The Interplay between Context and Students' Self-regulation in Bilingual Literature Discussions: A Case Study

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In the educational context for linguistic minority students created by the approval of Proposition 203 in Arizona, called "English for the Children" legislation, the education of English language learners (ELLs) faces new and difficult challenges, especially in schools that have a large and growing number of young Hispanic students. One of those challenges is the pressure placed on teachers to move Spanish speakers toward English fluency as soon as possible to the detriment of critical subject matter learning (Moll & Ruiz, 2002) and to the detriment of students' literacy and biliteracy development. Such pressure has led some teachers to eliminate the use of Spanish texts and talk from the classroom, thus ignoring their value for supporting ELLs as readers and thinkers. It follows, as different scholars have pointed out, that policy makers have overlooked both large-scale quantitative data and the more specific qualitative case-study data that demonstrate the benefit of Spanish language as a resource for bilingual Spanish/English children's literacy development (e.g., Crawford, 1999; García, 2000; Hudelson, 1987; Krashen, 2000; Ramírez, Yuen, Ramey, & Pasta, 1991).

Proposition 203 and a similar proposition in California (Prop 207), which were designed to restrict the access to bilingual education (Wiley, 2002), have implications for the educational and linguistic rights of language minority students as well as the maintenance of their native language. Research conducted in California after the approval of Proposition 207 concludes that, paradoxically, English-only instruction creates contexts that restrict linguistic minority students' access to literacy in English (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Asato, 2000).

This study addresses the vital role of the first language as an intellectual resource that enables ELLs to fully participate in literacy events at school as much as their English peers. The study highlights the role of context on shaping students' learning, talk, and participation in classrooms, an aspect that has been excluded from many studies on second language acquisition. I will share findings from a qualitative study completed before the approval of Proposition 203, in which I examined second-grade bilingual children's literate thinking as they discussed English and Spanish texts in small groups, focusing on the case study of a seven-year-old Mexican born girl (Isabela[1]) participating in the literature discussions over a year. Framed by sociocultural and activity theory (Gutiérrez, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1931/1978, 1934/1987; Wertsch, 1985, 1998) and transactional reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995), this study examines both the girl's talk about texts and the role of the small groups, particularly the linguistic context of the groups, in shaping her talk. The questions guiding the study are the following:

1) In what ways did having access to her first language support Isabela's discussions of texts in small group literature discussions?

2) In what ways did the small groups and their linguistic composition (being in a Spanish-dominant group or in an English-dominant group) shape Isabela's talk about texts?

3) What cultural resources did Isabela contribute to the literature discussions?

1. Theoretical framework

1.1 Literature discussions

The benefits of reading and discussing literature for mainstream students have been addressed extensively in the professional literature from a variety of perspectives (e.g., Beach, 1993; Lewis, 2000; Peterson & Eeds, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995; Short & Pierce, 1998; Sipe, 1996). Some of the

benefits for students include becoming skillful and competent readers as well as ones that are thoughtful and critical. Only a handful of studies, however, have focused their analysis on literature discussions with second language learners in mainstream classrooms (e.g., Klassen, 1993; Raphael, Brock, & Wallace, 1997; Samway & Whang, 1996), and even fewer studies have focused on literature discussions in elementary bilingual classrooms either in whole or small groups (e.g., Battle, 1995; Cox & Boyd-Batstone, 1997; Martínez-Roldán, 2003). Since many of the studies of reader response have been conducted with middle-class white students, some authors (e.g. Grossman, 2001) wonder to what extent this research can help us understand how ethnic identities shape readings of text and how second-language learners respond to literary texts in both their native language and in a second language.

Following Marshall's (2000) description of the research on response to literature, this case study follows the empirical tradition of research examining both readers' responses to texts and the context in which those responses take shape, focusing on bilingual students' responses to literature in small groups. Small group literature discussions or literature circles are small groups of students who read or are read the same book (or several books related to a single theme or broad issue) and then meet to discuss their understandings with one another (Short, 1995, 1997).

Since the work of Eeds and Wells (1989) on children's responses to literature, accounts of personal experiences related (and some times not so related) to the texts have been a part of children's process of making meaning from the texts and an important part of their literary understanding. In his study of the construction of literary understanding by first and second graders in response to picture storybook readalouds, Sipe (1996) found that personal responses to literature—when the children connected the texts to their own personal lives or used knowledge from the texts to inform their lives—was an important aspect of children's construction of literary understanding, representing a 10% of all the children's responses to the literature. For some students in his study, as in Cox and Boyd-Batstone's (1997), personal responses to literature provided them with an opportunity to become storytellers and to be active participants in the discussions. In this study, the way Isabela used personal responses and connections to the texts will also play an important role in her participation in the literacy event of discussing texts in small groups.

1.2 A sociocultural perspective

Vygotsky's (1978, 1987) sociocultural theory of learning and development stresses the great importance of cultural resources in the formation and development of thinking. Wertsch (1985) states that three topics form the core of Vygotsky's theoretical framework: "1) a reliance on a genetic or developmental method; 2) the claim that higher mental processes in the individual have their origin in social processes; and 3) the claim that mental processes can be understood only if we understand the tools and signs that mediate them" (pp. 14-15). While Vygotsky's works focus primarily on the mediational role of signs, especially language, contemporary scholars drawing on his work (e.g., Gutiérrez, 1994; Lacasa, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moll, 1990, 1997, 2001; Rogoff, 1995) stress the social and cultural contexts that mediate people's learning and how learning takes place within activity systems (Engestrom, Miettinen & Punamaki, 1999). Of major interest here is the use of sociocultural theory to understand learning and instruction in schools.

1.2.1 Learning and classroom contexts

Because Vygotsky viewed thinking not as a characteristic of only the child but of the child-in-social-activities with others, Moll and Whitmore (1993) stress the relationship between thinking and what they call the social organization of instruction. Contexts for learning in schools involve, therefore, the sociocultural tools created and used within classrooms, the cultural resources (including signs and symbols, such as home-based language) used by the students, their families, and communities over time that mediate their daily life and experiences, and the social organization of instruction (e.g., structures of participation, patterns of discourse). Classroom contexts have then the potential to mediate students' learning either by facilitating or restricting students' access to learning and participation in schools. Lacasa (1997) and Moll and Whitmore (1993) suggest that contexts that

offer multiple mediational means are likely to extend the amount and type of learning possible for students. Therefore, in studying bilingual students' literate thinking from a sociocultural perspective, it is relevant to examine the characteristics of contexts that invite or restrict students' access to full participation in literacy events as the following studies illustrate. The next two studies address contexts for learning in elementary classrooms that have English language learners.

Moll, Díaz, Estrada, and Lopes's (1992) microethnography of reading lessons in a bilingual classroom illustrates the role of the social organization of instruction in mediating students' participation and learning in reading events. After observing the reading instruction in English and Spanish for ELLs, Moll et al. found that the classroom context created for teaching reading in English did not facilitate the transfer of the reading skills the children already had in Spanish. Such instruction did not use and extend the resources each student brought to the classroom. The students were able to demonstrate better skills (reading comprehension of an English text) when functioning with one cultural tool (Spanish language to discuss the text), but poorer skills when asked in English about their comprehension of the text. Moll et al.'s case study points to the need of exploring more systematically the relationship between second language learners' reading comprehension (particularly for linguistic minority children) and the cultural tools (languages, texts, talk, and context) that mediate that comprehension.

Gutiérrez (1994) also examined the relationship among language, context, and literacy learning of ELLs as she analyzed patterns of interaction during journal sharings in nine elementary classrooms. She identified three different general orientations or scripts across classrooms characterized by various patterns of social action, discourse, and activity that afforded differential opportunities for learning: recitation, responsive, and responsive/collaborative scripts. Only in the responsive/collaborative classrooms, in which the pattern of interaction and talk opened up the space for taking turns, did the students have "the opportunity to take up a broad range of interactional and conversational roles and relationships that helped them construct extended oral and written texts" (p. 362).

Gutiérrez and Larson (1994) also illustrate how differences in contexts led to differential access to learning, a finding also documented thoroughly by Toohey's (2000) study in Canada[2]. Some practices and patterns of discourse create contexts that restrict access to certain forms of knowledge and learning. Gutiérrez and Larson conclude that practices that limit students' participation have particular consequences for historically marginalized student populations whose "social and historical experiences. . . are ignored or denied when students are provided few occasions to co-construct activity, discourse and the content of the curriculum" (p. 33).

The mediational potential of cultural tools and the social organization of the classroom should not be interpreted, however, as determining learning and action in a mechanistic way. The interplay between individual and contexts is more complex. Relevant to understanding these complexities is Wertsch's (1998) focus on the interaction between agent and the mediational mean, an interaction that he describes as usually involving an irreducible tension. This interaction leads him to rethink a notion of agent that considers the individual-in-isolation as responsible for action to a notion of agent as "individual-operating-with-mediational-means." The unit of analysis from a sociocultural perspective is then the mediated action, a system characterized by a dynamic tension among various elements. Wertsch stresses that although for purposes of analysis the elements could be isolated, this analysis should be carried out with an eye to how the pieces fit together in the end:

> Studies of either the agent or the mediational means are useful and relevant insofar as they inform us about how these elements combine to produce the mediated action under consideration. Among other things, this means that cultural tools should not be viewed as determining action in some kind of static, mechanistic way. . . cultural tools . . . can have their impact only when an agent uses them." (p. 30, emphasis in the original).

Wertsch (1998) also emphasizes how the introduction of novel cultural tools transforms the action, the whole activity system:

> The introduction of a new mediational means creates a kind of imbalance in the systemic organization of mediated action, an imbalance that sets off changes in other elements such as

the agent and changes in mediated action in general. Indeed, in some cases an entirely new form of mediated action appears. (p. 43)

The next study (Smagorinsky, 2001; Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 2000) illustrates how Wertsch's theoretical constructs help to understand the interplay between individual and context in classrooms. Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen's (2000) study focuses on the meaning making process of readers in small groups drawing on the Vygotskian concepts of mediation, contexts, and zone of proximal development. Based on the high school students' evocations of texts as they read and responded to "Hamlet," Smagorinsky (2001) describes reading as both a *mediated* and a *mediating* process. Reading was a *mediating process* in that the process of producing new texts contributed to the construction of meaning and a *mediated process* in which students' cultural practices enabled, or not, different transactions with texts.

The context and cultural practices of the high school students' classroom mediated the reading of the students in that emotional readings were valid responses to literature and so the students had access to multiple venues for making meaning. The students' readings, however, were also mediating in that the students' process of composing new texts (e.g., body biographies) in response to the readings contributed to the meanings that emerged during the transaction. For Smagorinsky, meaning emerges for readers through the composition of new texts in the transactional zone. This transactional zone can be broadly described as a dynamic, permeable, and experiential space in which readers and texts conjoin and in which cultural mediation takes place.

Although their study was conducted in a mainstream high school, it is one of the few studies using a Vygotskian approach to examine students' responses to literature placing great emphasis on the role of the context and, at the same time, on students' agency in changing the context. The authors reject deterministic views of contexts arguing for the need to conceive of social contexts in terms of the deeper histories that comprise them (e.g., the students' lives, personal agendas and interests, and their immediate and more distant social contexts). Students' personal lives and histories play an important role on how they appropriate and change instructional contexts.

This tension between agent and mediational means will also inform the analysis of Isabela's literary responses (a child-operating-with-mediational means) as she changed linguistic contexts in the discussions. In this study the mediational means are a combination of heterogeneous cultural tools—language(s), storytelling, literate ways of talking about texts, the texts—and also the peers' and adults' discourses. All of these mediational means interact and constitute an activity system in which learning takes place.

Also important in this study is the concept of *self-regulation* as a characteristic of higher mental processes in the individual (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998). Wertsch used the concept of self-regulation to describe Vygotsky's explanation of the child's use of inner speech and the transition from interpsychological to intrapsychological functioning. In this study, however, I am appropriating Wertsch's description of self-regulation as how the child takes over complete responsibility for carrying out the goal-directed task to understand children's self-regulation of discourse as they move among different linguistic contexts.

This study, therefore, represents a Vygotskian approach in the following ways: a) it adopts a genetic or developmental stance by studying the same children (focusing on a girl) over the course of an academic year; b) it utilizes a teaching-learning situation characterized by the children's participation within a dialogic and changing literature study group environment; c) it incorporates several mediational means into the small group discussions, including different teachers' and children's discourses, and multiple uses of texts and two languages; d) it analyzes how the children (as agents) appropriate and transform these mediational means into resources to accomplish social and intellectual "tasks"; e) it studies the transformation of external to self-regulation in a child; and f) it explores the tension between agent (one girl) and the mediational means available in the small group literature discussions.

2. Context

The setting for the study was a bilingual elementary school in the US Southwest with a ninety-three percent Hispanic school population, according to official school reports. Hispanics[3] in this school are mostly of Mexican-descent, both US-born and recent immigrants. The remaining seven percent of the school population included Native Americans, European Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans. In this dual-language school Hispanic students who were English learners were mixed in the same classroom with English monolinguals who were Spanish learners. The teacher organized her instruction around the goal of fostering bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic success for all students. Reading and writing instruction was offered in the student's first language. However, the children were allowed access to their first and second languages as they participated in classroom activities, and both languages were used interchangeably throughout the day.

The classroom had twenty-one seven- and eight-year olds, all of Mexican descent. Ten were English-dominant and eleven were Spanish-dominant as determined by the school's classification of language proficiency. Isabela was a seven-year-old Mexican born girl, the third of five children in her family. She was a first-generation immigrant whose family had moved from Mexico to the US Southwest four years before the study. She grew up on different ranches in Mexico as her parents moved to find jobs. At the time of the study her father was working in construction and her mother was a homemaker. Both parents were Spanish speakers. From observations of Isabela's interactions and her mother's report, Isabela spoke mostly in Spanish and occasionally codeswitched to English usually with English speaking peers. Isabela was considered a beginner reader and writer of Spanish.

Julia López-Robertson had been a bilingual teacher for five years. Julia created a learning environment where the children were invited to think, especially about the books they read and the themes they studied, to share their thoughts with others in whatever language they wanted, and to pose questions to each other inviting their peers to extend their comments on a regular basis. As part of her language arts curriculum, Julia had both guided reading groups and literature discussion groups. The small literature discussion groups differed from guided reading groups, because the students in literature discussion groups had a choice in the selection of literature. Groups were not organized by reading proficiency or language dominance, but most of the time they were bilingual. Both engagements differed also in their purposes. Guided reading in Julia's classroom pursued to support students' learning about the reading process, to increase the students' repertoire of reading strategies, and to increase the students' confidence as readers. Small group literature discussions, on the other hand, served the following purposes:

a) They were intended to provide students with an aesthetic experience with literature (Rosenblatt, 1995), to make connections, pose questions, and develop their own taste in books. Students had the opportunity to pay more attention to their responses to the books while simultaneously learning to evaluate literature.

b) They encouraged thoughtful discussions about books with all the children regardless of their reading proficiency or language dominance. In other words, they provided the students with the opportunity to develop an opinion about social issues that enabled them to stand up for their opinions while listening to others and considering different perspectives.

c) They offered a particular space where Spanish language (oral and written) was valued, supported, fostered, and where everyone—English- as well as Spanish-dominant students—was encouraged to be bilingual.

Almost one week before each discussion the children were presented with four books available in both languages from which to choose. Julia became a teacher-researcher and we worked together in the organization of the literature discussions. We chose the books to be offered taking into account their literary quality (Freeman, 1998; Schon & Corona-Berkin, 1996), the characteristics of quality multicultural children's literature for those books representing other cultures (Yokota, 1993), their availability in both Spanish and English (with few exceptions), and a focus on family during the first semester of the school year and on social issues during the second semester. When we organized the literature circles we encouraged students as individual readers and as a group to have a variety of responses to literature. We believe, like Rosenblatt (1978, 1995), that rather than approaching for the

first time a piece of literature by focusing and examining its literary elements, students should be allowed to experience the text aesthetically and to make meaning and respond in different ways. Therefore, we did not assign roles for the students to perform in the literature circles.

3. Methods: qualitative case study design

The study described in this article draws on and extends a one-year study in which I examined bilingual young students' responses to literature using ethnographic methods and case study design (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998). The study of Isabela's discussions in different linguistic groups is situated within this larger study of the children's responses to literature. Methods for the larger study included field notes from participant observation, audiotapes, and transcripts of 75 small group literature discussions or literature circles; videotape of literature circles; informal interviews with nine case study students and some of their parents; and samples of students' written responses to literature. The discussions were 20 to 45 minutes long and took place each week or every other week. I participated in the classroom from one to three times weekly, whenever we had literature discussions, organizing and facilitating the discussions together with Julia, the teacher researcher. I also audiotaped and analyzed all of the different types of reading events in the classroom for one week and attended several classroom activities and events related to reading over the year. As part of the original study, 11 literature discussions representing 3,607 conversational turns went through two layers of analysis: a thematic analysis of the students' and the adults' discourses and an analysis of the students' literary responses. [4]

From the analysis of their literary responses, I found that the students had a variety of literary responses to texts including the following categories: analytical talk (comments addressing the stories as a cultural product, focusing on the language of the texts, analyzing the art of the illustrations, and making narrative meaning) representing 59% of students' literary responses; intertextual connections (to other texts and to movies and soap operas) representing 5% of students' literary responses, and personal responses or connections to life experiences comprising 36% of students' literary responses. The category of connections to life experiences usually involved both narratives of personal experiences and storytelling of scary stories. (For a detailed explanation of how the percentages per category were determined, see Martínez-Roldán, 2000.)

The study reported in this article represents a third layer of analysis attempting to develop a better understanding of the relationship between context and learning, specifically, the relationship between the linguistic context of the small groups and young English language learners' talk about texts. From the data based that include 21 second-grade bilingual Mexican American students from working-class families, a case study student was selected by purposive sampling, which as Merriam (1998) indicates: "is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand and gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (p. 48).

3.1 Why Isabela?

Findings from the larger study show that Isabela stood out from the beginning in the literature discussions for her high participation in the small groups independently of the language of the groups even when she was a Spanish-dominant student not considered a balanced bilingual speaker at the time and independently of the fact that she was a beginner reader of Spanish. Therefore, to examine closely her participation and the nature of her responses to literature in the small groups had the potential to offer important insights and information relevant to the interplay between individual and context. Her participation was measured in terms of numbers of conversational turns in comparison with her peers and in terms of the length of her turns. As an example of her participation, Table 1 illustrates the percentages of conversational turns used by the members of four literature discussions in which Isabela participated, the first three groups made up of Spanish- and English- dominant students and the last one, made up only of Spanish-dominant students, including Julia, the teacher.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Conversational Turns for Participants in Four Literature Circles

La cama de Isabella (Isabella's Bed) 10/21/98			*La asombrosa Graciela* (Amazing Grace) 3/11/99			Pepita Talks Twice/ *Pepita habla dos veces* 3/18/99			*La niña invisible* [The Invisible Girl] 3/25/99		
	n	%		n	%		n	%		n	%
Julia	77	38	Researcher	108	31	Isabela	54	28	Julia	62	28
Isabela	55	27	Mario	101	29	Julia	47	24	Gloria	42	19
Amaury	45	22	Diana	88	25	Luis	36	19	Isabela	37	17
Luis	27	13	Isabela	38	11	Sandy	32	17	Diana	31	14
			Robin	12	4	Nadine	23	12	Ricardo	30	14
									Johaira	17	8
Total	204	100		347	100		192	100		219	100

As Table 1 illustrates, Isabela even had one literature discussion in which she used more conversational turns than the teacher, the discussion of Pepita Talks Twice/*Pepita habla dos veces*; a discussion in which she engaged in the storytelling of a difficult experience she had as a recent immigrant speaking girl in the US (Martínez-Roldán, 2003).

Isabela also had a range of responses to the texts as well as her peers. Table 2 offers an overview of Isabela's responses to literature in four small group literature discussions organized into two major categories: a) non-literary responses (NR), that is responses related to group processes, such as procedures for negotiating turn taking and language, facilitating the discussions by being a translator for others, and social talk; and b) literary responses (LR), which in turn are subdivided into analytical talk (AT) and personal responses (PR), as described above.

As shown in Table 2, 40% of Isabela's literary responses to the texts represent personal responses, which in her case involved narratives and storytelling. Isabela, indeed, stood out in the literature discussions as a storyteller since the beginning of the literature discussions (Martínez-Roldán & López-Robertson, 1999). She engaged in the telling narratives of scary stories, narratives about family experiences, visits to her hometown, her experiences as an immigrant, and her experiences at school. An analysis of the length and content of conversational turns in which Isabela shared personal experiences or told stories, shows that Isabela's most elaborated and lengthy experiences were related to her home town, her "*pueblito.*" Her longest narratives were also the storytelling of scary stories.

Being storytelling a major part of her repertoire to participate in literacy events, it seemed theoretically relevant to examine her use of storytelling across linguistic contexts. This made her case unique, one from which I could gain more understanding about the interplay between individual and mediational means, which involves examining the role that ELLs may play in their participation in literacy events, and the role of the context on shaping their participation.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Isabela's Conversational Turns by Types of Responses in Four Literature Circles

Literature circles	Non-literary responses		Literary responses				Total of turns by Isabela
			Analytical talk		Personal responses		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
La cama de Isabella (Isabella's Bed)	19	35	26	47	10	18	55
La asombrosa Graciela (Amazing Grace)	12	32	13	34	13	34	38
Pepita Talks Twice/ *Pepita habla dos veces*	18	33	15	28	21	39	54
La niña invisible [The invisible girl]	7	19	22	60	8	21	37
Total	56	30	76	41	52	28	184
Total AT + PR			76	60	52	40	
Total NR + LR	56	30	128		70		

3.2 Unit of analysis

Primary data for this study included transcripts from all the small group literature discussions in which Isabela participated over a year, 15 literature circles listed in Table 3. In this study the small groups are considered to be activity systems and they constitute the unit of analysis. I revisited the transcripts and the types of literary responses Isabela had in each small group. To examine the role of the context, I identified the literary genre of the texts as well as the linguistic composition of the groups: Spanish being a group composed only of Spanish-dominant bilingual students, and Bilingual being a group having both Spanish- and English-dominant bilingual students. It should be noted that the members of the small groups varied from discussion to discussion, depending on students' choices of texts.

I compared the types of literary responses Isabela had in both linguistic groups searching for patterns as well as for disruptions of those patterns. I also examined the composition of the groups in terms of gender and in terms of who was facilitating the discussion, whether the teacher or myself. The preliminary examination of the small groups, led me to choose three small groups to conduct an in-depth study of the interactions among the participants, which are described below. Those small groups presented patterns and contradictions that promised to be theoretically relevant to my research questions.

Table 3

Overview of Literature Circles in which Isabela Participated, Genre of the Texts, and Linguistic Composition of the Groups

Date	Book Title	Genre	Linguistic Composition
8/26/98	Green Corn Tamales/*Tamales de elote*	Modern variant of traditional story	Spanish
9/2/98	*¡Qué montón de tamales!* (Too Many Tamales)	Realistic Fiction	Spanish
9/16/98	*Guillermo Jorge Manuel José* (Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge)	Realistic Fiction	Spanish
9/23/98	*El tapiz de abuela* (Abuela's Weave)	Realistic Fiction	Bilingual
9/25/98	*El tapiz de abuela* (Abuela's Weave)	Realistic Fiction	Bilingual
10/7/98	Uncle Nacho's Hat/*El sombrero del tío Nacho*	Legend/Folklore	Spanish
10/21/98	*La cama de Isabella* (Isabella's Bed)	Fantasy	Bilingual
10/23/98	*La cama de Isabella* (Isabella's Bed)	Fantasy	Bilingual
10/28/98	My Aunt Otilia's Spirits/*Los espíritus de mi tía Otilia*	Fantasy Scary Story	Bilingual
2/4/99	*La mariposa*	Realistic Fiction	Bilingual
2/18/99	*La mariposa*	Realistic Fiction	Spanish
3/4/99	*El libro de los cerdos* (Piggy Book)	Fantasy	Bilingual
3/11/99	*La asombrosa Graciela* (Amazing Grace)	Realistic Fiction	Bilingual
3/18/99	Pepita Talks Twice/*Pepita habla dos veces*	Realistic Fiction	Bilingual
3/25/99	*La niña invisible* [The Invisible Girl]	Fantasy	Spanish

4. Findings and discussion

The analyses of Isabela's participation in small group literature discussions reveal that although she had a variety of responses to literature in both linguistic groups, her talk indeed changed as she moved from Spanish-dominant groups to bilingual groups. Although she had a range of responses to literature in both linguistic groups, in a Spanish linguistic context she drew much more on storytelling. Moreover, all of the instances in which she engaged in the storytelling of scary stories, she was participating in a group made up of Spanish-dominant students. Four out of six discussions in a Spanish-dominant group included the telling of scary stories by Isabela. In the English-dominant groups she often assumed the role of facilitator of Spanish for some English-dominant students and did not engage in storytelling or long narratives, even if the texts were suitable for eliciting scary stories.

Next, I discuss excerpts from three small groups that exemplify the interplay and tensions between the individual--Isabela self-regulating her discourse--and the context--the linguistic composition of the groups that offered different audiences, which constrained or shaped her telling of narratives. One is a Spanish-dominant group in which Isabela engaged in the storytelling of scary stories and in which her storytelling practices were challenged by other members of the group. The other two small groups are English-dominant groups in which the texts could have elicited the storytelling of scary stories but Isabela did not engage in this type of response to the texts. The original language used by the participants has been kept in the excerpts throughout the paper, which will be displayed in double columns as needed. To the left is the transcription using italics for the Spanish text, to the right is the translation to English.

4.1 Scary stories and literacy learning: "Uncle Nacho's Hat"

A scary story in the literature discussions was a narrative that had sensational elements intended to scare (e.g., dead people, bloody people, the devil, or mummies). The following excerpt, made up of a chain of scary stories told, mostly, by Isabela, illustrates the negotiation of meaning among the participants of this small group in terms of what counts as a literary response to texts. The students were discussing the text "Uncle Nacho's Hat/*El sombrero del tío Nacho*" by Rohmer and Zubizarreta (1989), a traditional Nicaraguan story about an uncle who does not want to let go of his old hat (a metaphor for old habits) for a new one. This picturebook has no scary elements in the story. At some point in the discussion, one of the girls, Gloria, addressed Isabela trying to remember a story or experience told by Isabela in a previous literature discussion. Isabela did not remember what Gloria was asking for, but instead announced that she had a different story to tell. Another student, Ada, spoke out to indicate that it was not the time to tell stories, because they were "talking about this book," excluding the telling of stories as a valid literate way of participating in the discussions, a message that was probably reinforced by my interest in knowing the nature of Isabela's connection to the text.

Gloria: *(Dirigiéndose a Isabela) ¿Te recuerdas el día que estábamos hablando de los, de los, can, cancianos? No sé, ¿cómo se llama?*

Gloria: (Talking to Isabela) Do you remember the day we were talking about kel, kelderly people? I don't know, how it's called?

Researcher: *Ancianos, ajá*

Researcher: Elderly, aha.

Gloria: *Ajá, ancianos, recuerdas que tú tenías una nana que era an, anciana (hablando a Isabela).*

Gloria: Aha, elderly, that you had a nana, a nana that was an el, elder (talking to Isabela).

Isabela: *Ajá, pero yo me sé una historia pero. . .*

Isabela: Aha, but I know a story, but . . .

Ada: *No, estamos hablando de éste (del libro)*.

Ada: No, we are talking about this (book).

Isabela: *Yo sé pero . . .*

Isabela: I know, but . . .

Researcher: *¿Pero se están acordando de cuál, del libro del niño que visitaba los ancianos? Ese es el cuento de "Guillermo Jorge Manuel José."*

Researcher: But, which one are you remembering, the book of the boy who visited the older people? That is the story of "*Guillermo Jorge Manuel José.*"

Isabela: *No, de ese yo no me estoy acordando. Me estoy acordando de una historia que me contaron, pero que es igual a esa.*

Isabela: No, it is not about that one I am remembering. I am remembering of a story that someone told me, but that it is similar to that one.

Researcher: *¿Que se parece a cuál?*

Researcher: It is similar to which one?

Isabela: *A ese libro.*

Isabela: To that book.

Researcher: *¿Al Tío Nacho?*

Researcher: To Uncle Nacho?

Isabela: *Sí*

Isabela: Yes.

Researcher: *Ah, pues cuando te acuerdes de tu historia nos la haces.*

Researcher: Ah, so when you remember your story you can tell it.

Isabela: *Ya me la acordé, me la estoy empezando a acordar. Es bien chistosa y asusta mucho.*

Isabela: I already remembered, I am beginning to remember. It is very funny and scares a lot.

Gloria: *Ajá, deja ver, ja, ja, ja.*

Gloria: Aha, let me see, ha, ha, ha.

Researcher: *¿Y se parece a la del Tío Nacho?*

Researcher: And is it like the Uncle Nacho story?

Isabela: *Ajá.*

Isabela: Aha.

Researcher: *Ah, bueno, pues vamos a oírla. ¿Ustedes quieren oír la historia que se parece al tío Nacho?*

Researcher: Ah, well, let's listen to it. Do you want to listen to the story that it is similar to Uncle Nacho?

Gloria: *Sí.*

Gloria: Yes.

Ada: *¡Sí, yo sí la quiero oír!*

Ada: Yes, I do want to listen to it!

When Ada did not support Isabela's attempt to engage in storytelling, Isabela introduced two arguments that gained the audience's interest in listening to her story: first, she argued that her story was connected to the text, that it was similar to the text they were discussing; secondly, that her story was very funny and scared a lot. The members of the group, including Ada, who initially was not interested in listening to Isabela's stories, expressed their interest in listening to her, and so she began her story.

I had been interested since the beginning of the discussions in understanding the connections between Isabela's stories and the texts we discussed. Therefore, in this discussion I made explicit efforts to know the nature of the connection of Isabela's story with the written story "Uncle Nacho's Hat" and so I asked Isabela to make explicit that connection. (Underlined text indicates codeswitching to English).

Isabela: *Había una, es igual que un libro, pero les voy a contar la historia esa. En una casa así bien oscura, y allí, allí un cuarto donde había una, una, una "desta." ¿Cómo se llama una* witch*? ¿Cómo se dice una* witch*?*

Isabela: Once upon a, it is the same as a book, but I will tell you the story. In a very dark house, and there, there was a room where there was a, a, how is it called, a witch. How do we say a witch (in Spanish)?

Ada and Researcher: *¿Una bruja? Bruja*

Ada and Researcher: [¿Una bruja?] A witch? Witch.

Isabela: *Sí, una bruja y mataba los niños.*

Isabela: Yes, a witch, and she killed the children.

Researcher: *¿La bruja?*

Researcher: The witch?

Isabela: *Sí, y después*

Isabela: Yes, and then

Researcher: *¿Y cómo se parece eso al Tío Nacho?*

Researcher: And how is that similar to Uncle Nacho?

Isabela: *O sea, que me fue recordando y recordando, cuando se levantaban así, y habían, en esa casa estaban todas las niñas, todos, todos, todos los niños, y en esa casa todas las noches se levantaban y iban y asustaban a la gente*

Isabela: Well, it made me remember and remember when they woke up, and there was, all the girls were in that house, all of them, all of the boys, and in that house every night someone woke up and scared the people.

Ada: *¡Uy!*

Ada: Uy!

Isabela: *O los mordían, así, y un niño que se había morido (muerto) a él nada le asustaba. Es como el Gasper, pero no es el Gasper; pero cuando iban y asustaban a la gente, toda la gente lloraba. Y una vez, porque una vez un vampiro fue . . .*

Isabela: Or they beat them, and a child who was dead, he was scared of nothing. He is like the Gasper, but it is not the Gasper, but when they went and scared all the people, the people cried. And once upon a time, because there was a vampire. . .

Student: *(pregunta inaudible)*

Student: (inaudible question)

Isabela: *y después le chupó la sangre a una señora.*

Isabela: And later, he sucked the blood of a woman.

Ada: *¿Y por qué (inaudible)?*

Ada: And why (inaudible)?

Researcher: *Ellas tienen dos preguntas y yo tengo una también. ¿Ustedes le van a hacer preguntas a ella?*

Researcher: They have two questions and I have another one. Are you going to ask her questions?

Isabela explained that one scene of the picturebook in which the uncle was in bed reminded her of the scary story she was telling, accepting implicitly my definition of what counts as "connections" to the texts in literature discussions and at the same time validating her narrative as a literary response. She then continued with what appeared to be a chain of stories until the students took the floor of the discussion posing questions to Isabela, such as the following:

Gloria: *Ajá. ¿Eso pasó de verdad?*

Gloria: Aha. But did that really happen?

Isabela: *Hace mucho, cuando vivía Dios.*

Isabela: Long time ago, when God lived.

Gloria: *Yo sé porque ellos hacen eso, porque quieren asustar a toda la gente y los que se caigan los agarran. Y las brujas son muy nojudas, son muy regañonas.*

Gloria: I know why they do that, it is because they want to scare all the people, and then they take those who fall on the floor. And the witches, the witches are very angry, they are too grumbling.

Researcher: *¿Y tú crees que eso es cierto, estas historias o son de la imaginación de las personas?*

Researcher: And do you think these stories are real or they come from people's imaginations?

Daniel, the only boy in the group, had an expression of disbelief, and so I opened Isabela's interpretation to discussion in the group by asking if they all believed that those scary stories had really

happened or if they were a creation of people's imagination. Ada and Daniel believed that the stories came from people's imagination, but continued interacting with Isabela about her story, asking what is a vampire and listening to other short stories she added to the first one in which the main character was the devil. At this point in the discussion, Daniel challenged the veracity of Isabela's story by stating that the story was not real: "*eso no es verdad*." Having questioned her authority as a storyteller, Isabela reverted that authority to the group and assumed the role of learner, which I interpret as a strategic move to graciously exit the situation:

Porque yo, cuando a mí me dicen esas cosas, me asusto, y las cuento yo pa' que, pa' que me digan si es cierto o no, porque así también dicen que si tienes miedo que te encajan unas uñas por atrás.	Because, when someone tells me these things, I get scared, and I tell them (the stories) so you can tell me if they are real or not, because someone has also told me that if you are scared someone will dig their nails in your back.

The students then talked about the characters and the illustrations of the book *Uncle Nacho's Hat*, but Isabela, joined by Gloria, returned to tell scary stories (which we enjoyed). That literature discussion ended with a conversational turn by Isabela in which she told the following story:

Aquí estamos contando las historias y ahí sale la momia. Sale la momia y le decimos (cambiando el tono de voz): "Aquí estamos," y pedimos ayuda. Y venimos con la cruz en la mano y venimos con un padre, y así (haciendo una cruz en el aire) le echa agua bendita, ¿ve? Y por eso yo cuento esas historias porque me recuerda de los libros.	There we are telling stories, and then comes the mummy. The mummy comes and we say (changing the tonal quality of her voice): "Here we are" and we ask for help, and we come with a cross in our hands, and we come with a priest, and in this way (making a gesture with her hands) he spreads holy water on it, do you see? And that's why I tell these stories because they remind me of the books.

Isabela closed the small group literature discussion with a creative and smart explanation she volunteered to justify her use of storytelling: "And that's why I tell these stories because they remind me of the books." She made efforts to place her stories within an acceptable type of literary response. That last comment suggests that she was monitoring or self-regulating her discourse (and the audience's responses) to accommodate it to the nature and expectations of the small groups, which were organized around a discussion of a literary text.

Isabela's response to literature through the use of stories, resembles what happened in Solsken, Willet, and Wilson-Keenan's (2000) study on the hybridity of texts created by a student as a way to participate from the literacy events in the classroom. In their study, a Latina girl interwove home, school, and peer language practices to serve a variety of social and personal agendas. Isabela stretched the notion of connections to books by describing her use of storytelling of scary stories as a way to talk about texts: "*porque me recuerda de los libros*" [because they remind me of the books], suggesting how Isabela creatively and actively appropriated and transformed the literary concept of "connecting" to the texts, while at the same time contributed cultural resources into the literature discussions. Isabela demonstrated she had a literate understanding of the "official" definition of "connecting to the texts" used throughout the literature discussions when asked to mention specific parts of the texts that motivated the connection. At the same time, Isabela inserted her own broader interpretation. Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, and Ming Chiu (1999) have described these types of hybrid language practices as dynamic spaces for learning created by students.

The way Isabela worked to gain the interest of the audience to listen to her stories in this small group, her notion of "connection to the texts," and her efforts to validate this interpretation as an appropriate literary response, suggest how the context shaped and was shaped by her responses. Moreover, Isabela's storytelling was initially prompted by another member of the small group. In some respects, storytelling was a collaborative joint activity in which other participants took an active role

by not only inviting Isabela's stories, but also by reacting to them with interest and emotion, and sometimes, by adding their own stories.

4.2 Interchange of expertise: "My Aunt Otilia's Spirits"

The last week of October, the students were going to celebrate the *Día de los muertos* or Day of the Dead. The students were going to prepare "paper faces" on the occasion of that traditional Latin American holiday. Invited by the teacher, one of the mothers was going to visit the classroom to teach the students how to make and paint the faces. The teacher and I decided to provide the opportunity to the students to talk about the Day of the Dead in the literature circles since it was a part of the students' culture that permeated many activities for the week in and outside school. We offered two texts that the students could choose for the discussions. Not surprisingly, Isabela chose the scariest and most humorous one, "My Aunt Otilia's Spirits/*Los espíritus de mi tía Otilia*" by García (1987). That picturebook tells a Puerto Rican scary story about an aunt whose spirit leaves her body. One night, her nephew, who shares his bed while she visits his family, accidentally drops her bones on the floor while her spirit had temporarily left her body. He had to put all of the bones together before the spirit of tía Otilia returned to her body.

There were three Spanish-dominant students and one English-dominant student in this small group. One might have expected that this text would have elicited scary stories from Isabela who was so willing to engage in storytelling, but the students, including Isabela, wanted to read aloud individually and collaboratively parts of the story they liked. In addition, the composition of the group and other members' needs did not create the most suitable context for storytelling, since there was an English-dominant student who was trying to participate in Spanish and Isabela took on the role of facilitator of Spanish language for him. Indeed, after having several bilingual small group discussions, Isabela realized that her English peers needed the help of Spanish-dominant speakers to participate in the discussions. After one of the first bilingual small groups, Isabela wrote in her journal (in non-conventional ways that she read to the teacher as follows): "*A mí me gustó mucho, pero le tuvimos que ayudar a los de inglés porque apenas están aprendiendo a hablar español*" [I liked it very much, but we had to help the English (speaking children) because they are bearly beginning to learn to speak Spanish.].

In this literature discussion, Héctor, the English-dominant boy, used many turns to share his opinions about the text. He was working hard to recover his Spanish because, as he said, he wanted to be able to talk to his grandmother who spoke only Spanish. He told the teacher he wanted to speak in Spanish in the literature circles and so he did, even when his oral production in Spanish was very limited. His determination to try to speak Spanish was evident. Isabela and other Spanish-dominant students as well supported Héctor's efforts and provided him with words that he needed or asked for as he participated in the discussion, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Héctor: *Era, era malo, era malo cuando el chama, el . . .*	Héctor: It was, it was, it was bad when the young k . . .
Isabela: *el chamaquito*	Isabela: the young kid
Hector: *el chamaquito tumbó las cosas . . .*	Héctor: the young kid knocked the things ...
Mario: *los pedazos*	Mario: the pieces
Hector: *los pedazos de la se . . .*	Héctor: the pieces of the lad . . .
Isabela: *de la tía*	Isabela: of the aunt
Héctor: *de la tía Otilia*	Héctor: of aunt Otilia

As they supported Héctor to discuss the text in Spanish, they all began to read aloud one part of the text that they all liked in such a way that while they supported Héctor's language development, the most experienced readers in the group supported Isabela as they read collaboratively some sentences from the text. Isabela had read independently the following sentence, which was one of her favorite parts: *"Mis dientes (inaudible) y mis pelos se pusieron parados y mis pies dijeron: 'échense a correr.'"* [My teeth (inaudible) and my hair stood up, and my feet said: "get ready to move."]. Then Isabela commented: *"Eso me gustó"* [I liked that.]

However, Isabela could not read aloud independently the following sentence and received support from her peers and they all engaged in a collaborative reading of the sentence:

"La cabeza estaba donde deberían estar los pies y los brazos donde debía estar... (pausa, leyendo lentamente) y v i c e v e r s a."	The head was where the feet should be and the arms where… (stopped and read slowly) and v i c e v e r s a.

It may be that Isabela did not feel the need to tell scary stories because they were discussing one, the one offered by the text. In that sense their literary talk was directly connected to a scary story. However, the context of this small group did not facilitate Isabela's engagement in the storytelling of other scary stories in that she was responsive to the needs of one of the members of the group. Isabela participated in this small group actively and efficiently, not only by assuming the role of a more expert Spanish speaker, but simultaneously by receiving the support of the more expert Spanish readers in the group. This literature discussion was one of the first times in which Isabela, as a beginner reader, took risks with reading aloud in the groups. The story was sufficiently interesting for Isabela as to make her to want to engage with the print of the text in front of other more proficient readers in Spanish and English. Reading in this small group became a collaborative joint activity (Gutiérrez, et al.1999) in which the students supported each other as they used the written text to participate in the discussion.

4.3 The bilingual context as a site of tension: "Isabella's Bed"

"Isabella's Bed" by Lester (1992) is the story of two children who visit their grandmother and stay at her house. They sleep in a bedroom that once belonged to Isabella, the grandmother. There is a sandalwood chest filled with objects and things from South America in the room. As the children observe each object, they get transported to the place related to the object's history, which is the history of a young woman. By observing the objects inside the sandalwood chest, the children learn that her grandmother is Isabella, the young woman who possessed those objects. The small group discussing this text was bilingual with two boys, Isabela, and Julia (the teacher). In this discussion, Isabela did not engage in long narratives or storytelling although the story was about a grandmother telling stories to their children. One interpretation I entertain is that the group, which had only one girl and two boys, one of them English-dominant and the other a boy who was not particularly into listening to stories told by girls, did not provide an avid audience for Isabela's storytelling. The teacher also made the students aware of the need to slow down since one of the members in the group was not fully bilingual. Isabela, therefore, engaged in translating some of her and other's responses into English or Spanish:

Isabela: *¡Yo, yo, yo! (Buscando en el libro). A mí me gustó esta parte porque tenía, le dijo la nana que ella era, que ésta era la cama de ella y ella era Isabela.* *(Comenzó a buscar otra parte del cuento).*	Isabela: Me, me, me! (Searching in the book). I liked this part because (it) had, the grandmother said that she, that this was her bed, and that she was Isabella. (She was looking for another part of the text.)
Teacher: *OK, pero quédate en esa hoja porque acuérdate que Amaury no entiende mucho, así que hay que hablar con él también para que él entienda. (Hablándole a Amaury) ¿Entendiste?*	Teacher: OK, but stayed on that page because remember that Amaury does not understand a lot, so we have to talk to him so he also understands. (Addressing Amaury) Did you understand?

Isabela: *Y lo puedo decir en inglés.* <u>I liked this part because *la nana* said that she is Isabella and I liked the little fish right here.</u>

Isabela: And I can say it in English. <u>I like this part because the grandmother said that she is Isabella and I liked the little fish right here.</u>

In spite of not engaging in storytelling of scary stories, Isabela managed to participate in this bilingual context, and even used more conversational turns in this literature discussion than the boys. Her ability to participate does not imply that the heterogeneous groups could not become a site of tension for Spanish speakers, girls, or emergent readers. Indeed, Isabela could not display her abilities as a translator as much as she seemed to want. Amaury, English-dominant speaker and the more experienced reader in the class, a boy already reading chapter books, did not welcome Isabela's translations to English, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Luis: *A mí me recordó cuando nosotros en primero (inaudible).*

Luis: It reminded me of when we were in first grade (inaudible)

Julia: *¿Eso te recordó de eso? (Dirigiéndose a Amaury) ¿Entendiste lo que él dijo?* <u>What do you think?</u>

Teacher: That (pointing to the text) reminded you of that (his story). (Talking to Amaury) Did you understand what he said? <u>What do you think?</u>

(Luis comienza a traducir su respuesta)
Luis: <u>Because this part</u>

(Luis begins to translate what he has said)
Luis: Because this part . . .

Isabela: <u>He said he likes this part</u>

Isabela: <u>He said he likes this part</u> . . .

Amaury: He says he likes this part because we all . . .
(Amaury no puede completar la traducción).

Amaury: He says he likes this part because we all . . .
(Amaury cannot complete the sentence).

Teacher: Well, because we went to the desert.
Amaury: That's what he said.

Teacher: Well, because we went to the desert.
Amaury: That's what he said

It could be that Amaury was a receptive bilingual of Spanish but not a producer, and in fact did not need the translation. It could be that being such a proficient reader, he did not feel comfortable being helped by an emergent reader, or it could have been issues of gender so he did not want to be helped by a girl. Whatever the reasons, the context of this discussion presented Isabela with different sources of tensions, since several of the ways she could fully participate in the discussion did not suit the other members' needs or agendas. This may have led Isabela to engage in an interesting type of response not so common in the rest of the literature discussions in which she participated. This response was what Sipe (1996) calls "Performative responses." In his study he found that the text seemed to function as a platform for the children's own creativity or imagination. He describes performative responses as follows:

> [The students] manipulated the text, utilizing it as a pretext (O'Neill, 1995) for the children's own creative purposes, in a playful (and sometimes subversive) carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984) romp, and as an expression of *fouissance* (Barthes, 1976). Like little deconstructionists, the children regarded the text as their playground, as an Adarchic array of signifiers with potentially infinite meanings, and over which they exercised complete control" (Sipe, 1998, p. 377).

Isabela's performative responses included what Rowe (1998) calls "book-related dramatic play,"

which she found to have an important role in the literacy-learning processes for the children in her study. Isabela "dramatized" in a playful way the part she seemed to like the most in the book, the last sentence of the story when the grandmother says: "I have so many stories to tell you my children." Isabela read the sentence and later, changing her voice, rephrased these last words of the story and "rewrote" them by changing the character of the grandmother with the teacher:

"<u>Wait, wait!</u>," *dice la maestra, (cambiando su voz) "tengo muchas cosas que contarles niñitos chulos." ¡Ja, ja!, "niños chulos!"*	"<u>Wait, wait!</u>," says the teacher, (changing her voice) "I have so many stories to tell you my cute children." Ha, ha!, "cute children!"
A mí me gustó el corazón, como lo hicieron, ¿verdad? Lo voy a soplar (soplando tres veces en su mano). Maestra, maestra, como que está soplando el viento (soplando en su mano).	I liked the heart (in the picture), how they made it, right? I will blow it (blowing three times). Teacher, teacher, it seems that the wind is blowing (blowing over her hand).

Isabela did not perform as a storyteller within this constrained and challenging small group, but made use of other sign systems in which she also "performed," always using her first language as a cultural resource and intellectual tool that enabled her to have an active participation in this small bilingual group.

5. Conclusions and implications

In reviewing research question number one: "In what ways did having access to her first language support Isabela's discussions of texts in small group literature discussions?," the findings of this study point to the vital role of the first language as an intellectual resource that enabled a young English language learner, Isabela, to draw on her home-based discourse to make sense of texts. In this study, access to her first language created for Isabela the possibility of developing a positive academic identity as a student who could fully participate in the literate events in her classroom, as much as her English peers. The study, therefore, suggests the importance of allowing the use of students' first language to facilitate literacy and biliteracy development. In this bilingual classroom the students' home language was regarded as an intellectual resource and a tool that the children brought to the educational process.

Isabela's linguistic repertoire (especially her first language and her use of narratives and storytelling) enabled her to participate as a literate member of the classroom within different small group literature discussions with either Spanish-dominant or English-dominant students. In contrast, lack of access to cultural resources (especially to students' languages) means, ultimately, lack of access to learning and participation in schools. The argument made here about the benefits of enabling instead of restricting students' access to diverse linguistic and cultural resources, challenges instruction enacted through English-only legislation.

Research questions numbers two and three sought to understand the relationship between individual and context within specific literate events in the classroom. Question number two asked "In what ways did the small groups and their linguistic composition (being in a Spanish-dominant group or in an English-dominant group) shape Isabela's talk about texts?" Isabela's talk changed as she moved from Spanish-dominant bilingual groups and Spanish monolingual groups to English-dominant bilingual groups. In the Spanish-dominant linguistic context, she engaged in a variety of literary responses to literature. Prominent among these was her use of narratives including the genre of scary stories. In the English-dominant groups, she assumed the role of facilitator of Spanish for some English-dominant students and she did not engage in storytelling of long narratives or in the telling of scary stories, even if the texts were suitable for storytelling. She engaged instead on performative responses. The absence of both long narratives and scary stories in Isabela's discussion of texts in the bilingual English-dominant groups points to the interplay of different mediational means (e.g., the texts, the linguistic composition of the groups, the peers' gender, language dominance, and reading proficiency) in facilitating, constraining, and shaping Isabela's telling of narratives. Moreover, having access to different linguistic contexts and different audiences made available a range of responses and roles for Isabela that allowed her participation as a literate member of different groups, which indicates

the benefits of providing bilingual (and heterogeneous) learning contexts to English language learners, instead of just English-only contexts and instruction.

Question number three addressed "What cultural resources did Isabela contribute to the literature discussions?" This study documents how, through her participation in the literature groups Isabela was not a passive student whose responses were just shaped by the context, but that she self-regulated and monitored her discourse and her use of texts as resources for thinking. The ways in which this young student self-regulated her discourse according to the linguistic composition (and different audiences) of the groups, and how she managed to be a successful participant in both contexts, point to a view of achievement that departs from the typical perspective of policymakers who interpret achievement only in terms of standardized tests scores. This different perspective on achievement acknowledges intellectual abilities and complex cognitive processes socially mediated that go beyond the restrictive definition of achievement that drives standardized tests.

Moreover, Isabela appropriated and transformed different mediational means into resources to accomplish social and intellectual "tasks." For instance, by appropriating ways of talking about texts and changing the very meaning and interpretation of literary concepts with regard to what counts as "connecting to texts," Isabela was able to position herself as a storyteller within the groups while simultaneously engaging in the discussion of other aspects of the texts. Isabela thus contributed to the shaping and transformation of the context. She contributed cultural resources to the discussions, drawing on storytelling as part of her home's funds of knowledge.

The findings from this study assert that a major role for teachers of linguistically diverse students as well as mainstream students is to orchestrate the learning context in such a way that it provides access to as many cultural resources as possible. The social organization of the literature discussions in this classroom was strategically orchestrated by the teacher to provide the students access to cultural resources that are not always available in classrooms that include linguistically diverse students. The small literature groups in this study included a range of mediational means: the use of quality children's literature in the students' first and second language, heterogeneous grouping, the teachers' and the peers' mediation, and access to different discourses, particularly, to storytelling as a valid response to literature. The social organization and the nature of the discussions, which privileged multiple interpretations, bilingualism, and biliteracy, created a context in which all students had access to learning and participation.

Finally, it seems important to highlight the benefits of the literature discussions as a context that influenced positively Isabela's reading attitudes and reading behaviors. The members of the groups contributed resources to Isabela's literary understandings by supporting her reading of texts as they engaged in collaborative reading. The literature discussions supported Isabela's engagements with texts throughout the year and supported her interest in reading. Isabela's written opinion about the literature discussions held throughout the year was that the literature discussions "*te ayudan a aprender a leer*" [help you learn to read] and that they are "*muy suaves, porque aprendes de los libros*" [very cool, because you learn from the books], not an insignificant learning about the value of texts, reading, and talk in two languages at such early age in an English Only era.

Notes

[1]. All names except the teacher's are pseudonyms
[2] Toohey's (2000) study documents how some pedagogical practices in mainstream classrooms create academic identities for minority students associated with failure at school.
[3] The term Hispanic in this manuscript refers to people of Latin American heritage, although Nieto (2000) and others caution about the limitations of this term.
[4] A conversational turn was defined as one or more utterances expressed by a single person before another speaker took the turn.

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