

“Let me show you how to do the homework:” Child literacy brokering in and out of school

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Vignette: Remaz & Juana



Emergent & Family Literacy

- Ø Emergent literacy
 - | Children learn much about literacy before entering school (Clay, 1998; Teale & Sulzby, 1986)
 - Concepts of print
 - Functions of & beliefs/values about print → practices
- Ø Family/intergenerational literacy
 - | Continuum of acquired abilities & social constructs that influence literacy (Gadsden, 2000)
 - | Siblings can be “guiding lights” (Gregory, 2000)

Language & Literacy Brokering

- Ø Informal translation work (Morales & Hanson, 2005), including oral & written language
- Ø Draw upon linguistic, textual, and cultural resources to negotiate meaning (Mazak, 2006; Orellana et al, 2003)
- Ø Limitations of current research:
 - | Focus on translation
 - | Examines Spanish-speaking communities

Brokering Among Sudanese Families

- Ø Perry, K. (2007). *More than Language Translation: Culture, Text and Genre Aspects of Literacy Brokering among Sudanese Refugees.*
- Ø Lexico-syntactic/graphophonic knowledge
 - Encoding & decoding of English
- Ø Cultural knowledge
 - Context, expectations, beliefs & values
- Ø Written genre knowledge
 - | Purposes, functions, features of texts

Research Focus

- Ø How are young Sudanese refugee children negotiating, making sense of, appropriating and/or transforming the U.S. school-based literacies and the literacy practices of their homes and communities?

Methodology

- Ø Data Collection
 - Participant observation in homes, community, and schools
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Artifact collection
- Ø Unit of analysis: Literacy (brokering) event (Heath, 1983)
- Ø Data Analysis
 - Coding of brokering events
 - Developing data matrices
 - Derivation of brokering categories
 - Identification of themes
 - AtlasTi software

Participants

- Ø Reputational selection (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999)
- Ø Three families, all sojourner in Middle Eastern countries (Egypt and Lebanon)
- Ø Families differed by parents' level of education
- Ø Focal children in kindergarten and first grade

PARENT	EDUCATION LEVEL	FOCAL CHILD(REN)	GRADE
M: Viola	Law degree	Boni	1 st
F: Isbon	Some college	Samuel	Kindergarten
M: Falabia	Nursing degree	Juana	1 st
F: Primo	High school		
M: Akhlias	7 th grade	Remaz	Kindergarten
F: Amin	Some high school		

Child literacy brokering

- Ø Children brokered for others *and* received brokering from other children
- Ø Two types of brokering:
 - Lexico-syntactic/graphophonic
 - Writing, spelling, and reading various texts
 - Literacy practices
 - Understanding use and features of various genres
 - Engaging in literacy practices that were valued in different contexts

Lexico-Syntactic/Graphophonic: Writing

- Ø Forming letters
- Ø Spelling words
 - China, very
- Ø Writing names
- Ø Occurred both at home (siblings) and at school (peers)



Lexico-Syntactic/Graphophonic: Reading

- Ø Juana most often engaged in this type of brokering
- Ø Helping peers read during centers
 - "It's just like *bath*, but it's *math*."
- Ø Brokering occurred "under the radar"
 - Not sanctioned by teacher

Literacy Practices: Aspects of Genres

- Ø Illustrated sophisticated knowledge related to written genres and literacy practices
- Ø Remaz and the address book
 - | “Whose phone number is that? You need to write his name.”

Literacy Practices: Storybook Reading

- Ø Sibling-sibling storybook reading was common
- Ø Juana brokered for younger sister
 - | Which page to start reading on
 - | Matching text to pictures
 - | Pretend-reading with prosody



Literacy Practices: Digital Technologies and Texts



- Ø How to navigate websites and online games
 - | “Keep on pressing this”
- Ø Digital text features
 - | Scroll bars, icons, buttons, mouse

Literacy Practices: School Literacies

- Ø Samuel and Juana most often brokered for peers at school
 - | “You have to put your name on it”
- Ø Homework—a highly valued practice
- Ø Parents reinforced expectations that siblings should help each other
 - | “Next year, you will go to kindergarten, and you will have to learn from your sister”

Who brokers?

- Ø All focal children acted as brokers
 - | Some brokered for peers and siblings more often
 - | Some received brokering more than others

Child	Broker for Adults		Broker for Siblings/Peers		Recipient of Brokering	
	Home	School	Home	School	Home	School
Boni	X		X		X	X
Juana	X		X	X	X	X
Samuel	X		X	X	X	
Remaz	X			X		

Insights & Implications: Family Literacy

- Ø Family literacy roles & relationships do not look the same across all cultures
 - | In some, children take on great family responsibilities at an early age (Rogoff, 2003)
 - | Siblings (even very young ones!) often provide significant literacy support
- Ø Literacy brokering is a matter of *family literacy*
 - | Literacy learning is multidirectional and goes beyond nuclear family
 - | Educators must account for these multidirectional relationships in planning family literacy programs

Insights & Implications: School Literacy Practices

- o Children provide knowledge about school literacy practices
 - | Refugee parents may have limited knowledge about U.S. schools
 - | Doing homework, classroom expectations, etc
- o Children import brokering practices into classrooms
 - | Teachers can capitalize on these funds of knowledge that some children bring
- o Brokering is different from peer tutoring
 - | Teachers can sanction informal literacy brokering and help students understand when it's appropriate

Directions for Research

- o Expand research into other cultural communities
 - | How does brokering vary across communities?
- o Explore impact of child brokering on literacy development & academic achievement