Con/texto: Cultural Relevance & Linguistic Resources in Reading After-School

Leslie López & Corre la Voz (CLV)
UC Links Conference, UC Berkeley March 2019

“The autonomous school builds different worlds Where many true worlds fit with truths”
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2009-2018: Developing an “autonomous” CLV literacy curriculum: cultural intentionality, multi-modal interaction, inquiry, critical thought, expression

2009-11 unstructured/reactive--movie projects as literacy--“kids’ ideas”--often dominant culture

2011-2015 reactive “homework support” (+ CLV movies)
• 1 day read whatever books kids bring (Wimpy Kid era)
• 1 day help with math hw (basic skills --> CCore transition)

2016-2018 “negotiated” curriculum w/schools (+ CLV movies)
• Sometimes read whatever books kids bring
• Weaker help with math hw (no access--> CCore complexity)
• Expanding CLV curriculum (research, poetry, councils, etc)

2015-2018 STRONGER CLV PROJECT CURRICULUM: Objectives, improving scaffolds, logic for justice
○ Drama, Poetry, Letters, Research (interview, online);
○ Process/production, teamwork--mentors & mentees
○ MOSTLY WRITING/CREATION CURRICULUM, NOT READING

2018-19: Develop reading curriculum; Develop translanguaging
centering & developing CLV/UC Links assets--language & literacy.
No more math in CLV
Our school also expanding reading
So is B&G

• Poder de la Palabra 40 min (1:1 or 1:2)
• Dinámica 20 min (whole group)
• Proyectos 50 min (small group)
“4th grade reading slump:”
across the world, 9-10 year olds’ reading declines, especially low SES, ethnically under-represented. Intersecting factor: learning national language (L2)

Students don’t make the shift from “learning to read,” to “reading to learn” (e.g., Brozo 2005; 2008; Chall 2003)

**Spiraling exclusion pieces:**
CAST as “DEFICITS”
- (Academic English) vocab;
- Formal tools, diverse sources;
- Supported environment to express self, form co-constructed learning environment (identity and shared meaning with adults and society);
- Access to increasingly complex syntax in either language;
- Access to domain knowledge.

**PUNITIVE “CONSEQUENCES”**
- “Ranking” & individualistic systems in education over time peg students to rudimentary, stigmatizing “decoding.”
- Intersecting: English Proficiency tests profoundly disadvantage ELLs

**More privileged students, spiraling promotion/inclusion:**
- can read for independent pursuits;
- have access to internet;
- opportunities (library, travel, camps, adult presence, adult advocates, teachers of dominant-culture skills);
- people to admire and co-construct their sense-making

“Reading to Learn” good fit with CLV & ELL-support (Meanwhile…)

**Recommended** (Brozo; Robertson ELL specific, 2010; Ogle & Corre-Kovtun 2010; Fisher & Frey 2014 etc)

**Dominant reading curriculum at schools include:**

- Single-measure, computer-based reading tests/analysis to “level” kids (e.g., Lexile)

**Balance teacher & student-centered approaches:** applied and useful activities; inquiry-based; content relevant to student learners; *build on prior knowledge (funds of knowledge), home language*

**Expand student choices:** genres and formats, gender identities, ethnic, language, and family identities. *Include non-fiction. Include web, combine multi-modal, translanguaging.*

- Boys’ reading worldwide declining much more steeply than girls’. (Ortiz et al Boys’ Literacy Practices 2014)

**Expand the social:** make reading a social, interactive, discursive activity. Emphasize collaboration. Expand oral language opportunities.

**Word-per-minute tests (with stopwatch) for ELLs pervasive.**

**The Scholastics publishing monopoly built into school libraries; classroom curriculum.** (Improving-expanding somewhat)

**Silent, solitary reading.** Nightly logs. 20 minutes + 1 sentence “what did you read.” HW
What is the “curriculum?”

Building on our existing strengths; contribute directly to school-relevant needs

**Objective 1:** To make “reading” one of those activities that is culturally and linguistically proximate, socially comfortable and nurturing; explicitly and tangibly modeled, practiced, enjoyed.

- Building intentionally on our primary strength: our collaborative classroom environment and practices. Our social habitus of community support, care, interaction, inquiry, translanguaging. “Mature speakers” of the students’ bilingual background, facilitating conversation and modeling learning together.

  LOPI (Learning by Observing and Pitching In) Rogoff

- **Purchased books to test and enjoy** (Program Assistant research collaborative project)

**Objective 2:** To develop “flexible routines” and teachable techniques that allow mentors to work with individuals and dyads, whose interests and language backgrounds vary.

- **Partner reading curriculum** for close reading, discussion, then writing, based on previous research & project scaffolds.

- **Mentoring tips**—working with text features, voice, moving in and out of text; recognizing “key” or generative words, etc.

- **Non-fiction more cognates**—social-political vocab compelling

- **Biographies compelling**—narratives chronologically organized, how do people grow up, face adversity, make decisions, different shapes of lives

- **Fiction:** a rich thicket of idiomatic expressions and culturally inexplicable references, unpredictable genre features
The social habitus matters

**SCHOOL ETHNIC RATIOS**

**STUDENTS**

- **2016-17**
  - White 48%
  - Latinx 41%

**STAFF**

- **2016-17**
  - White 87%
  - Latinx 10%

**TOTAL STUDENTS (N=522) BY ETHNICITY 2016-17**

- White: 48%
- Latinx: 41%
- Two or more: 5%
- Asian/Asian Am.: 4%
- Black/African Am.: 2%
- Pac. Is/Haw/Filip.: 1%

**TOTAL STAFF (N=30) BY ETHNICITY 2016-17**

- White 87%
- Latinx 10%
- Native American 3%

**Proportion flipped in last 8 years: 50/40**

- **3 Latinx Teachers for 145 ELLs**
- **213 Latinx Students**

**Ratio of Latinx Teachers to Latinx Students**

- **3:213**

- **2016-2017**

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**Note:** The image contains pie charts and bar graphs showing the school's ethnic ratios for students and staff. The data is from the academic year 2016-17.
CLV multiplies students’ access to speakers of their own language; immersed in room of rich, supportive communication

CLV Ethnic Ratios 2016-17 (typical)

100% Latinx students

100% Latinx mentors

Total 23 mentors: 17 students

2017-18 variation

2 mentors mixed/other
1 student white

CLV Ratio Latinx Mentors to Latinx Students (all year) 23:17

CLV Ratio Latinx Mentors to Latinx Students 2017-18

TOTAL STUDENTS (N=473) BY ETHNICITY 2017-18

TOTAL STAFF (N=30) BY ETHNICITY 2016-17
CLV’s first set of books
Co-constructed w Undergraduate PA (Summer Research)
Reading (avidly) to learn

These slim books are not cheap, and are highly coveted by students—and school teachers. Two 4th grade male teachers saw these and asked the principal for books like them, to motivate their students.

Fall 2018: many pages of fieldnotes on A. & E., two 4th graders who sat together in Partner Reading.

Little previous interest in reading; difficulty focusing.

Deeply engaged in Ronaldo & Messi.

Good pair of books for Partner Reading
Compare and Contrast during discussion time
WRITING RUBRIC: It has been tough to get [them] to write in their journals as their high levels of energy make them prone to distractions. However, they have been making progress and **began to write in their journals slightly more when they did partner reading.**

READING: …**[I]n partner reading in which they worked through the text to fully comprehend the text.** A____ made connections to the autobiography of Lionel Messi through the real life examples that he saw on television. He **began to become invested in the book on Messi’s life and worked through words he did not understand with E____.**

VERBAL: …As [they] both read sections of the autobiographies of both Ronaldo and Messi, they **began to talk about the readings together.** A_____ began to talk about Messi’s struggles with a hormone deficiency but he still prevailed while E____ discussed the importance of working hard with Ronaldo’s work ethic. …

CRITICAL: A____ believed that Messi was just naturally talented and did not work hard like Ronaldo, but E____ **disagreed as he said that they both train really hard to be the best soccer players in the world.** E____ elaborated and said that you have to first think about what you are going to do before doing it so that you can **imagine yourself being successful.** He even compared it to when he plays football himself, as he says that **he is always thinking about how and in what direction he will run with the ball before he does it.**
A began to have a discussion on Messi and his upbringing as Messi’s grandfather’s death played a major role in his life as a kid. Once he died, Messi still continued to play really well, and A acknowledged this. Messi was talented from the start as a kid. A didn’t stop talking about him being the best player and comparing him to Ronaldo. After reading a section on Ronaldo, A said he is not better than Messi because he only works hard to be good and that Ronaldo has to practice to be great. This is when E stepped and said well Messi also worked hard to be good as he had to go through a lot as a kid and he trains every day or else he would not be good even if he is talented. E said that A had an opinion and that he did not really know if Messi is better than Ronaldo or vice versa. E [said] that he was not biased because he did not like soccer and had no interest in the players.
Help readers connect their physical and emotional senses (embodied experience) to language, imagination, & text

“That’s a beautiful dream, hija. You dreamed of my island. I think a happy dream means you will soon be well.”

...

She heard the sound of a chair scraping the floor, and then the music of the typewriter keys. Juliana closed her eyes and imagined each letter the poet typed was a brushstroke, painting a picture in her head.
Magic Windows/
Ventanas Mágicas

(2 books, fully bilingual)

**Mixed genres:**

- Autobiographical, concrete
  - (embodied memory, narrative, sensory)
- Ancestral culture/mythology
  - (deeper collective identity, history)
- Art form; How-to (papel picado)
I’ve always loved to watch the work that people do with their hands. This is a close-up of my grandfather’s hands cutting a nopal cactus. He’s cutting the cactus and I’m cutting the paper.

“Learning by Observing & Pitching In” (Rogoff et al)
Tia Lola
Favorite of the year

Protagonist:
10-11 year old sensitive Latino boy, family experiencing divorce and displacement. They wind up in Vermont (whitest place ever?)

Beautiful, subtle complex “dilemma” situations involving language, culture, values, family. Translanguage reality and meta-discourse on it

The book itself is a short novel. It fits what they are “supposed to be reading.” The library had 12 copies!!
Continuing to document amazing outcomes in the classroom

Continuing to develop methods and techniques

Continuing to think through translanguaging in reading methods (space and tools for selves, stories, discussion) as well as writing/production