Teaching Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms: Towards a Pedagogy of 'Thirdspace'

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Abstract

This paper explores the possibilities of what I call 'Thirdspace' pedagogy for ESL literacy education, one that interrogates some of the assumption commonly held by politicians about the acquisition of 'cultural literacy' and, related to this, social, political, and historical perceptions of cultural-linguistic difference. By drawing on the concept of 'Thirdspace', I seek to challenge dichotomising and essentialising tendencies in thinking about the education of L2 learners, with the aim of locating literacy learning on the fault-line between cultures - in the space of radical openness. The 'trialectic' of pedagogic spaces and the political strategy of Thirding in classroom communities of difference is examined, to suggest how this approach may be used productively in reconceptualising literacy pedagogy in/for conditions of multicultural life.

Introduction

In times when conservative and liberal notions of multiculturalism, diversity and difference claim to provide final vocabularies for adjudicating cultural tensions, it is important to raise questions about the adequacy of teaching frameworks, methods and models of literacy learning that construe singular meanings and identities for those who are new 'latecomers' to the system. As many researchers and theorists have emphasised, multicultural education is not feasible in conditions of the unifying top-down cultural politics of a permanent nation-state (Giroux 1996). On the one hand, conservative forces today operate with the notion of an all-encompassing cultural identity of a nation imagined in the public spheres of cultural politics and education, with the aim to differentiate, control, marginalise, and normalise the cultural Other. At the same time, it is no less important to identify the ethnocentric blind spots and voluntarist rhetoric in what were regarded as the most radical (liberal) critiques of the mainstream models of migrant and minority students' education. Because liberals celebrate cultural pluralism by essentialising and reducing the Other to the "particular ethnic Thing" (Zizek 1997: 43), they also fail to see the power-grounded relationships among the construction of identity, the production of cultural-semiotic space and struggles over meaning. Neither the totalising power of a dominant culture nor the educational governmentality of a nation-state can be underestimated or wished away through a mere celebration of the local embrace.

Today, when a conservative fetishising of the 'national' and the 'global' and a liberal pragmatism of the 'ethnic' and the 'local' seem to paralyse the very possibility of re-thinking cultural politics in education, we need an alternative to this binarist model. We need, to paraphrase Henri Lefebvre (1991), to resume the dialectic of multicultural spaces in which we live and learn in order to reveal contradictions between the global and the local, between centres and peripheries, between the individual and the social, between the politics of universal knowledge and situated knowing in everyday practices. In a word, we need a theory (a knowledge) of the production of cultural-semiotic and intellectual spheres in multicultural conditions; one that injects a third dimension into thinking about the possibility of crossing, erasure and 'translation' of the boundaries in the cultural production of identities and textual meanings.
The production of cultural-semiotic spaces

The widely spread assumptions that culture is a common denominator for those who live within it, and that its boundaries are defined by the unitary and coherent experiences of a nationality, are still driving mainstream research into language and literacy learning and education practices in the (late)modern world. These ideas carry the signifying weight of the desire for a community composed of members equally assimilated to and immersed in a shared experience - a desire sentimentalised by democratic rhetoric and nostalgic in its search for a once and future totality within national borders. For people to sustain the image of their national community, they must share common cultural knowledge, values and beliefs, and this requires substantial ideological work to form the collective consciousness of its members. In particular, the production of a common cultural-semiotic space can be tied to those textual practices that emphasise unitary cultural knowledge and memory. It is through the technology of print and other media that people establish an image and a sense of their community, even though "they never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them" (Anderson 1991: 6). Cultural literacy and competency with 'nuanced' and 'proper' English, as Hirsch (1999) argues, are key elements in achieving national community, social peace and economic justice. In this conception, cultural literacy is ideological through and through in that it is put to shape and maintain an image of a nation as a deep, horizontal comradeship.

However, it must be stressed that a project of nation-building and, connected to this, transmission of cultural literacy are inseparable from the processes of cultural homogenisation and exclusion of the Other. Official nationalism models a culture as a limited social space in that its membership is finite and does not include the entire world. For a community (a nation) to exist there must be the Other, against which the community can define itself. Nationalism intersects therefore all too often with (neo)colonialism and (neo)racism. The former thinks in terms of legitimising the national community vis-à-vis the construction of the different and often inferior Other, while the latter "dreams of eternal contamination" (Anderson 1991: 149). For these reasons, difference is often seen as a problem or a threat, which needs to be normalised or neutralised. The language of state and common cultural literacy are the key tools in this process, contributing to the ideologically narrow conception of a cultural-semiotic sphere of nation in which meaning- and identity-making occur. In other words, the nationalist thought in broader politics, and in the sphere of education, draws on the 'classic' notion of complex but static culture - a "self-contained whole made up of coherent parts" (Rosaldo 1989: 20) - to strengthen the 'We' collective through the homogenising principles of ordering and regulating cultural relations and differences.

These characteristics of national holism and the production of homogenising cultural-semiotic space have been challenged by those who see in the making of a cultural totality not only a set of constructed meanings such as national unity, purpose and identity but also another set of operations such as order-through-domination and unity-through-incorporation (Haraway 1991). Today, in particular, we are witnessing the resurgence of nationalism and pan-culturalism as a reaction to the processes of globalisation and migration; as reactionary forms driven by the fear of letting 'loose' a Culture (writ large) in conditions when the foreign from without and the different from within threaten the imagined and written community - that is, a nation. Consequently, contemporary nationalism drives both our knowledge industry and pedagogic practices, restricting their foci to those of cultural, linguistic and ideological unification and glossing over acknowledgment that the very existence of the national has always been a "coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given a bodily form" (Bakhtin 1981: 291). For one thing, then, we need to recognise, both in the public sphere of cultural life and in education, the
simple reality of today's multicultural states in which national languages and cultures are themselves assemblages of many 'other-cultural' strands, sedimentations where different sociocultural and linguistic elements constitute complex mixtures and blendings, and in which the notion of original purity becomes increasingly (and seriously) destabilised and questionable.

A powerful counter-narrative of a dynamic culture, which I find particularly useful in thinking about the production of cultural-semiotic spatiality, comes from the works of the Tartu-Moscow school of cultural semiotics. Yury Lotman (1990), a key figure of this school, offers an ecological vision of linguistic and textual processes in culture, defining its semiotic space as the semiosphere. Like Bakhtin, Lotman understands the semiosphere of culture as a coexistence of differences and as a living space of dialogical events, in which the production of consciousness and meaning - as the production of being - can only take place through contact with an Other. Just as life-forms in nature provide the modes of otherness for humans to understand their own distinctive life-form, so different cultures, cultural groups or individuals require the Other to understand their particular identities. The dialogical interaction in the semiosphere of culture occurs on the boundaries between us and them, self and other, our culture and foreign culture. Every culture constructs such boundaries within which semiotic activity is organised on different levels of sign systems.

The production of spatial boundaries is a result of semiotic individuation, imagination and modelling of real space. According to Lotman (1990), the external boundary of cultural semiotics separates 'own' space which is safe and ordered from 'their' space which is hostile and chaotic. Besides this function of ordering and organising reality, the boundary is also the bilingual mechanism that translates external messages into the internal language of the semiosphere and vice versa. Any cultural semiosphere and its text-generating mechanisms depend on otherness and its semiotic input in order to forge appropriate conditions for semiotic enrichment and change. The boundary translation between 'us' and 'them' is not a perfect assimilation of difference but, rather, results in 'approximate equivalences' or new hybrid semantic connections and meanings. In this function, the boundary determines both the internal mechanism of textual production and the mechanism of translation through which the semiosphere of a culture can be in contact with non-semiotic and alien semiotic spaces.

The same basic boundary division occurs also within the semiotic sphere of a particular culture and reflects its asymmetrical nature or the 'bipolar asymmetry' (Lotman 1990). The semiosphere has a centre surrounded by increasingly amorphous areas moving in the direction of the periphery. If the centre contains dominating sign systems that include sign users, texts, and codes that are elaborately organised, the periphery, on the other hand, is characterised by heterogeneity and fragmentation and is responsible for dynamics within the semiosphere. However, the conception of the centre and the periphery, in Lotman's (1990: 138) words, is just a rough primary distinction:

In fact, the entire space of the semiosphere is transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different languages and even of texts, and the internal space of each of these sub-semiospheres has its own semiotic 'I' which is realised as the relationship of any language, groups of texts, or separate texts, to a metastructural space which describes them, always bearing in mind that languages and texts are hierarchically disposed on different levels ... [creating] a multi-level system.

That is to say, Lotman's perspective on cultural semiotics presupposes the presence of a centre or origin in the play of signification, but he tends to a poststructural conception by exploring relations between multiple centres and margins. Therefore, the fundamental culturally perceived differences and oppositions, such as 'high - low', 'left - right', 'white -
black’, 'good - evil', 'town/centre - countryside/periphery', 'male - female', 'normal - abnormal', etc., perforate the semiosphere by creating multiple inner boundaries that specify its regions (sub-semiospheres). The play of signification and translation across those borders leads to the semiotic ‘irruptio’ of texts and signs into an alien territory and ultimately to the transformation and emergence of new meanings.

In this view of the cultural semiosphere, we can observe an interplay of diachrony and synchrony, continuity and contingency, identity and alterity. The concept of boundary creates the very possibility of thinking about what is inside - individuality, collective identity, normativity, values, moral positions, etc., - as relatively stable and historically continuous phenomena. This is, according to Lotman, the result of autocommunication or internal dialogicality within the boundary of a sub-semiosphere. But this stability can be lost when boundaries collide, within the process of translation. In communication between differences (e.g. 'own - alien', 'i - s/he', 'us - them', 'high - low', etc.) the dynamic reconstruction of texts may lead to the alterity of identities and meanings. By paying attention to both intrasemiosis (or autocommunication) and intersemiosis, Lotman argues that the interplay between them yields the most new information.

At the same time, the dialogical communication with difference is characterised by functional asymmetry, running its spectrum "from complete mutual translatability to ... complete mutual untranslatability" (Lotman 1990: 125). From the centre of the semiosphere to its periphery, translatability decreases. The monological centre, the locus of meta-language, attempts to regulate the entire semiosphere, translating it into its own language. However, the dialogical periphery is the "area of semiotic dynamism ... [and] the field of tension where new languages come into being" (ibid: 134). The periphery is also the 'filter' through which a culture comes into contact with other cultures, translating them. Any synchronic section of a culture will reveal dialectic between centre and periphery, inside and outside, canonised and non-canonised texts and memories. In this dialectic the entire semiosphere is set in motion from outside. As a complex mechanism, it cannot "switch itself on by itself" but, rather, depends on input from other cultures to change and develop.

In Lotman's scholarship, the semiosphere of culture is in a constant state of mutation. It always oscillates between centre and periphery, identity and alterity, native and foreign. His speculations on translation and intersemiosis present the boundary as the semiotic and political 'hot spot'. The tension between us and them, inside and outside, is most evident at the boundaries. This tension maintains the semiosphere in a state of 'creative ferment' and conflict, both separating and blending languages, genres, texts and cultures. The boundaries of the semiosphere are sites of semiotic creativity, which is facilitated by the movement of texts and the sociocultural dynamics of people. On the one hand, the notion of semiotic motion within and across the semiosphere of a culture cleaves open its hegemonic political discourse within the bounded notion of cultural space, mapping the turbulent patterns of 'bilingual translation'. In the process of intersemiosis between centre(s) and margin(s) as well as in translation between 'own' and 'foreign' the authority of central texts is constantly undermined and dispersed, shifting official meanings by the very process of being translated. On the other hand, the process of semiotic border-crossing for the marginal and the foreign involves the dialogical affirmation of identity. Yet this identity is neither immutable nor primordial. A tension between socially constructed differences results in a dialogical indeterminacy of identity that opens up a process of cultural-semiotic hybridisation.

Hence, in the concept of the semiosphere, 'culture' can be better understood not as a noun but, rather, as a verb, foregrounding the dynamics of texts and identities between and across constructed boundaries and the production of cultural-semiotic Thirdness - new texts, identities and meanings. This phenomenon of hybridisation, crucial for Lotman, Bakhtin and others, is often excluded from or bypassed in the political discourse of the multicultural state.
It is traditionally seen as a transitional stage en route to complete cultural assimilation. However, for Lotman, hybridity is neither a form of inferiority nor a transitional state, but is a mode of cultural-semiotic development itself. It is a contestatory energy that exists in-between cultural boundaries and is, in fact, a source of productive cultural creativity and new meaning-making possibilities.

**Semiotic landscaping and planning**

Lotman's analysis of the production of semiotic space is fundamentally important in understanding how the Other is (mis)recognised in the heated debates about immigration and education of minority students. Through such spatial-semiotic markers as 'high' and 'low', 'inside' and 'outside', 'centre' and 'periphery', 'us' and 'them', etc., people do not only make sense of themselves and of cultural spaces in which they live. They also deploy these discursive topologies to construct a communal space, which would be a permanent source of protection from fears of insecurity, isolation, estrangement and the intrusion of aliens. In turn, this reifies a politics of difference that favours 'us' (identities, meanings and practices of the 'inside'), while marginalising and excluding 'them' (practices, knowledges and identities of the 'outside'). Obviously, in the production of cultural-semiotic spaces and political locations, identities and meanings become consolidated and generalised. As Artiles (2000) argues, 'us' comes to define a particular collective identity - homogeneous, hard-working, speaking proper English. In contrast, 'them' are lazy, dirty, heterogenous, misuse English and take advantage of the welfare system.

Operating within the 'bipolar asymmetry' of 'us' and 'them', the majoritarian 'inside' identifies the Other - newcomers, strangers and immigrants - as a lower category, threatening the cultural-linguistic canon, and hence as something that requires disciplining and assimilation. The semiotic production of spaces of difference is directly related to those discourses in which difference is constructed and its presence is organised. The first step in this process, according to Zygmunt Bauman (1997: 46), is the invention of the disruptive Other who does not fit into the linguistic, cognitive, moral and aesthetic spaces of the dominant culture:

> [B]y their sheer presence, [strangers] make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be a straightforward recipe for action, and/or prevent the satisfaction from being fully satisfying, pollute the joy with anxiety while making the forbidden fruit alluring; ... they befog and eclipse the boundary lines which ought to be clearly seen; if, having done all this, they gestate uncertainty, which in its turn breeds the discomfort of feeling lost - then each society produces such strangers.

The next issue becomes what to do with these strangers to make cultural-semiotic spaces orderly and meaningful again. The reaction of the cultural 'inside' to the presence of the Other results, as a rule, in broad political and educational initiatives directed at making the different similar. This can be seen in the persistent and historically recurrent efforts of the 'inside' to produce cultural literacy crises, leading consequently to the actions that reduce the linguistic vitality of minority groups and diasporas. As a result, the roles of ESL programs have often been aligned with the construction of homogenising cultural representations and have played a distinctive social role in shaping the subjectivities of culturally different students.

Politicians discussing the funding of ESL education in major immigrant-receiving countries have traditionally followed an assimilationist agenda rooted in the cultural politics of maintaining the vision and practice of a unified cultural space. The primary goal of this agenda has been the unconditional incorporation of minorities through the acquisition of 'proper' English and common cultural knowledge - memory, sentiments, practices and
attributes of a host culture. At the same time, as the ethnic fabric of immigrant-receiving states changed dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s and the struggle for minority rights increased, there has been a shift in politics from the linear assimilation to the liberal, non-linear model of minority integration. However, the liberal celebration of the autonomy and uniqueness of local cultures, minority and immigrant identities has produced one-dimensional, patronising notions about difference, treating "each local culture the way the colonizer treats colonized people - as 'natives' whose mores are to be carefully studied and 'respected'" (Zizek 1997: 44). This multicultural strategy of convenient Othering, as Stuart Hall (1992) observes, merely has confirmed and stabilised the hegemonic cultural order by naming the Other as marginal or peripheral to the mainstream. Consequently, as the conservative/liberal debate over language education has polarised, we are witnessing today the adoption of English-only policies in some states of the USA, the move towards mainstreaming of ESL support after the Swann Report in the UK and the phasing-out of LOTE and long-established bilingual programs for Aboriginal students in Australia.

Conservative policies in response to the liberal multicultural agenda have lead to a 'backlash pedagogy' aiming to maintain the status quo of the dominant culture in education and to further marginalise minority students (Gutiérrez 2000). In the current process of cultural-semiotic landscaping, linguistic standards are legitimised and commodified so that "language determines who has access to political power and economic resources" (Tollefson 1991: 16). That is to say, language and literacy planning not only establishes the semiotic domination of the 'inside' but also consolidates the cultural-linguistic deficit of the Other, both creating and perpetuating inequality. While Hirsch (1999), for instance, says that knowledge of the literacy canon and competency in 'nuanced' English are tickets to better social futures, many people from minorities who are 'competent' in English remain functionally illiterate and find themselves still relegated to ghettos (Macedo 2000).

Hence, conservative initiatives in language and literacy planning, those that have pragmatically and symbolically elevated English to a high status position while devaluing other languages and their speakers, return us again to a fundamental political and pedagogic question. As Michael Singh (2001: 88) states, we cannot be positioned advantageously within the world's multilingual economy and sustain linguistic diversity when the cultural and pedagogical spaces of multicultural state "continue to be swamped by Anglo-fundamentalist intent". Neither can we celebrate difference by seeing the Other through a positivistic grid of static and discrete ethnic identities, describing minority groups as having ways of thinking, learning and perceiving the world that are radically different from the mainstream. Rather, we need to recognise local social and ethnic fragmentation and hybridity as the effect of an enunciation of difference that constitutes asymmetries of power in interethnic relations (Luke & Luke 1999).

From this point of view, ethnic fragmentation is a political process aimed at creating oppositional semiotic spaces, in which the vitality of multiple sociocultural identities is sustained through local literacies, social languages and other cultural and diasporic practices. Not only are multiple semiotic locations needed for sociocultural minorities to feel secure. They also provide the basis for new forms of language and literacy cosmopolitics (Singh 2001) as well as for new forms of political agency (Laclau 1996). Yet we must also recognise that new identities, in challenging the very structures by which they have been made, make different claims about the priorities and trajectories of sociocultural change. They are being formed across differences and through the interconnection of fragmented cultures and partial languages. We need to look, then, in our pedagogical practice beyond the traditional static frameworks of culture and the transmission modes of language and literacy teaching to understand the turbulent patterns of language and literacy appropriation by minority students; patterns that are being formed not only in competitive cultural-semiotic locations but also in sociocultural dynamics, inevitably involving dis-locations and border-
crossings. In this regard, Lotman's insistence on the dynamic view of cultural-semiotic
spatiality (as a context for learning) has a profound implication for multicultural education
without essentialism, if we recognise difference and the more subtle and mixed processes of
textual practices occurring in the Thirdspace of differential interconnections and radical
semiotic mutations.

**Hybrid literacies and a pedagogy of Thirdspace**

Given the above-mentioned processes in the production of cultural-semiotic spaces and the
dynamic nature of border-crossing and mutation, there is a need to conceptualise the
literacy practices of minority and migrant students as those which involve a great deal of
intercultural creativity and semiotic hybridity. There is already a growing number of literacy
researchers who challenge the traditional models of homogenous cultural literacy on this
basis (e.g. Duranti & Ochs 1996; Gutiérrez & Stone 2000, Solsken *et al.* 2000). These
sociocultural researchers emphasise that, under multicultural conditions, members of
migrant communities merge semiotic resources and discourses from different cultural
practices within the same literacy event, rather than drawing on one distinct or traditional
cultural practice.

A Thirdspace perspective originates from the view of literacy as literacies, i.e., different ways
with texts within different sociocultural practices (Gee 2001). However, by emphasising
differences between situated practices mediated by texts, the sociocultural approach does
not attempt to produce yet another divide in literacy studies. Because different literacies sit
in different relations of power, there is a great deal of mutual interpellation, ranging from the
relations of complementation and adaptation to those of assimilation and opposition.
Examples of such interpellations have been documented in the ethnographic studies of
interaction between school literacy and literacy practices in different communities (see
Barton *et al.* 2000).

There is no denial that a particular literacy practice can be re-enacted without obvious
transformative changes across the relatively large time-scales of history. The reproduction of
textual practices is due to the censorship of a community, the enculturation of newcomers to
particular practice types as well as the result of ongoing 'autocommunication' within
communal boundaries. Yet communities of practice are not only in contact with other
communities but also they become 'populated' by strangers and newcomers, 'bombarded' by
alien texts or 'invaded' by new technologies and discourses. One way or another, literacy
events involve not only reproductive but also productive-transformative activities, resulting
from intersemiosis. This feature is observable in those literacy events in which two (or more)
literacy practices are interdiscursively and intertextually networked, generating 'borderland
Discourse' (Gee 1996) and hence organic (unconscious) and dialogic (intentional) forms of
semiotic hybridity (Bakhtin 1968). These new hybrid practices (Discourses) can be
recognised as productive or as threatening, depending on the philosophy of a community -
its constructed image, practice patterns and social goals, and a degree of its openness to
difference and change.

Both neo-conservative and neo-liberal policy-makers and educators have embraced the
image of contemporary classrooms as communities. For the former, such an image provides
the ideological basis for designing homogenous literacy learning environments (it is easier
then to imagine what those communities need to know year-by-year). For the latter, this
image provides an opportunity to organise chairs in a circle and to learn more about cultural
differences and their attending values. Yet, it soon appears that the cultural resources of the
Other fall outside the knowledge and values of the dominant groups, on the basis of which
curriculum is designed. Thirding in meaning-making - a marker of border-crossing
innovation, transgressive intertextuality, and mobile textual self-fashioning - becomes then
often (mis)recognised as an error, as a literacy deficiency or even disability. Solsken et al. (2000) observe in this regard that traditional views of literacy do not leave space to acknowledge or appreciate the richness and complexity of hybrid textual constructions because these texts (narrative and written) often fail to approximate the conventional genres and privileged meanings.

Thus, while recognising that classroom communities will remain to a large extent imagined, Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy brings a culturally responsive perspective on the participation of minority students in literacy events. It invites both teachers and teacher educators to (re)imagine classrooms as multivoiced collectives whose literacy learning is related to the practices, discourses and 'funds of knowledge' of other communities (Moll 2000).

Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy is a framework in which the politics of seeing the Other and the 'us-them' binarism is rethought productively to take into account the students' world of everyday - "a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur" (hooks 1990: 31). The starting point here is to approach literacy learning as the domain of life, the unfixed, the dialectic and the dynamic in the intercultural space of action and meaning by revealing the deployment of bifurcated discourses (i.e., political strategies of dealing with difference). Students need to learn how power-knowledge relationships saturate their lived experiences within the cultural-semiotic boundaries of constructed, multiple, 'real-and-imagined' places (Soja 1996). They need to know how these binaries are constructed in asymmetrical relationships. Yet, the aim of a Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy is to transcend sociocultural binarisms by deconstructing the essentialised representations of meanings and identities and by introducing 'other-than' choices. 'Thirding' in meaning-making can be genuinely appreciated only when difference is recognised and used as a resource for literacy learning in conditions of multiculturalism and semiotic multimodality.

Following Soja's (1996) critical studies of spatiality, I deploy the trialectics of space to define those ontological categories by which a pedagogical practice can be analysed as well as re-designed. From a trialectic point of view, the systematic study of space reveals the interaction of material (perceived) space, mental (conceived) space and the space of real action or lived space. Soja defines them respectively as First-, Second- and Thirdspace. The important point seems to be that Thirdspace, or lived space, both encompasses and is distinct from the other two. It is Thirding-as-Othering - "the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also ..." (ibid: 60). Thirdspace is "a product of a 'thirding' of the spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance and meaning" (ibid: 11). This trialectic approach offers a new way of thinking about the pedagogical construction (and reconstruction) of spatiality and its impact on learning in classroom communities of difference.

Firstspace of the pedagogic can be referred to the domain of classroom practice organisation. This is the material-semiotic space of constructing particular learning environments. With the focus on learning rather than solely on teaching, sociocultural perspectives on literacy conceive of learning environments as a space which people historically and dynamically organise through mediational cultural tools. Material-semiotic resources that are available in the classroom not only afford but also constrain students' participation in classroom activities. As a result, instruction practices that restrict students from using semiotic resources (including their home and community resources) have negative social and cognitive consequences for learners (Cole 1998). From a sociocultural point of view, if we are to create rich learning environments, which give minority students
more (or equal) opportunities for participation, then those environments must also be supportive.

This involves the realignment of teaching to the textual practices of all participants. Incorporation of the primary resources of minority students within the learning activities of a classroom will help mediate an individual's relationship to the sociocultural world, connecting classroom literacy learning to multiple cultural practices and funds of knowledge. As such, the pedagogical Firstspace is about a critical analysis of learning space with the aim to create rich learning environments in which the diversity of learners' cultural tools is utilised.

Secondspace of the pedagogic is understood here as an intellectual sphere of classroom practices. Its critical analysis focuses on semiotic-cultural representations of knowledges and meanings, as well as on their tensions. Productive literacy learning in the pedagogic Secondspace is related to the construction of rich collective ZPDs (zones of proximal development), in which students' prior sociocultural experiences are the starting point for further intellectual growth (Vygotsky 1978). In making literacy learning relevant to students' social life, the teacher does not simply pass a textual meaning on to the student. Rather, s/he creates and uses cognitive scaffolds that are germane both to the learning context and to the world beyond the classroom. This intellectual collaboration must be challenging enough to create rich learning tasks, which can be performed first collectively and later independently (Luke 1999; Vygotsky 1978). Hence, the pedagogic Secondspace is both social and mental, interpersonal and intrapersonal.

The social nature of the zone is due to its emergence within a socially mediated activity in which "children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky 1978: 88). The intellectual nature of the zone, as it was understood by Vygotsky, lies in solving pedagogic tasks that will push students to perform 'above themselves'. These 'being ahead of yourself' activities occur only in those classroom events in which social learning leads intrapersonal development. It is not about transmission of a singular knowledge or meaning. Rather, teaching and learning literacy in the collective ZPD means working with the multiple funds of knowledge - everyday and scientific concepts - which in their interaction can afford productive learning and hence high quality intellectual and social outcomes, such as needed for life in multicultural conditions.

Lastly, the pedagogic Thirdspace is conceived of as consisting of living dialogical events in literacy learning practices. It subsumes the previous two spaces and is here given a sociopolitical priority. Thirdspace is about pedagogic events in which difference is recognised, valued, and used as a resource for the productive learning and the active participation of all students in classroom activities (Gore 2001). At the same time, literacy pedagogy of Thirdspace does not necessarily refer to a sense of learning in communal harmony. Conflict between uses (and users) of recognised textual practices becomes itself a tool for rich learning. Students' diversity in meaning-making needs to be understood as a source of openness and 'incompleteness' of their identities, leading to their mutual intellectual enrichment and hence to the enhanced possibilities of creating heterocultural spaces for effective learning.

Furthermore, the pedagogic Thirdspace suggests a need to explore the forces that produce what cultures validate as knowledges. Thirding in literacy learning comes from post-critical views of society, necessitating the cultivation of new ways of reading the world both for mainstream and minority students. Such an understanding of contemporary society and making sense of self and the wor(l)d will be different from culturally egocentric frameworks that are based on the values of either the mainstream or minority orthodoxies. Epistemological dominance and cultural hegemony in classrooms can be overcome only
when any form of knowledge is conceived as incomplete in itself and open to changes and transformations.

Within these trialectics, the pedagogic spaces in multicultural classrooms are dependent upon each other and need to be taken simultaneously into account to formulate the dimensions of a multicultural, multimodal, post-formal and radically open pedagogy of literacy.

Conclusion

In sum, the concept of Thirdspace pedagogy is an attempt to articulate a framework for the literacy education of minority students, which transcends the dualism implied in both conservative and liberal approaches to this issue. Thirdspace is a way out of such dualism. Critical of essentialist positions of identity and cultural literacy, it enables other positions and literacies to emerge. As a lived space, it is also a mode of articulation of new identities and meanings, blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture, identity and cultural literacy. Despite the exposure of Thirdspace to contradictions and ambiguities, it provides a spatial politics of difference that is inclusive rather than exclusive or assimilative. Thirdspace is not about a resolution of contradictions between differences but is itself a way of living and learning with difference(s) and ambivalence in systems of cultural representations and practices of representing.

A Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy can, then, play a modest role in a broader attempt to subvert oppressive practices in teaching minority students. It endeavours to construct a new vision and practice of classroom literacy learning; one that leads to the development of intercultural competence in classroom communities of difference. In striving to create opportunities to jointly experience diversity in classrooms, through a genuine dialogicality of unmerged voices, its philosophy goes well beyond antagonistic binarisms of the dominant and the subjugated.

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