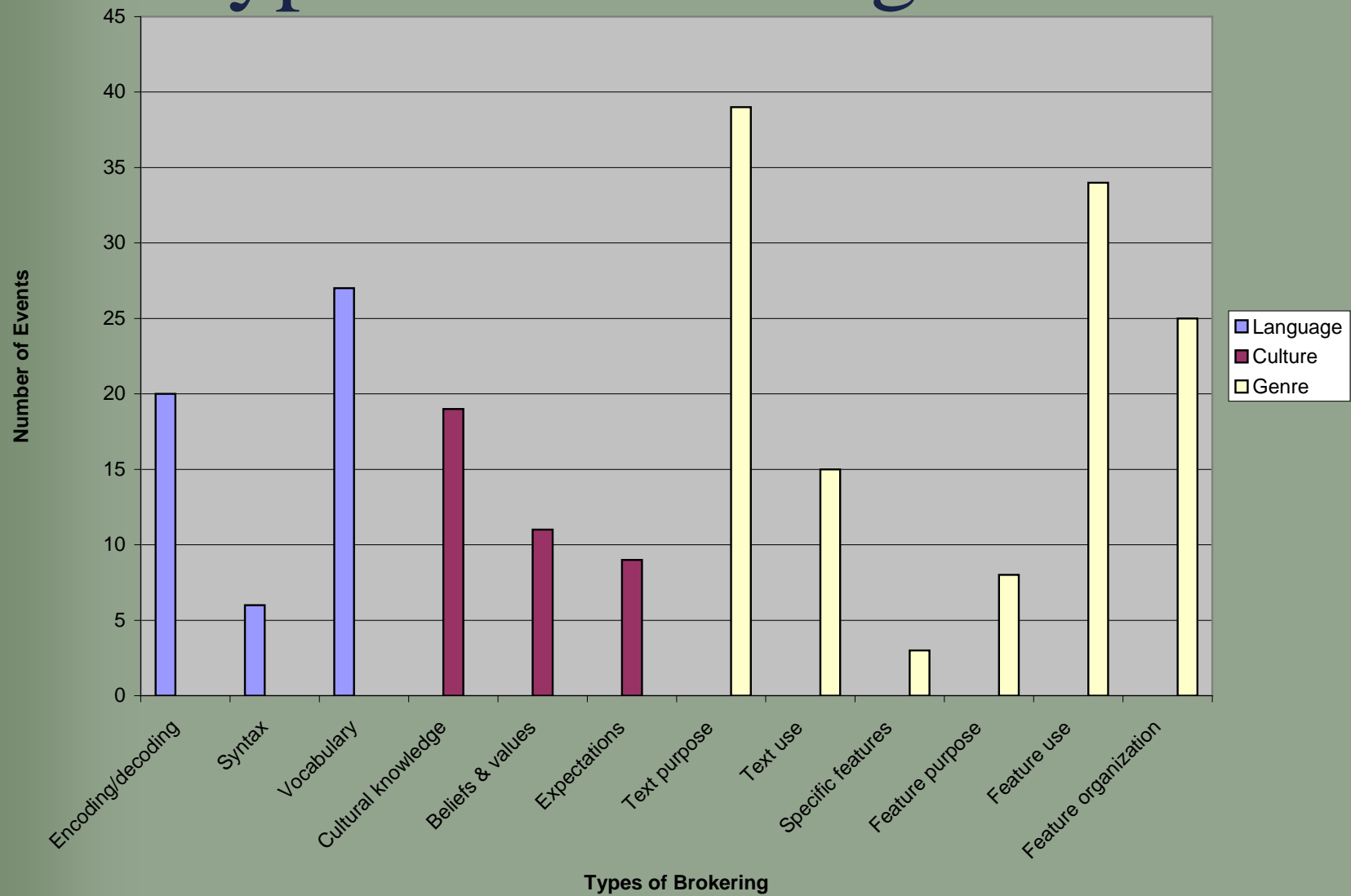
- Purpose of features
 - Provide a great deal of information about a given text's purpose and how it should be used
 - Digital texts
 - What are hyperlinks, dialogue boxes, and icons for?

Genre/Textual Knowledge

- Use of features

PARENTAL PERMISSION														
Parent/Legal Guardian: _____														
_____	_____	_____	_____											
Address (if different):														
_____	_____	_____	_____											
_____	_____	_____	_____											
_____	_____	_____	_____											
Telephone: ()	Driver's License #:													
I authorize the following people to pick up holds for my child: _____														
I authorize the following people to have access to my child's records: _____														
I am the parent/legal guardian of the minor child applying for a library card and understand that this card allows access to all materials and services of the library. I am responsible for all materials borrowed using this library card including payment for lost and damaged materials and any fees. I will give immediate notice if this card is lost or stolen, or if I change my address.														
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature _____			Date: _____											
STAFF USE ONLY														
Hold Pick Up:	AU	BK	DA	FO	HA	HO	LE	MAIN	MS	OK	SL	ST	WE	WM
Driver's License Number _____														
Governing Municipality _____ County _____														
Staff Initials and Location _____ Date Entered _____ Verified by _____ Date Verified _____														

Types of Brokering Events





Children Act as Brokers

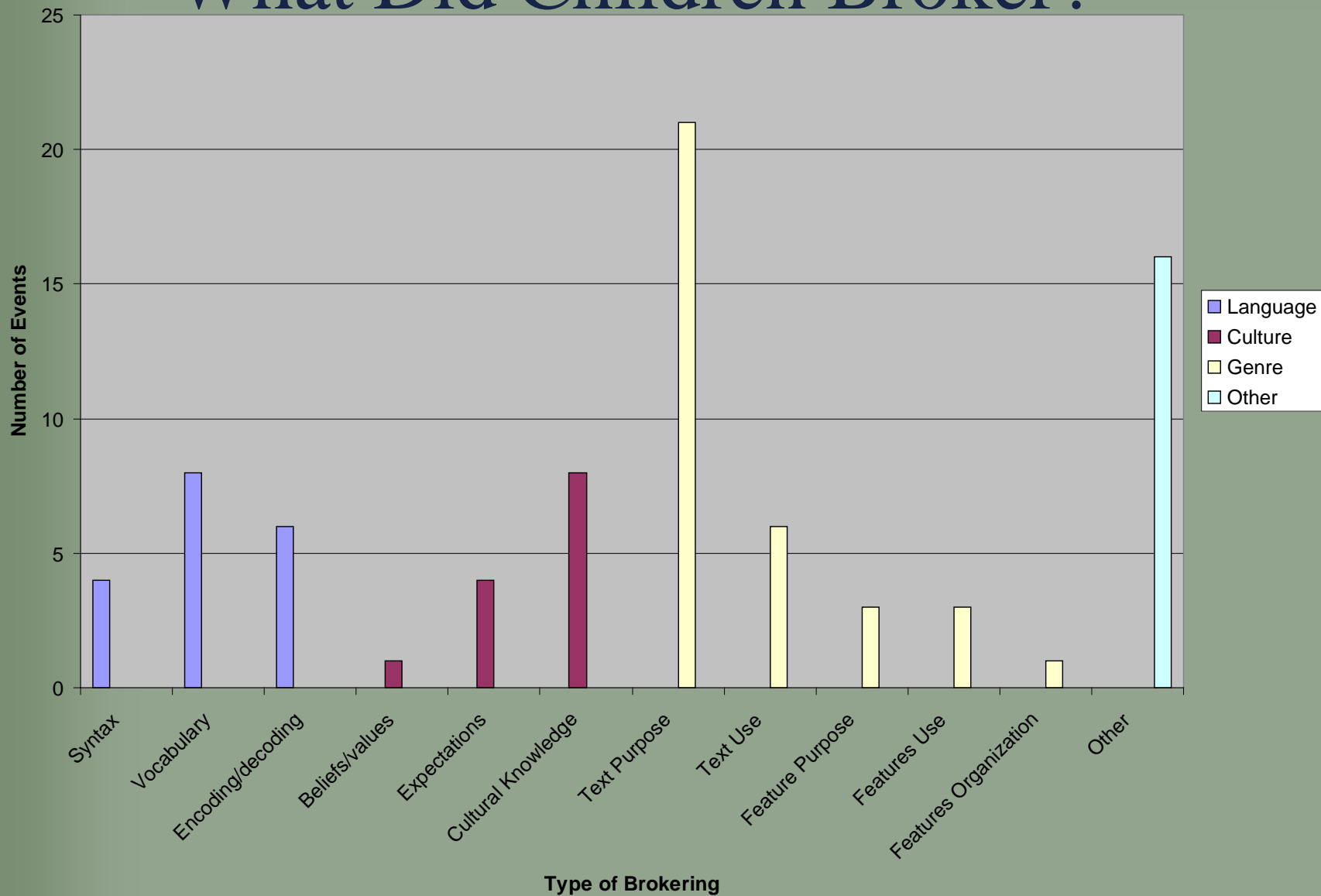
- How are the young Sudanese refugee children born in the U.S. from these families negotiating, making sense of, appropriating and/or transforming the differences between U.S. school-based literacies and the literacy practices of their homes and communities?



Children Broker Many Texts

- Sudanese children acted as language and literacy brokers for their parents in new ways
 - Children were *not yet* fluent readers/writers
- Brokering often occurred around school-based texts, typically emphasizing:
 - Purpose: what text is *for*
 - Content: what text is *about*
 - Language: translation, vocabulary, spelling

What Did Children Broker?

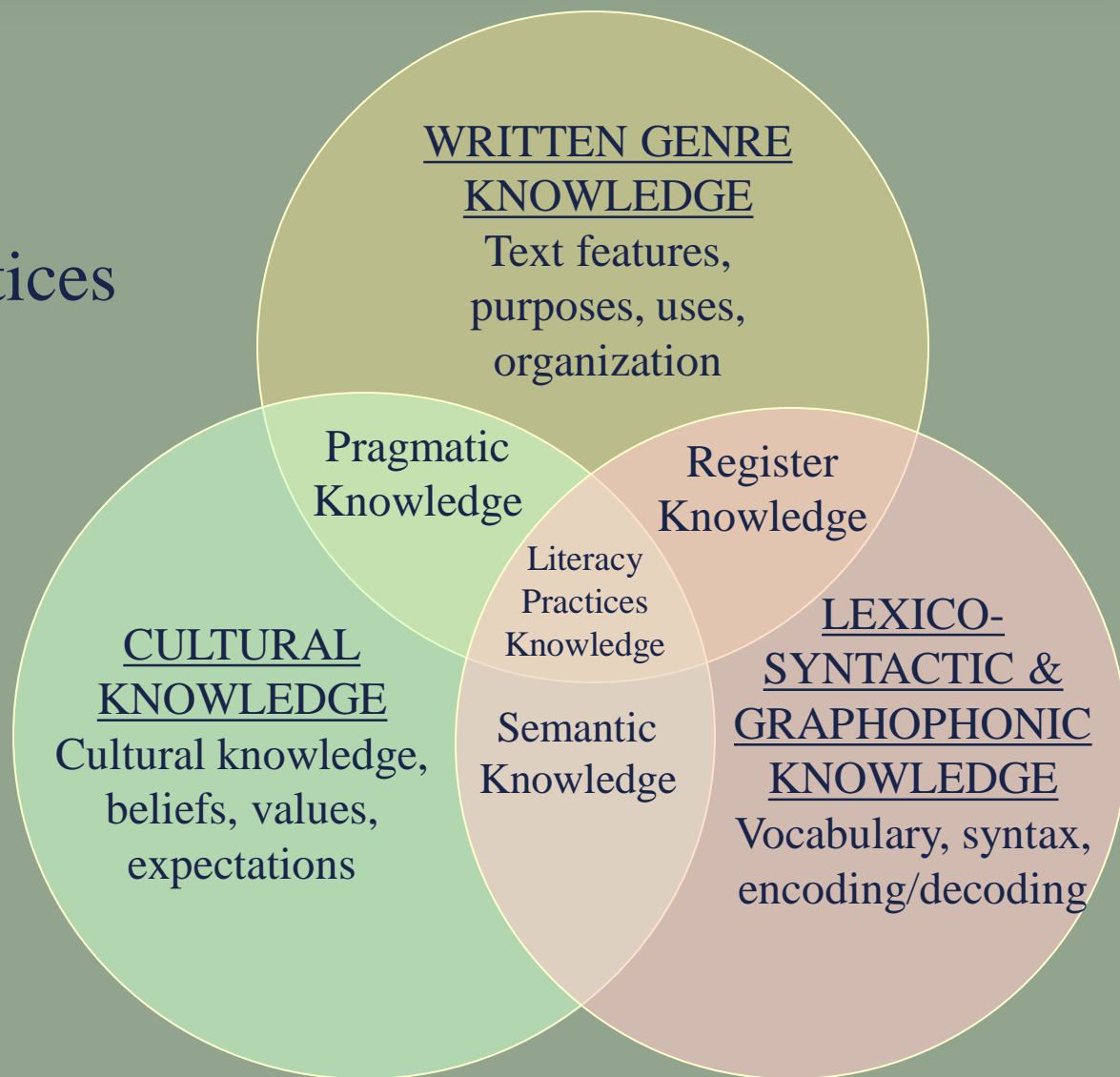


What Did Children Broker?



- Remaz:
 - “Make an N, Mommy!”
 - “I have to bring the paper that you signed”
- Boni
 - “You gotta sign.”
 - “You have to read this all because these papers are SO important”
- Samuel
 - “That’s a fire. Read that one.”
 - “A paper because we don’t have snacks”

Knowledge Needed to Participate in Literacy Practices





Language vs. Literacy Brokering

- Language brokering
 - Translation of language/meaning (Morales & Hanson, 2005; Tse, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999)
 - Texts are secondary or optional
- Literacy brokering
 - Focus on texts
 - Involves language, culture, genre knowledge
 - Often involves knowledge about *practices*



Brokering Takes Many Forms

- Expediting literacy events
 - e.g., writing food labels and English letters
- Teaching about language, culture and genre
 - Vocabulary, beliefs, features, etc
- Advising about practices



Child Brokers

- Some researchers have looked at children as brokers (Orellana, 2003; Tse, 1996; Valdés, 2001)
 - Latino- & Asian-American communities
 - Children older than 10
 - Language translation/interpretation
 - Disagreement about impact on children/families
 - Disruption of traditional family structures
 - Positive developmental/academic outcomes



Sudanese Children's Roles

- Child literacy brokering fits well with Sudanese familial relationships and expected roles for children
 - Different cultures enact family roles and parenting in different ways (Rogoff, 2003)
- Children are expected to take great responsibility
 - Household chores
 - Sibling/child care



Children as Teachers

- Parents positioned children as teachers in the family
 - Akhlas: “She teaches me—my best teacher, Remaz!”
 - Isbon: “I don’t know—you have to teach me. You have to teach your father”
- Child brokering is natural in some cultural communities



Adult/ESL Literacy

- ESL/adult literacy courses may need to consider genre and cultural knowledge equally with decoding, fluency, translation
 - How are different texts put together?
 - What are the functions of different textual features?
 - How are different texts used in the real world?
 - What sorts of cultural knowledge might learners need about the content and use of different texts?



Family Literacy

- Literacy brokering...
 - Is a matter of family literacy
 - Exposes children to a variety of real-world texts and purposes for reading & writing
 - Supports intergenerational models of family literacy, where learning is multidirectional



Parent Involvement in Schools

- Findings may help explain some patterns of parental response/involvement in schools
 - Many brokering events involved school texts
- Sending notes home is more than a matter of translation
- Parents may not understand the function of the text or cultural expectations embedded in the content