

Revisiting the Continua of Biliteracy: International and Critical Perspectives

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The continua model of biliteracy offers a framework in which to situate research, teaching, and language planning in linguistically diverse settings. Arguing from this model, and citing examples of Cambodian and Puerto Rican students in Philadelphia's public schools as illustrative of the challenge facing American educators, Hornberger has suggested that the more their learning contexts allow learners to draw on all points of the continua, the greater are the chances for their full biliterate development. The present paper revisits the continua model from the perspective of several international cases of educational policy and practice in linguistically diverse settings – Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, and from a critical perspective which seeks to make explicit the power relationships which define bi(multi)literateacies in these contexts. Building from these perspectives and from continuing research in Philadelphia's Cambodian and Puerto Rican communities, we propose an expanded continua model which takes into account not only biliterate contexts, media, and development, but also, crucially, the content of biliteracy. We conclude with comments on how the insights of the continua model of biliteracy can contribute to our understanding not only of linguistically diverse classrooms, but also of all classrooms.

Introduction

The continua model of biliteracy offers a framework in which to situate research, teaching, and language planning in linguistically diverse settings. The model uses the notion of intersecting and nested continua to demonstrate the multiple and complex interrelationships between bilingualism and literacy and the importance of the contexts, media, and content through which biliteracy develops (see Figures 1 and 2). Specifically, it depicts the development of biliteracy along intersecting first language–second language, receptive–productive, and oral–written language skills continua; through the medium of two (or more) languages and literacies whose linguistic structures vary from similar to dissimilar, whose scripts range from convergent to divergent, and to which the developing biliterate individual's exposure varies from simultaneous to successive; in contexts that encompass micro- to macro-levels and are characterised by varying mixes along the monolingual–bilingual and oral–literate continua; and (as revised here) with content that ranges from majority to minority perspectives and experiences, literary to vernacular styles and genres, and decontextualised to contextualised language texts (Hornberger, 1989; Skilton-Sylvester, 1997).

Biliteracy, in this model, refers to 'any and all instances in which communica-

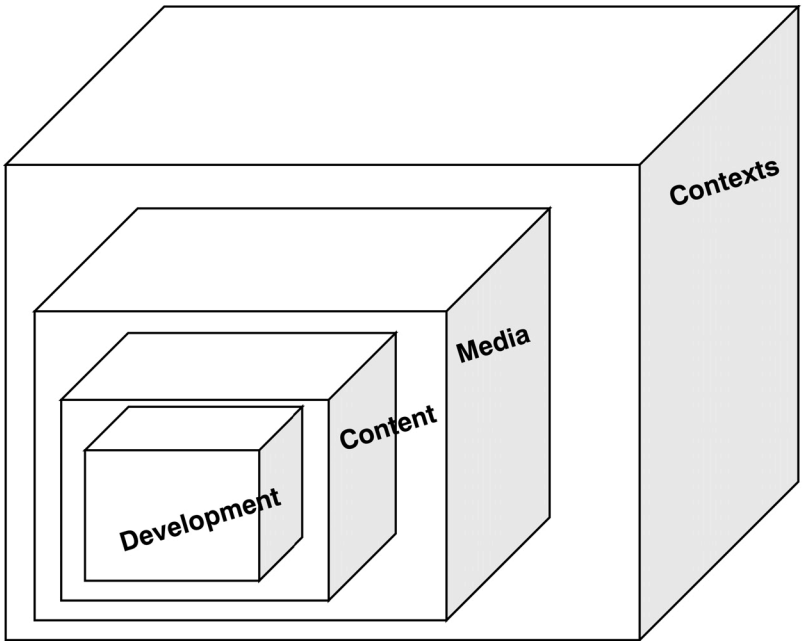


Figure 1 Nested relationships among the continua of biliteracy

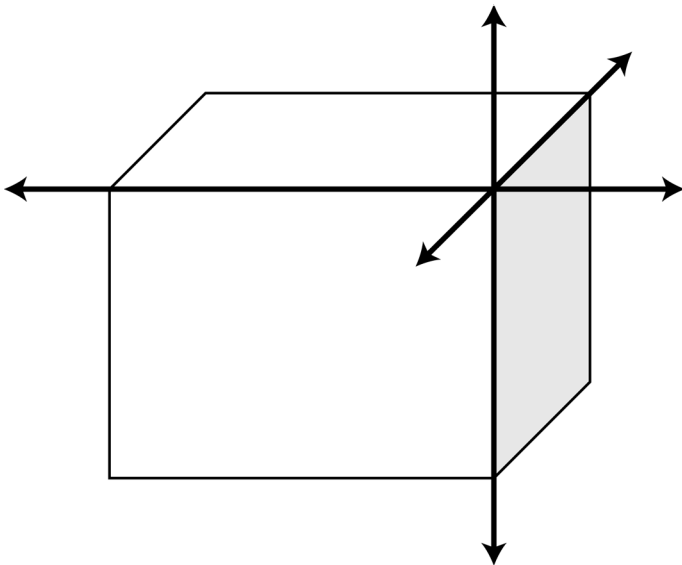


Figure 2 Intersecting relationships among the continua of biliteracy

tion occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing' (Hornberger, 1990: 213), a definition which by no means originated the use of the term, but which attempted to clarify it. In order to understand any particular instance of biliteracy – be it an individual biliterate actor, interaction, practice, programme, situation, or society – we as educators, researchers, community members or policy makers need to take account of all dimensions represented by the continua. At the same time, the advantage of the model is that it allows us to focus for pedagogical, analytical, activist, or policy purposes on one or selected continua and their dimensions without ignoring the importance of the others.

In 1989, Hornberger emphasised a balanced attention to both ends of the continua and all points in between. The notion of continuum was 'intended to convey that although one can identify (and name) points on the continuum, those points are not finite, static, or discrete. There are infinitely many points on the continuum; any single point is inevitably and inextricably related to all other points; and all the points have more in common than not with each other' (1989: 274–5). Arguing from the model, and citing examples of Cambodian and Puerto Rican students in Philadelphia's public schools as illustrative of the challenge facing American educators, Hornberger suggested that the more their learning contexts allow learners to draw on all points of the continua, the greater are the chances for their full biliterate development (1989: 289). Implicit in that argument was a recognition that there had in fact *not* been attention to all points.

In the intervening years since the model was proposed, Hornberger and her students and colleagues have continued to use the continua model in their work on biliteracy in Philadelphia and internationally. Given a decade of accumulated work, the moment seems propitious for revisiting the continua model to see how it has held up through the new perspectives we have acquired. One revision which has already been alluded to above and to which we will return is the addition of the continua of biliterate content (Skilton-Sylvester, 1997).

In what follows, we will be drawing primarily on two kinds of new perspectives we are bringing to the continua of biliteracy, perspectives which are distinguishable but also complementary and overlapping: (1) international perspectives deriving from Hornberger's work in South America and from the growing international literature on multiple literacies, multilingual literacies, and multiliteracies; and (2) critical perspectives deriving from Skilton-Sylvester's and Hornberger's ongoing work in Philadelphia and from the growing international literature on critical pedagogy, critical realism, critical literacy, critical discourse analysis, and related fields.

Throughout, what we will be emphasising is an emerging explicit emphasis on power relations in the continua model (see Figure 3). We are arguing that in educational policy and practice regarding biliteracy, there tends to be an implicit privileging of one end of the continua over the other such that one end of each continuum is associated with more power than the other (e.g. written development over oral development). In investigating biliterate contexts, development, media and content, one can see the ways in which power is negotiated through language by individuals and institutions and that some language practices seem to garner more power than others. Corson (1999) describes the ways in which power and language are inextricably linked:

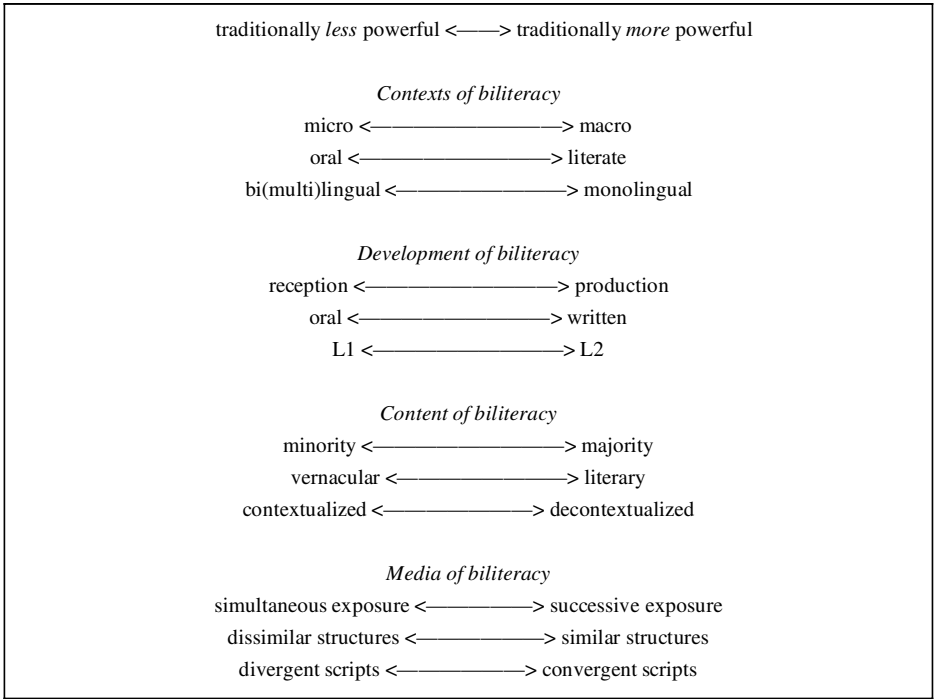


Figure 3 Power relations in the continua of bilinguality

For most everyday human purposes, power is exerted through verbal channels: Language is the vehicle for identifying, manipulating, and changing power relations between people...In short, the struggle for power in any setting is really a struggle for the control of discourses (Corson, 1999: 14–15).

In investigating the complexity of bilinguality using the continua as a theoretical framework, one sees the ways in which certain practices, varieties, contextual features, and instructional strategies have been tools for gaining and/or sustaining power, while others have not. What Hornberger was arguing for in 1989 when she first proposed the continua of bilinguality, though not as explicitly as we will do here, is the need to contest the traditional power weighting of the continua by paying attention to and granting agency and voice to actors and practices at what have traditionally been the less powerful ends of the continua.

We are not suggesting that particular bilingual actors and practices at the traditionally powerful ends of the continua (e.g. policies which promote written, monolingual, decontextualised, standardised texts) are immutably fixed points of power to be accessed or resisted, but rather that though those actors and practices may currently be privileged, they need not be. Indeed, we are suggesting that the very nature and definition of what is powerful bilinguality is open to transformation through what actors – educators, researchers, community members and policy makers – do in their everyday practices. In this, we concur with Street, who suggests that ‘for educationalists concerned with ... power, the question is

not “how can a few gain access to existing power”, nor “how can existing power structures be resisted”, but rather how can power be transformed’ (1996). Street follows Foucault and Bourdieu in putting forward a ‘process’ (as opposed to ‘quantity’) model of power, arguing that power varies between sites and contexts and is exercised through force, through discourse, and through acquisition of cultural and symbolic capital. One route to transforming existing power, he argues, is through a critical reflexivity that

focuses attention on the daily lived reality of power relations and helps us recognise how we are all involved in both control and resistance; rather than assuming that power always lies somewhere else, this view assumes that *power lies in each of us* and our immediate personal and social relations, as well as in institutional formations. (emphasis ours, Street, 1996)

Similarly, our purpose in pointing to the privileged, powerful ends of the continua is not to reify that power but rather to emphasise that the privileging can be transformed through critical reflection by the various actors involved – educators, researchers, community members, and policy makers – on how their own everyday biliteracy practices do or do not exercise and maintain power. This is particularly important for language teachers to consider as they teach linguistically diverse students. Critical reflection about language and power in and out of the classroom can allow new speakers, readers and writers of a language to see that the values placed on particular languages and varieties are not fixed, but socially and culturally constructed. This can make classrooms places where a diversity of linguistic practices can be valued and given voice. Peirce’s (1995) discussion of helping students claim the ‘right to speak’, is a useful construct in understanding how agency and voice are connected to power relationships. She suggests that those who are learning a new language need to believe that they have the ‘right to speak,’ that what they say will be heard and responded to with interest, respect and action. Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1977) work, she suggests that we cannot assume that listeners always grant those who are speaking (or writing) English as a second language the ‘right to speak’ and that as teachers, we need to help students claim the right to speak in and out of the classroom context. Peirce goes on to describe the powerless and powerful positions learners are ‘allowed’ to take in particular situations. For example, one adult learner initially saw all of the communication problems she had when talking to native speakers as related to her own limitations as an immigrant; as time went on and she began to see herself as a multicultural citizen of the United States, she began to be able to speak more freely and command the attention of her listeners.

Critical reflection is important not only for those who are speaking a new language, but also for those who are listening – educators, researchers, community members and policy makers. In looking at the ways in which power is constructed through language and in interaction, actors can begin to see themselves as agents who have the power to transform practices and not merely as recipients of already decided upon norms. In discussing the relationship between action and power, Giddens (1984: 14) offers a helpful description of agency. He explains, ‘Action depends upon the capability of the individual to “make a difference” to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to “make a difference”, that is, to

exercise some sort of power.' This paper takes the position that all of us have the capability to transform the traditional power weighting of the continua of bilingualism, to 'make a difference' to this 'pre-existing state of affairs'.

In what follows then, we revisit the continua, paying explicit attention to dimensions of power, drawing on recent international and critical perspectives to do so, and making a plea for research, teaching, and language planning which grant agency and voice to those who have traditionally been powerless. Corson has recently suggested that neutrality is in any case a problematic stance in applied fields, since it often means condoning an unsatisfactory *status quo* (1997: 166). Instead, he suggests that applied practitioners, and in particular in this case applied linguists, might take inspiration from the critical realism of Roy Bhaskar, a British philosopher of science, whose theory of being includes as real entities the 'reasons and accounts that people use or offer, to direct or effect social or individual behavior or change' (Corson, 1997: 169). Such an approach, Corson suggests, might lead to reform in several areas of applied linguistics, including not only dictionary-making and linguistic nomenclature, but also language planning, treatment of standard and nonstandard varieties, and second language programme delivery; in most cases such reform would involve the devolution of 'research and decision-making processes down as much as possible to the least of the stakeholders' (1997: 177).

Similarly, Ruiz has recently argued that 'voice and agency are central to critical pedagogy' and that 'without them, there is no such thing as "empowerment"' (Ruiz, 1997: 327). Indeed, he takes issue with the way the term empowerment has been used in the literature, as if it were a gift bestowed on the powerless, rather than the result of their own initiative in taking control and taking power. Agency and voice are, then, central to empowerment; and they will be central to the argument we present below.

Contexts and Development of Bilingualism: International Perspectives

Contexts of bilingualism

Implicit in consideration of the contexts for bilingualism is society's tendency to weight power towards the macro, literate and monolingual ends of the continua. Hornberger (1992) showed how bilingual contexts for Puerto Rican and Cambodian students in Philadelphia in the 1980s were framed and constrained by national policies which emphasised English acquisition at the expense of minority language maintenance (e.g. the proposed English Language Amendment to the Constitution, the 1984 and 1988 renewals of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986), by an educational system which used minority languages only to embed the more powerful English literacy, and by the assimilative 'charm' of English which pulled students' biliterate development towards English. For the United States to achieve its goals of education for all, she argued, policy, curriculum, and community language and literacy use would have to change in ways that would encourage, rather than inhibit, biliterate individuals' drawing on all points of the continua for their full biliterate development. What was not stated explicitly there, but is worth stating now, is that one of the ways to make those changes

happen is to pay attention to and grant agency and voice to oral, bilingual interaction at the micro-level.

Such is precisely the emphasis in recent developments in language policy and educational reform in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, where bilingual intercultural education is gaining ground as a vehicle for moving societal discourse away from the openly racist ideology of the past and towards a more inclusive, intercultural one. Owing to a confluence and evolution of such factors as Peru's Revolutionary Government of the 1970s, the gathering momentum of Ecuador's indigenous grassroots movement in the 1980s, and the leadership of Bolivia's first indigenous vice-president in the 1990s, new worlds of possibility for the historically oppressed indigenous languages and their speakers have been opened up beginning with the 1975 Officialisation of Quechua in Peru, and followed by the creation of the National Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education in Ecuador in 1988 and the launching in 1994 of the National Education Reform of Bolivia which sets out to make all of Bolivian education bilingual and intercultural.

In a recent paper, Hornberger (2000) has explored the degree to which the shift in these three Andean countries towards a more inclusive, intercultural ideology can be seen as truly substantive and not merely rhetorical, examining the use and meanings of the term 'intercultural' in official policy documents and in short narratives about intercultural practice by indigenous and non-indigenous educational professionals. The narratives reveal first of all that the cultural (social) identities (groups) involved are more complex than essentialised designations by language name (e.g. Quechua speakers or Spanish speakers) would suggest, and that there is an incipient recognition that interculturality must be based on dialogic interaction among different cultural groups, self-consciously defined. What is most revealing, however, is that the narratives also provide evidence that local actors are actively engaged in making use of oral, bilingual resources at the micro-level to change the longstanding macro-level discourse of racism and discrimination to one of intercultural understanding and collaboration.

Two practitioner narratives illustrate this point.² Early in her career, Bolivian teacher of English and Quechua Julia Pino Quispe was assigned to a school in a mining centre. Upon her arrival on the first of May, the director told her that one of her responsibilities was to organise the annual celebration of Mothers' Day later that month. She worked hard and organised 'dances, funny toys, presents for the mothers, and other activities'; but what stands out most in her memory of that event is

a girl who was frequently marginalised in her class because she was of peasant origin and this was still noticeable in her speech; and she offered to participate with a poem in Quechua which told of someone who had lost her mother and could not be consoled in her grief. The poem, of course, made the greatest impression and all were astonished because the form in which she interpreted the poem in Quechua could not have provided more originality nor more sense of life to all those who had the good fortune to be present. After this event, the girl was no longer excluded from any group; on the contrary it served to enable her to value her capacity to be included and it also served as a good example to her classmates.

In a second narrative, Concepción Anta tells of her work in an urban secondary school in Cajamarca (northern Peru), where she finds that using local materials

and natural resources enables her to work successfully with her students, who come from the outskirts of the city and are of very limited economic means. For example,

in a language class, where I am working with stories, I prefer to choose a peasant story, from a district or province of Cajamarca, worthy material from the locality, rather than choose a foreign story. First, I tell them the story and then with them we proceed to dramatise the story, using local materials from their own area; and finally with them we select some music to make a song from the story; this is something which they find very entertaining . . . what I seek is for all aspects of the student or the person to continue functioning always as an integrated whole, . . . where man's lived experience is in conjunction with the life of the animals, the plants, the hills, the cliffs, the rivers, the stars, the fields, etc.

Teacher Julia and the little girl who performs a poem in Quechua, and teacher Concepción and her class performing a local peasant story with local materials and local music, are engaged in micro-level contestation of dominant discourse practices by making use, in school contexts, of language and content which have historically been excluded from the school. As we will address more fully in discussing the content continua, they are infusing vernacular and minority content (as opposed to literary and majority content) into a formal schooling context that often excludes the histories and voices of those who speak minority languages. They have used their discourse to serve a purpose different from that dictated by macro-level, hegemonic, Spanish, western, urban, formal education practice; and have taken control of oral, bilingual, micro-level interactional contexts to do so.

Another example of the need and potential for actors at the oral, bilingual micro-level of context to take control away from macro-level, monolingual literacies comes from Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo's work on language socialisation in Kwara'ae (Solomon Islands). Watson-Gegeo (1992) argues for the value of thick explanation, which integrates both macro- and micro-levels of contextual data in seeking to explain a particular problem, in this case Kwara'ae children's problems with succeeding in school. Having first sought an explanation through micro-level study of language socialisation patterns in the home and classroom discourse patterns in the school, she and co-researcher Gegeo found that, contrary to expectation, Kwara'ae language socialisation practices (in particular the discourses known as 'shaping the mind') emphasise precisely the kind of direct, verbally mediated teaching of intellectual and cultural skills that should be successful preparation for school discourse. On the other hand, study of actual discourse in the classroom revealed use of a restricted version of English in the context of inadequate, irrelevant materials and poorly trained teachers. A 'thin' explanation would have attributed the children's problems to differences between home and school in terms of language use, sociocultural meaning, interactional rules, and behavioural expectations.

Not satisfied with this explanation, however, Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo looked to the macro-level context, carrying out an institutional analysis based on document review; interviews with parents, teachers, Ministry of Education officials; and the recoding of their data. They uncovered a larger social context in the

Solomons in which rapid school expansion resulting in outdated and incomplete materials and poorly trained teachers using oral recitation and rote memorisation, along with a national development plan which privileged urban over rural schools, and an emerging class system assisted by the schools as gatekeepers, had all contributed to a deep ambivalence among Kwara'ae adults towards the schools. This ambivalence was consciously or unconsciously communicated to their children (for example, in 'shaping the mind' discourses) and served to undercut children's motivation to succeed. Watson-Gegeo concludes that 'children's problems with succeeding in school have less to do with home socialisation than with larger societal processes that shape the nature of schooling in the Solomons' (1992: 63). While Watson-Gegeo uses the case to argue for the value of understanding the macro context in explaining a micro-level phenomenon, the example also serves to make the opposite point; namely the role of the oral, Kwara'ae shaping-the-mind discourses in the home in resisting dominant English literacy schooling imposed from the macro-level.

Internationally, it is perhaps the New Literacy Studies which have done the most to draw our attention to just these kinds of contestations of macro-level, dominant, monolingual literacy practices, with their documentation of 'multiple literacies' – the multiple social and cultural constructions of literacy in practice. Street criticises what he calls the autonomous model of literacy, a model which conceives of literacy as a uniform set of techniques and ascribes direct cognitive and social benefits to the acquisition of these skills; he suggests instead an ideological model, wherein literacies are seen as multiple and socially constructed (Street, 1993: 1–21). Using key concepts like literacy event (Heath, 1982: 50) and literacy practice (Street, 1995: 2), researchers have produced a growing body of work on reading and writing as social practices embedded in particular historical and cultural contexts; and their work has encompassed multilingual literacies as well. This work has explicitly drawn attention to the fact that literacies may be implicated in operations of social power, as well as in the formation of identities and subjectivities (Collins, 1995: 81).

A recent study by Martin-Jones & Bhatt (1998) shows how the everyday multilingual literacy practices of young Gujarati speakers in urban Leicester (UK) contribute to the construction of their social identities, identities which for these young people are multiple and changing over time. In contradistinction to the usual concern expressed 'in contemporary debates about the language education of young people in multilingual urban contexts in Britain . . . about how best to support literacy development in English beyond the initial stages' (1998: 37), these authors explore 'the different literacies that bilingual learners have access to and the ways in which they draw on these literacies as they explore and affirm different identities' (1998: 37). Specifically, they present evidence for a variety of literacies: these include the literacies associated with particular cultural inheritances (e.g. reading Gujarati in Sunday prayers, letter-writing in Gujarati as a shared family activity, learning and performing songs in Gujarati, Arabic literacy and Islamic studies), individual and shared literacy activities in English (sharing books and magazines, exchanging notes and letters with friends, collecting memorabilia), and the school literacies the young people participate in. Although we will discuss the content continua more fully in a later section, here again we can see the overlapping of context and content. The situation

Martin-Jones & Bhatt (1998) discuss here in relation to Gujarati speakers in the UK is a typical one in which vernacular and minority content is relegated to personal rather than school contexts. In limiting the discourse in official school contexts to monolingual, written, literary texts from the majority culture, the richness of multilingual, oral discourse, vernacular writing and literary texts from minority cultures is left outside of the school walls.

More generally, looking at the role of context in schooling is important to illustrate the ways in which linguistic and intellectual development have typically been discussed in decontextualised terms. Looking closely at biliterate contexts, and specifically at multilingual, oral interaction at the micro-level, allows us to see how measures of intelligence and school achievement have ignored those ways of speaking and knowing that have not been valued inside of school contexts. As Kincheloe & Steinberg have suggested, 'Intelligence is not an innate quality of a particular individual, but, rather something related to the interrelationship among ideas, behaviors, contexts and outcomes . . .' (1993: 229). Paying attention to the traditionally less powerful ends of the continua of biliterate contexts illuminates ways in which a contextualised view of learning and cognition can have important consequences for defining and measuring school success.

Development of biliteracy

The last two examples above – of Kwara'ae children and of multilingual urban youth in Britain – are as much about the development of biliteracy in the individual as about biliterate contexts. Both demonstrate a societal tendency to weight power towards the L2 (second language), written, production ends of the continua of biliterate development. In both cases, national policy and school curricula are focused primarily on English (L2) literacy development as evidenced in school performance (usually standardised tests), even in the face of other language and literacy resources in the community.

All too often, the focus on productive L2 literacy development is accompanied by a skills-based view of literacy. Hornberger & Hardman (1994) reported on their study of adult biliteracy programmes for Puerto Ricans and Cambodians in Philadelphia, making an argument for the inadequacy of an autonomous, cognitive skills-based view of literacy with its emphasis on a single, standardised schooled literacy in the L2 and arguing for a complementary ideological, cultural practice view (1994: 168). What was not stated explicitly there, but is worth stating here, is that one of the features of the ideological, cultural practice view, with respect to the continua of biliterate development, is that when put in practice in literacy teaching, it can assist learners in claiming the 'right to speak' through use of their L1 (first language), oral, and receptive skills as well as the L2, written, productive ones.

This becomes clear when we take a closer look at the findings presented by Hornberger and Hardman. In an ESL literacy class for Cambodian adults, Hardman found evidence of a cultural practice approach in student-directed social learning strategies including prompting, collaboration and using Khmer (the L1) to answer questions, talk with other students, and take notes; he further noted that students were most comfortable with repeating, copying and reading aloud, activities which as he pointed out use both receptive and

productive skills (and oral-written ones too, in the case of reading aloud) (Hornberger & Hardman 1994: 151–6). These findings give direct evidence of the space for learners to use their L1, oral, and receptive skills in a cultural practice approach.

Hornberger too found that in the bilingual GED programme run by ASPIRA (a non-profit Puerto Rican education-advocacy organisation established in 1961 in New York City), while the focus was on mastering the discrete skills needed to pass the GED exam, at the same time the programme embedded this literacy as cultural practice at every level in ways which sought to give voice and agency to the learners' Spanish language and Puerto Rican cultural identity. For example, the programme explicitly taught Puerto Rican culture and cultural awareness to both the Spanish-dominant and English-dominant groups, offered opportunities for students to act in solidarity with other Latin Americans, connected the students to a network of ASPIRA-sponsored organisations and programmes that support the Puerto Rican community, drew on the Puerto Rican community to support students' development, allowed the students to accommodate the highly individualised competency-based programme to the more collaborative learning approach they seemed to prefer, and acknowledged and addressed tensions between the Spanish-dominant Puerto-Rican-born and English-dominant Philadelphia-born groups. Evidence of the success of this approach in creating a context where students' expressions are voiced and heard came in the very lively election campaign for class officers and ASPIRA Club Board representatives, including a several-verse rap song in Spanish spontaneously composed by a group of students (Hornberger & Hardman 1994: 163–7).

Similar counter-power weighting of the continua of biliterate development towards the oral, L1, receptive end is evident in an indigenous teacher education programme in the Amazonian rainforest which Hornberger visited in 1997 (Hornberger, 1998):

Every year since 1983, this course sponsored by the Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre (CPI) has been held during the summer months (January–March) in or just outside Rio Branco, Brazil. For the past several years, it has been held at an outdoor site whose spaces and buildings are consistent with the indigenous teachers' own community spaces. The 1997 session was attended by some 25 *professores índios* 'indigenous teachers', representing eight different ethnic groups whose languages are in varying stages of vitality, from those with about 150 speakers to those with several thousand.³

One of the striking features of the course is that the *professores índios* are simultaneously learners and teachers-in-information; that is, they are simultaneously learning the school curriculum themselves for the first time, while also preparing themselves to return to their *aldeias*, or communities, to teach it. Another feature of the course is the emphasis on reflexive practice, epitomised in the keeping of class diaries during the school year, a practice which some of the *professores índios* have employed since 1983.⁴ The third striking feature is the clear language-as-resource orientation, used here in Ruiz's (1984) sense. The language-as-resource orientation in the CPI course means that the indigenous languages are not only encouraged and used as medium and subject of instruction in both the course and the

schools, but that the *profesores indios* encourage and exchange among each other across their different languages.

One activity of the course in which all three of these features converge is the *profesores indios*' authorship of teaching materials in the indigenous languages which are reflective of indigenous culture, history, and artistic expression; these materials serve as documentation of the *profesores*' own learning while also serving as a teaching resource for their own classrooms. Interestingly, this activity in which they are all engaged means that they listen to and read each others' languages even when they do not actually speak (or write) those languages themselves.

That is, the course creates a context in which the multiple oral (and written), L1 expressions of the indigenous teachers are voiced and heard. The documents produced also make it possible for minority-authored texts to become part of the content of the curriculum, for both teachers-in-training and the students they will teach.

This 'multiple literacies' approach is further enabled by the pedagogy of 'multiliteracies' employed in the course. Multiliteracies, as defined by the New London Group (New London Group, 1996: 63), refers to the multiplicity of communications channels and media in our changing world (and secondarily to the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity); the concept extends literacy beyond reading and writing to other domains, such as the visual, audio, spatial, and behavioural. In the case of the indigenous teacher education course, these other literacies reinforce the reading/writing literacies, since the teachers live and study in a traditional space familiar to all of them, follow their traditional behaviours (e.g. sleeping in hammocks in communal houses, bathing frequently during the day, etc.), and make extensive use of drawing in addition to reading and writing in producing their materials.

Furthermore, the indigenous teacher education course embodies all four components of the 'how' of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, as defined by the New London Group: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. In their dual role as learners and teachers-in-formation, the indigenous teachers in the CPI course have opportunity for situated practice through immersion in meaningful practices among their peers, and subsequently for transformed practice as they enact their learnings as teachers in their own village schools. As noted above, a central feature of the course has always been reflexive practice, which means that the teachers of the course take seriously the need for scaffolded instruction and critical framing, and the indigenous teacher-learners have long since been socialised to a critical pedagogical approach.

In addition to defining multiliteracies and the 'how' of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, the New London Group also addresses the question of 'what' a pedagogy of multiliteracies is about (1996: 73–6), namely that it is about designing in the sense of making/taking meaning from available designs to create new transformed designs (which are never purely created nor purely reproduced). Available designs include grammars (of languages and other semiotic systems) and orders of discourse, and we redesign these in the same way that we make/take meaning from texts/discourses to create new texts/discourses (cf.

Fairclough, 1992 on intertextuality). In the case of the CPI indigenous teacher education course, we already noted that the *profesores indios* are engaged in producing teaching materials in the indigenous languages which are reflective of indigenous culture, history, and artistic expression and which serve as documentation of the *profesores'* own learning while also serving as a teaching resource for their own classrooms, an example *par excellence* of 'designing'. The 'what' of a pedagogy of multiliteracies brings us to the content of biliteracy, with which we introduce the next section.

Content and Media of Biliteracy: Critical Perspectives

Content of biliteracy

Implicit in consideration of the content of biliteracy is society's traditional power weighting of the continua towards the majority and literary ends (as opposed to the minority and vernacular ends). Indeed, the clear power weighting here was what first drew Hornberger's attention to the power dimension of the continua. There are also significant power-related weightings in the decontextualised–contextualised continuum, but the relationship is not as immediately visible.

In her study of literacy, identity and educational policy among Cambodian women and girls in Philadelphia, Skilton-Sylvester found it necessary to supplement the continua model with these content dimensions that would allow for looking not only at how language was used and learned, where it was used and learned, and what aspects of it were used and learned, but also the kinds of meanings expressed in particular biliterate contexts, during particular aspects of biliterate development, and through specific biliterate media. Whereas the media continua focus on the forms literacy takes, the content continua focus on the meaning those forms express. She argued for the importance of including minority, vernacular and contextualised whole language texts in these learners' literacy experiences.

If voice and agency are indeed central to critical pedagogy, the importance of making whole texts that include the experiences of language minority students a part of that pedagogy becomes immediately evident. In this way, knowing two languages is inextricably linked to knowing two cultures. Through the content continua, biliteracy becomes linked to bicultural literacy. In their construction of a post-Piagetian cognitive theory that is informed by and extends critical, feminist and post-modern thought, Kincheloe & Steinberg (1993) suggest something called 'post-formal thinking'. This theory of cognition holds that

the frontier where the information of the disciplines intersects with the understandings and experience that individuals carry with them to school is the point where knowledge is created (constructed). The post-formal teacher facilitates this interaction, helping students to reinterpret their own lives and uncover new talents as a result of their encounter with school knowledge . . . unless students are moved to incorporate school information into their own lives, schooling will remain merely an unengaging rite of passage into adulthood. (1993: 301)

It is in this intersection of school knowledge and personal knowledge that paying attention to the minority end of the content continua (rather than the majority end) is most important. Examples from Skilton-Sylvester's research include one 11th grade high school student named Ty, who when encountering Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior* for the first time, asked 'Is she the only Asian writer?' This young Cambodian woman had been able to go through eleven years of school without realising there were Asian writers who wrote in English. This realisation provided a springboard for her to reflect on her own experiences, to see that her process of being a second language learner in a US school was not just a local/personal phenomenon. She went on to say,

She seems like me . . . in the story, she goes to school and then she's silent. You know, she doesn't usually, like raise her hand and like participate and answer the questions her teacher asks . . . When I read the story, it kind of like reminded me of myself when I used to be in elementary school. . . She's Asian and of course, I'm Asian too. It made me kind of look back, you know. (Skilton-Sylvester, 1997: 244)

The reading of this text fell at the minority end of the content continua and at the same time at the literary end usually encountered in the classroom. Although this was a literary text, it addressed some of Ty's own experiences with school. As such, it opened a door for her to be a part of literary discourse in a new way.

An even less powerful aspect of literacy is the vernacular. The vernacular end of the literary-vernacular content continuum is often completely absent from school discourse. This was certainly the case for Cambodian students in Philadelphia and mirrors some of the findings of Martin-Jones & Bhatt (1998), mentioned earlier, in their study of Gujerati speakers in the UK. Skilton-Sylvester found that students who were proficient vernacular writers (writing letters, plays for friends and family members to perform, etc.) were often framed as 'non-writers' in schooling contexts. At home with her siblings and cousins, one young woman named Nan was in a constant state of performance of the plays and stories she had written. In her ESOL class, she was sometimes able to use her performance skills to augment texts that she had written. For example, she was able to read her journal aloud. This was one of the very few ways that her vernacular ways of reading and writing were valued in the classroom. This particular example is especially interesting because performance is so inextricably linked to literacy in Cambodia. As Thierry has said,

Whether they are written or oral, there is no question for them of the second aspect, since writing does not imply a silent reading in their view. The story is told. If it is read, it is read in a loud voice, and not only for oneself, but for an audience. (1978: 86)

More than any of the other girls in Skilton-Sylvester's study, Nan wrote and performed stories she had written spontaneously, of her own volition. However, she struggled painfully with school writing assignments. The role of performance in vernacular writing was rarely evident in school contexts for Nan. Where it was, she was seen as a writer; where it wasn't, she was seen as a non-writer.

The decontextualised-contextualised continuum has a particularly compli-

cated relationship to power, a relationship also inherent in Street's (1984) distinction between autonomous and ideological perspectives on literacy. Within the scientific tradition and much academic writing, decontextualised meanings are the meanings that count. This tradition has certainly maintained a powerful place in academic discourse generally (Kennedy, 1997), such that being able to state truths that hold, regardless of context, has been a part of speaking the language of power. At the most decontextualised end of this continuum are decontextualised parts of language followed by decontextualised wholes.

Some researchers (Anyon, 1980; Skilton-Sylvester, 1998) have discussed the ways in which those in poverty are often not given exposure to whole tasks that require problem solving but instead are exposed primarily to tasks that require rote memorisation of the parts or what Anyon (1980:427) has called unexplained fragmented procedures.⁵ For the purposes of this paper, we are highlighting the fact that an exclusive emphasis on decontextualised parts of language makes it so that students do not learn how to construct wholes with academically appropriate parts. For example, in discussing an ESL class in which the parts of language were stressed at the expense of rather than in conjunction with wholes, Warschauer (1998) describes a student named Jon, who

was not challenged to develop the skills of abstraction, system thinking, experimental inquiry, or collaboration that are crucial in today's economy (Reich, 1991) . . . [nor] to 'talk and write about language as such, to explain and sequence implicit knowledge and rules of planning, and to speak and write for multiple functions in appropriate forms' (Heath, 1992). (Warschauer, 1998: 76)

In the late 20th century, an ability to construct wholes with appropriate parts is quite important if one wants to speak the language of power.

A particularly interesting illustration of the ways in which language parts divorced from the wholes leave learners powerless comes in looking at Chamran's experiences (Skilton-Sylvester, 1997). As Chamran entered first grade and during the first three years of schooling, she struggled to decode and to spell. Most of her assignments were ones in which she was asked to copy something from the board or from a homework sheet. Regularly, Skilton-Sylvester would ask Chamran if she wanted to write a story, but she typically said 'no'. After three years, she finally answered 'yes', and proceeded to write 'Spelling Test' at the top of the page and number down the left hand side from 1-15. Skilton-Sylvester was struck by the fact that Chamran had chosen a spelling test, but then realised that her knowledge of literacy had remained at the letter and sight word level. It was with these parts of language that she felt most comfortable. She knew the spelling test genre inside and out. She had learned the spelling test format, but had not learned other formats for expressing her thoughts in writing (1997: 255).

This moment was particularly poignant because in all of the spelling lists Chamran and the other girls (from the ages of 6-17) had studied, never did they understand the meaning of the words they were being asked to spell. So, not only was Chamran's 'story' a set of parts rather than a whole, it was also a practice that was devoid of meaning for her and for many others. It is then no surprise that writing whole texts is quite difficult for these students when they reach other

levels of schooling and are asked to summarise, synthesise and evaluate in their writing.

If we now turn to the contextualised end of the continuum, it is important first to stress the value of contextualised parts, parts of language that are analysed and understood in the context of a whole text or texts. Although an exclusive emphasis on decontextualised parts can keep language minority students from learning the language of power, being able to use parts of language correctly is one key element of being able to speak the language of power. As Delpit (1995) suggests, students of color are often not given access to the intricacies of the parts of academic discourse. That is, they are often not taught how to use pieces of language to construct meaningful, articulate whole texts. In the service of allowing students to create whole texts, turning one's back on the parts of language can keep students from learning powerful discourse. The key to making it so that students can use the parts of language to construct articulate wholes comes in contextualising those parts so that students see how they fit into the creation of a whole text.

At the most contextualised end of this continuum, we see that contextualised whole texts, that is texts that acknowledge the position of the reader or writer, are, like vernacular texts, usually absent from school contexts. However, in current debates about what kinds of content count, there is an increased emphasis on paying more attention to the contextualised end of this continuum. In the applied linguistics field alone, there has been an ever-increasing emphasis on contextualised, particular knowledge (Davis, 1995). An example of this kind of emphasis was seen in Skilton-Sylvester's (1997) research in an adult education class that a Cambodian woman attended. In Soka's process of writing a letter to her former teacher (contextualised content that had meaning to her as a person), her teacher found out that she had a very complex understanding of the structure of personal letters (even though her English skills were relatively limited). Soka was able to explain how the structure of writing letters in Khmer is different from English and how this is connected to language and culture (Skilton-Sylvester, 1997: 227). Starting with contextualised content in an academic context allowed her to analyse language and even rhetorical structure in a more decontextualised, powerful way.

If students' whole contextualised texts, with all their imperfections, could be used as a starting point, meaning would be ensured and students could intrinsically see the links between decontextualised and contextualised language, and between the literary and the vernacular. If minority texts could be chosen as a part of the literary content of the classroom, links could also be made between the content students bring with them to school and the content they encounter at the school door.

Skilton-Sylvester's contribution of the content continua to the continua model of biliteracy parallels other developments in the study of language and literacy. It is true that 'there is a longstanding tradition in linguistics which is concerned with the form rather than the content of language' (Malcolm, 1997), which perhaps explains the missing content dimension in the original continua model. It is also true that in recent years, there has been greater attention to content. Malcolm mentions Gary Palmer's (1996) work on cultural linguistics and its origins in Boasian linguistics, ethnosemantics, and the ethnography of commu-

nication. There are also the various critical perspectives on language and literacy, as expressed for example in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Norton, 1997), critical language awareness (Clark *et al.*, 1990, 1991), and critical literacy (Lankshear, 1997); as well as critical ethnography (May, 1997) and critical pedagogy (Goldstein, 1997), all of which demand attention to content.

Lankshear suggests that 'two essential elements of any and all critical practice . . . [are] the element of evaluation or judgement . . . and the requirement of knowing closely . . . that which is being evaluated' (1997: 43). To think critically about language, discourse, or literacy, one must first know it closely; that is, one must pay attention to what it is – its content. In terms of literacy, Lankshear specifies three possible contents, or 'potential objects of critique: . . . literacies per se, . . . particular texts, [and] . . . wider social practices, arrangements, relations, allocations, procedures, etc.' (1997: 44). These he in turn relates to discourse and Discourse, in Gee's sense (1990), where discourse with a small d refers to the language components of Discourse with a capital D, which refers to social practices or 'ways of being in the world'. Indeed, Gee suggests in his introduction to Lankshear's volume that critical literacy is in fact 'the ability to juxtapose Discourses, to watch how competing Discourses frame and re-frame various elements' (Gee in Lankshear, 1997: xviii).

Gee's discourse/Discourse distinction is akin to Fairclough's discussion of discourse types which make up the 'orders of discourse associated with particular institutions or domains of social life' (1992: 284). Fairclough goes on to specify discourse types as genre, activity type, style, and discourse itself: where *genre* is the overarching type that corresponds closely to social practice types (e.g. informal chat, counselling session, newspaper article); *activity type* refers to a structured sequence of actions and the participants involved; *style* varies according to tenor (e.g. formal, casual, etc.), mode (e.g. written or spoken), and rhetorical mode (e.g. argumentative, descriptive, etc.); and '*discourses* correspond roughly to dimensions of texts which have traditionally been discussed in terms of content' (1992: 286; emphasis added). By drawing attention to the majority–minority perspectives and experiences (discourses and activity types), as well as the literary and vernacular genres and styles, of texts available to Cambodian women and girls, Skilton-Sylvester attends precisely to the ways in which discourses make up the Discourses, or possible ways of being in the world, that are made available (or unavailable) to these language minority readers.

Available Discourses are multiple, indeed innumerable: 'e.g. gangs, academic disciplines, bar gatherings, ethnic groups, friendship networks, types of men, women, gays, children, students, classrooms, workers, workplaces, etc. and etc.' (Gee in Lankshear, 1997: xv). Yet they are not equally available to all; rather they are ordered hierarchically within the politics of daily life (Lankshear, 1997: 39). By calling attention to the importance of whole contextualised texts/discourses that give voice and agency to minority discourses and activities and vernacular genres and styles, we are arguing for attention to the traditionally powerless ends of the continua of biliteracy content.

Media of biliteracy

One of the reasons for revisiting the continua was as a vehicle for analysing ongoing data collection on two-way bilingual programmes in Philadelphia's

Puerto Rican community, as well as to revisit data which had been collected earlier, some of which had never been analysed and written up.⁶ Focusing on the media of biliteracy as they are put in practice in these two-way bilingual programmes, we wondered: would the argument we had been developing, about the need to pay attention to the powerless as well as powerful ends of the continua, hold up?

We concur with Valdés' (1997) cautionary note about underlying societal power relationships and their possible negative effects on two-way bilingual programmes (dual-language immersion programmes), especially in light of the appeal of these programmes to both bilingual educators concerned about the education of language minority children and foreign-language educators interested in developing second language proficiencies in mainstream American children. Specifically, she suggests three issues that deserve closer attention: (1) the degree to which modifications that may be made in the use of the minority language (to accommodate language majority children) may in fact be detrimental to the primary language development of minority children; (2) the ways in which intergroup relations among children in school are shaped by societal attitudes and structures outside the school despite the best intentions of those within the school; and (3) the question of who will in fact be the main beneficiaries of the language resources developed in the programme; i.e. will the two-way programme serve simply to give the majority yet another way (bilingualism) to displace the minority in the larger societal power structure? (412–420).⁷

Similarly, we found, once we focused on the media of biliteracy in the two-way programmes we are familiar with, that faculty and staff continually face challenging decisions touching implicitly on larger questions of power. Specifically, decisions constantly arise with regard to: (1) placement of students in English-dominant and Spanish-dominant streams in the two-way programme; (2) distribution of English and Spanish in the programme structure and the classroom; and (3) the co-existence of various standard and nonstandard varieties of English and Spanish and the implications of this for instruction and assessment. The first two issues relate to the question of simultaneous versus successive exposure to (or acquisition of) the languages/literacies, while the last touches on the matter of language varieties' structures and scripts. We argue that the implicit weighting in most educational approaches to biliteracy (whether bilingual or monolingual) is towards successive acquisition and similar, convergent, standard language varieties. To contest that weighting requires attention to simultaneous acquisition and to dissimilar, divergent, nonstandard language varieties.

Hornberger's earlier work had noted the issues of student placement and language distribution in the programmes to some degree, and the issues of standard and nonstandard varieties only in passing. With regard to the placement of students in English-dominant and Spanish-dominant streams:

When students first arrive at Potter Thomas, they are assigned to the Anglo or Latino stream according to their home language, that is, the dominant language in the home, as reported by the parents. Parental preference also plays a role in children's placement; parents may choose, for linguistic or cultural reasons, to place their child in the Anglo stream, even if the child is

Spanish-dominant; or vice versa. Thus Anglo and Latino are neither clear cultural nor monolingual language categories, but reflect two clusters along a continuum of language use, as well as a range of attitudes toward Spanish language maintenance and assimilation to U.S. culture (Hornberger, 1991: 230).

What was not explicitly stated then, but is worth stating here, is that English-dominant and Spanish-dominant *could not* be self-evident categories, given the myriad constellations of language use, ability, and exposure present in a community where ongoing circular migration from Puerto Rico to Philadelphia and back is a fact of life for nearly everyone to one degree or another. The fact is that most Puerto Rican children do not grow up with just one (dominant or only) mother tongue and then acquire the second language in school, but rather that they are constantly crossing back and forth between both languages and the meanings and identities they convey.

Similarly, Rampton, in his work on language crossing among Anglo, Afro-Caribbean, and Panjabi adolescents in the UK, has suggested that native speaker and mother tongue are problematic terms, given that the assumptions underlying them are now widely contested; it can no longer be assumed, for example, that a particular language is inherited (genetically or socially); that people either are or are not native/mother tongue speakers; or that people are native speakers of one mother tongue. He proposes instead that we think in terms of expertise, affiliation, and inheritance, where expertise has to do with a speaker's skill, proficiency, and ability to operate with a language; and affiliation and inheritance are two different, socially negotiated routes to a sense of allegiance to a language, i.e. identification with the values, meanings, and identities the language stands for (Rampton, 1995: 336–44). Although Rampton focused in his work on oral language use, Martin-Jones & Bhatt (1998) use these same concepts in showing how the range of multilingual literacy expertise developed by multilingual youth in Leicester is affected by the opportunities available to them as well as by the kinds of allegiances they feel at different points in time; in some cases, for example, young people reclaim in later adolescence an inheritance that they had earlier left behind.

Students arriving (and re-arriving) at school with widely different constellations of biliterate expertise, affiliations and inheritances pose a complex challenge to schools seeking to develop a two-way bilingual programme that builds on both languages for all students. One such challenge occurred when Julia de Burgos Middle School sought to implement a targeted two-way programme for an initial cohort of 60 gifted students assigned to Spanish-dominant and English-dominant sections.

A problem has arisen, however, in that the Spanish language proficiencies of the English-dominant section encompass a great range, from [non-Puerto Rican] African-American students who have never had any Spanish instruction at all to Latino students who are fluently bilingual and in some cases biliterate in Spanish and English. The English language proficiencies of the Spanish-dominant section likewise span a range from the recent arrivals from Puerto Rico who are beginners in English to

fluently bilingual and, in some cases, biliterate students (Hornberger & Micheau, 1993: 44–5).

Hornberger (1991: 230–3) described how Potter Thomas School sought to address a similar challenge through a complex stream and cycle structure, where students regularly cycled through heterogeneously grouped homeroom classes in the Anglo and Latino streams where bilingual language use was the norm, and homogeneously grouped reading classes where language separation was expected, and back again. A study of how one fourth/fifth grade homeroom teacher at Potter Thomas created successful learning contexts for her students' biliterate development, specifically how she built students' interaction with text, highlighted how she 'allows small-group peer interaction to occur spontaneously and a-systematically as a natural outgrowth of shared cultural values, emphasises her students' community-based prior knowledge, and seeks to help her students to 'connect and transfer' strategies across languages' (Hornberger, 1990: 227). Retrospectively, it appears that this teacher had in fact found ways to build on the biliterate affiliations, inheritances, and expertise that her students brought with them to school. What was not stated explicitly then, but is worth stating now, is that such an approach made a strength rather than a weakness out of students' criss-crossed, simultaneous (rather than successive) acquisition of two languages and literacies.

A third issue which poses challenges for these two-way programmes is the co-existence of standard and non-standard varieties of English and Spanish in the school community's repertoire, and the implications of these for instruction and assessment. While earlier fieldwork (by Hornberger and her students) had taken note in passing of the existence of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Latin American varieties of Spanish, and of school standard and African-American varieties of English all in use within one school (cf. Zentella, 1997: 41 on the repertoire of Spanish and English varieties on New York City's *el bloque*), the focus in terms of the continua of biliterate media had been more on the relative similarities and convergences *between* the two languages (Spanish and English) and their writing systems as potential resources for transfer of literacy from one to the other, rather than on dissimilarities and divergences across varieties *within* the two languages which might impede literacy development even in one.

To pose a (partially hypothetical) example: a school with a two-way programme serving Puerto Rican children in Philadelphia decides, after many years of English language standardised testing, to inaugurate Spanish language standardised testing as well, in an effort to obtain a more representative picture of their students' biliterate accomplishments; the only trouble is that the only standardised testing materials available reflect Mexican, not Puerto Rican language varieties and identities and thus, hardly promise to render a truer picture of the Puerto Rican students' expertise. Similarly, another school elects to develop portfolio assessment in Spanish and calls in an English-language expert on the subject, who is in turn stymied by the discovery that the teachers in the school, who speak varieties of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Latin American Spanishes, cannot agree on the 'correct' form of Spanish to use.

The problem of multiple varieties of Spanish has been around for some time, but has received relatively little attention. Among the first to draw attention to it

were Gary Keller and Guadalupe Valdés. In a 1983 article, Keller posed the question: which variety of Spanish to use in the classroom? He pointed out that the answer has often been made in the form of one of two extremes: either the local vernacular or world standard Spanish; but that sociolinguists chart instead a middle course that fosters bidialectalism. In the meanwhile, he said, the debate was being worked out in classrooms and programmes across the country. A 1974 National Institute of Education project evaluating approximately 1000 titles in Spanish bilingual education found that eight types of Spanish were in use, as follows: (1) world standard Spanish, (2) regional or social varieties from outside the US (e.g. Bolivian), (3) all US regional and ethnic varieties, (4) eastern US ethnic varieties, (5) western US ethnic varieties, (6) nonstandard non-Spanish (i.e. bad translations), (7) regional and ethnic varieties *and* world Spanish, and (8) controlled world Spanish (i.e. only those forms for which there are not alternate regionalisms or ethnic varieties). Noting his dissatisfaction with the fact that there were too many Spanishes being promoted in the classroom, he suggested that some of the above alternatives are certainly more appropriate than others (e.g. types 1, 4, 5, and 8); and he concluded that resolution of this corpus planning issue would be extremely difficult to achieve without the conferral of power and authority (that is, voice and agency) on a group of corpus planners (Keller, 1983: 257–64).

Valdés too made an early plea for language planning on this issue. Her 1983 article, entitled 'Planning for biliteracy,' called for *lingüistas comprometidos* 'committed linguists' to be involved in training bilingual teachers, developing community activities for out-of-school bilingual adults, and most relevant for our topic here, teaching Spanish as a subject in high school and college to Hispanic bilinguals, with a 'focus on the written language and not on eradicating the students' home dialect' (1983: 259). In her 1981 co-edited book, she had reported on a series of studies on Spanish language classes designed for Hispanic students in which the disturbing picture which emerged was one of language classes 'designed to show speakers of that language that theirs is not really that language – perhaps is not really *any* language' (Ruiz, 1997: 320 commenting on Valdés, 1981). Ruiz cites this as an example of instances of 'language planning in which "the inclusion" of the language of a group has coincided with the exclusion of their voice' (Ruiz, 1997: 320).

For those voices to be included requires attention to divergence and dissimilarity across varieties of the language, and not an unreflexive legitimising of only the standard variety. We have already noted above Corson's suggestion that applied linguists' adoption of a critical realist stance could lead to reform in the treatment of standard and nonstandard varieties; specifically, he suggests that it is the participants in any given context of situation who should determine the variety(ies) of a language that will be accorded status in that situation. As Ruiz suggests, though, this goes beyond matters of language or dialect, to those of voice and agency.

'Efforts on behalf of subordinate groups to "denaturalise" standard dialects and dominant Discourses are increasingly evident,' says Lankshear (1997: 34), going on to name three such sorts of initiative: bilingualism as an educational demand/ideal, 'bidialectism' in education, and 'multidiscoursal' education. To illustrate the last two, he cites the case of West Indian Creole dialects and stan-

standard English involving students at the University of the Virgin Islands, as described by Anderson & Irvine (1993). 'These students channelled their anger at being assigned to a non-credit remedial English class into a critical investigation of language and dialects' which, ultimately, had an impact on their language practices in and out of class. They began to write

consciously in a variety of genres: using standard English for research papers, letters to editors, etc.; Creole for fictional stories addressed to other West Indians on themes of shared interest; and Creole for letters of thanks to guest speakers from the community, etc. (Lankshear, 1997: 36–8)

What is interesting about this example is that it is not just about the use of different dialects, but also of the orders of discourse and ways of being that those dialects entail; hence, the idea of not just bidialectal, but also multidiscoursal, education.⁸

A two-way bidialectal approach to the education of Aboriginal students in Western Australia provides another example (Malcolm, 1997). This work began in 1994 out of Edith Cowan University, as part of a teacher development project called 'Language and Communication Enhancement for Two-Way Education'. In partnership with the state Education Department of Western Australia, the project involves a 'team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal linguists and educators at the University . . . working with Aboriginal education workers from schools across the state and the teacher-partners they have nominated'. One bicultural team is carrying out research on the varieties of Aboriginal English spoken (and in particular the cultural imagery, or discourses, it represents); while another makes use of material from the accumulating semantic and pragmatic data base, as they prepare curriculum that both meets the state curricular requirements and reflects the underlying discourses (dialects, genres, styles, and voices) of Aboriginal English. The material is then trialed by the teams in the schools. The project operates under the basic premise that most Aboriginal people today are functioning in complex bicultural contexts, employing different varieties of English which represent different and sometimes competing discourses, identities, and cultural schemas for behaving and interpreting behaviour, and that it is the job of education to recognise and allow learners to build on those resources.

One final note about this project, one which takes us back to the continua of biliterate contexts. The project aims intentionally at both macro (systemic) and micro (school) levels.

The idea of giving recognition to Aboriginal English, rather than simply condemning it, is still not fully accepted at the staffroom level although the Education Department . . . has accepted the principle of bidialectal education. The work at the school level is fundamental, in that our experience has shown that a school can be transformed by a teacher who has his or her eyes opened to the reality of Aboriginal English by being engaged in action research on it. (Malcolm, 1997)

Conclusion

As our 're-visit' to the continua of biliteracy draws to a close, the recurrent theme which has emerged is the need for schools to become sites for bi(multi)literate instances where student voices are heard and where students

are able to 'make a difference' with the language(s) they speak. For voice and agency to be available, teachers, administrators, researchers, policy makers, community members and students themselves must contest the traditional power weighting of the continua. With regard to the *contexts* of biliteracy, we have seen some evidence of such contestation occurring at the oral, bilingual, micro-level in, for example, school language practices in the Peruvian highlands, language socialisation practices in Kwara'ae, and literacy practices among urban multilingual youth in Britain. With regard to the *development* of biliteracy, we have seen that a cultural practice model of literacy allows for learners' voice and agency through use of their L1, oral and receptive skills as well as the L2, written, productive ones. With regard to the *content* of biliteracy, we have argued for the importance of contextualised whole texts/discourses that give voice and agency to minority discourses and activities, and vernacular genres and styles. With regard to the *media* of biliteracy, we have suggested the value of programme structures and instructional approaches which make a strength rather than a weakness out of learners' criss-crossed, simultaneous acquisition of (exposure to) two languages and literacies, and the need for language planning that devolves agency and voice to those whose varieties and discourses are at stake. As Cummins (1994) has suggested, exploring and exposing the invisible screen that obscures power relationships in schools is a key element in providing equitable education for all:

In culturally diverse societies, a central goal of education should be to create interactional contexts where educators and students can critically examine issues of identity and experience and collaboratively deconstruct the myths that are inherited from one generation to the next . . . For educators to create an educational context with their students where the assumptions and lies underlying dominant group identity become the focus of scrutiny rather than the invisible screen that determines perception is to challenge the societal power structure. Educational equity requires no less. (Cummins, 1994: 153)

This paper has been an attempt to make visible the ways in which school practices surrounding literacy and bilingualism have acted as a powerful invisible screen both nationally and internationally, and the ways in which this screen can lose and is losing some of its power by paying attention, at both micro- and macro-levels, to the traditionally less powerful ends of the continua of biliteracy. We agree with Corson that only an inclusive epistemology meets the three basic ethical principles of equal treatment, respect for persons, and benefit maximisation (Corson, 1997: 183), and we argue from that epistemology that inclusion of learners' voice and agency is the only ethically acceptable solution when it comes to educating a linguistically and culturally diverse learner population. In today's world, that means every learner in every classroom.

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Notes

1. This is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the Symposium on Sociolinguistic and Ethnographic Studies on Linguistic Diversity: Looking Back and Looking Forward, as part of the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association in San Diego, April 1998. We are grateful for comments from those present at the session. We also thank editor David Corson and the two referees for very helpful comments as we prepared the paper for publication. Any errors of concept or interpretation are of course our own.
2. Translations from the Spanish are by Hornberger; names are pseudonyms.
3. The ethnic groups represented in the 1997 course were, in order of total estimated number of speakers from greatest to smallest: Asheninca or Kampa – of which there are only 560 in Brazil, but 55,000 in Peru; Kaxinawá – with 2700 in Brazil and another 1200 in Peru; Apurinã – 2800; Jaminawá – 370 in Brazil and 600 in Peru; Katukina – 650; Arara or Shawandawa – 300; Yawanawá – 230; and Manchineri – 152 (Brasil 1994).
4. See Monte (1996) for a description and analysis of the diaries and Cavalcanti (1996) for insight into the reflexive nature of the cross-cultural interaction between the *professores indios* and one of the *professores brancos* ‘white teachers’ who provide instruction in the course.
5. This analysis of fragmented, decontextualised school work builds on Bowles & Gintis’ (1976) discussion of the fragmentation of tasks in the workplace for workers of lower socio-economic classes.
6. We are grateful to students and staff of the Potter Thomas Elementary School and the Julia de Burgos Middle School, as well as to the School District of Philadelphia, for ongoing research and collaboration relationships since 1987. Warm appreciation also goes to Melisa Cahnmann (University of Pennsylvania PhD student) for collaboration at Potter Thomas School and in the revisiting of earlier data.
7. As a case in point, David Corson reports that work with francophone minority students in Ontario suggests that programmes of the two-way type can gradually reduce the children’s use of and proficiency in their French first language (personal communication, 19 July 1999).
8. In this regard, it is perhaps worth noting that in a more recent formulation of the discourse types making up orders of discourse, Fairclough (in New London Group 1996) has given greater salience to both dialect and voice, including them among the discourse types, where in 1992 they were not included.

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