LINGUISTIC FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: BUILDING ON BILINGUAL STUDENTS’ HOME LANGUAGE RESOURCES

DR. PETER SAYER
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
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- Funds of knowledge framework
  - Background
  - Two examples

- Study of bilingual students’ in San Antonio
  - Linguistic funds of knowledge
  - Multilingual pedagogy
1996
1996

The Language Center in Oaxaca, Mexico
A 4th grade class in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas 2011
2nd graders doing a science experiment in Puebla, Puebla. 2012
A kindergarten lesson in Aguascalientes, Ags. 2015
Interviewing middle school students studying English in public schools, Aguascalientes, March 2014
The teacher “diversity problem”: gap of percentage of White teachers and non-White students

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**Note:** By “nonwhite,” we mean all populations that are nonwhite, including the African American, Hispanic, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native American populations.

The challenge

- It’s harder for teachers to really know their ELL students
- Funds of knowledge is a perspective on what students bring from family and community
NOTA: En los municipios que aparecen en blanco, no se identificaron alumnos hablantes de lengua indígena.
(*) Sin representación
kaipxy yul.

tsaj paax aawaa.
mts yil tsaj paax.
pox yil y'ojkyp y tsaj paax.
tsaj paax' ku waaj.

xii yii o'kp.
pik yii xii.
xii mik yii y'aañ.
xii jin yootepii.

xii yii y't xoj.
xii yii xoj.
xii yii y't mij xoj.
ween yii yii ts'aa xoj.
maav y'aaq y'ii xoj.
ja'ax y xo'oj wyaañi.
tam liy xoj kixm.
pox yii li xo'oj.
Funds of knowledge

- What counts as “school knowledge”?
  - Two stories

- What counts as “school language”?
  - “Social language” (BICS) and “academic language” (CALP)
Story 1: The cow stuck in the ravine
Story 2: Sebastian’s wrenches
Funds of Knowledge

Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms

Edited by Norma González - Luis L. Moll - Celby Amorio
Funds of knowledge

“The concept of funds of knowledge ... is based on a simple premise: People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge. [The funds of knowledge] approach is one key to unlock and capitalize on the knowledge students already possess.”


ELL STUDENTS

CURRICULUM: The cultural orientation of the knowledge, skills, concepts, and language of the content and standards
Bridging school and home
“For children who are English learners, there is no pedagogical reason for their first language to be erased so that they can learn a second language, and it is sound practice to build on their existing ‘funds of linguistic knowledge’ (Smith, 2000).”


Promoting “critical language awareness”: teachers becoming aware of teachers unconscious biases based on language.
Deficit views of students’ language

Question: “Do differences in students’ speech characteristics lead to differential judgments by teachers about students’ academic performance?”

Researchers tape-recorded two groups of ninth-grade boys, six Black and six White, speaking identically worded answers to typical school questions that differed only in pronunciation. Using a matched guise technique, the recorded responses were evaluated by 62 experienced K-12 teachers. The teachers were not given any identifying information about the students, but asked to evaluate the answers and assign a score using the same rubric.
Questions:

- Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?
- What is the difference between discovery and invention?

Answers given by White students were perceived as better and more correct (awarded higher scores/grades) than identical answers given by Black students.

Evidence of unconscious vocal stereotyping

- Vocal stereotyping often deficit views of vernacular varieties
- Many bilingual students’ home language is best understood as a mixed code vernacular

Church services sign in Rio Grande Valley Texas (Smith & Murillo, 2013)
Myths about language mixing

Vernaculars are stigmatized, “broken” language varieties.
People mix languages because they are...
- Lazy
- Uneducated
- Can’t keep their languages separate
- Don’t know how to speak either language properly

Store sign in Laredo, Texas (Ramos, 2015)
Zentella’s (1997) study of bilingual children in New York City found that code-switching is rule-governed and grammatical.

Only 6% of instances of code-switching were a result of “crutching”.

Children switched languages for various reasons: To show empathy, reported speech, etc.

The most balanced bilinguals were the most prolific code-switchers.

Young bilinguals can employ their differentiated language systems in contextually sensitive ways (Genesee, 2007).
1.1 Obama insisted that the passage of the Keystone Pipeline would not be part of a quid pro quo with the Canadians.

1.2 Chomsky’s linguistic theory of transformational-generative grammar has a certain je ne sais quoi.

1.3 Jacky [talking about spider’s egg sac]: Lo que yo no entiendo es porque sale en un puffy little thing así que cargan arriba this little puffy thing.

1.4 Victoria [to adult in hallway]: Mister Peter tenemos que estar quiet porque están haciendo testing.
- Figure Left: Times for mass at church, Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas
- Figure Right: Rules for monolingual discourse at a bilingual school in the same time as left.
- From Smith & Murillo (2013)
Children as language brokers

- Children of immigrant parents often function as “family interpreters” or language brokers, doing paraphrasing for adults. (Orellana, 2015)
Assumptions in language education

- There are two separate languages involved: Spanish and English
- Concurrent use of languages is undesirable (Jacobson & Faltis, 1990)
  - E.g. Fidelity to Gomez & Gomez model of dual language education calls for strict separation of languages
  - Cummins (2008): “two solitudes” assumption
    “Even in dual language and other bilingual or foreign language programs, current conventional wisdom dictates that the two language of instruction be kept rigidly separate, resulting in cross-language transfer that is haphazard and inefficient” (Cummins, 2005, p. 587)
Callaghan Elementary School
Westside Neighborhood, San Antonio, Texas
“Paseo por el Westside” neighborhood event, May 2010
Photo: Esperanza Peace & Justice Center
parque busco juzgar brisa
podía hoy hoy ahora kiwi
asustar peligroso insecto gritar
podrido pegajoso cabeza queso
quita común saqué

Use geologist tools, as well as observing, describing and measuring skills, to collect, record, and organize data using pictures, numbers and words in order to classify the physical properties of a rock.

Observe, describe, and record the physical properties and patterns of the Sun and Moon.
Bilingual classroom environment
Bicultural classroom environment
Code-switching as an affordance to talk about academic content

2nd grade science class: Jacky is working with her classmates to label a picture of a spider using a diagram.

Jacky: Lo que yo no entiendo es porque sale en un puffy little thing así que cargan arriba this little puffy thing. [What I don’t understand is why this puffy little thing sticks out like they’re carrying this little puffy thing.]
Learning vocabulary

1 Teacher pauses reading a story to check comprehension
2 Teacher: Dice “un plato llano”… ¿qué quiere decir plato llano? ¿Cómo es?  (It says a “plate”… what does it mean a level plate? How is it?)
3 Itzel: Redondo (round)
4 Yolanda: Ovelado [ovalado] (ovail [sic])
5 Teacher: Sí pero ¿qué clase de plato necesitas para la sopa…? ¿Un plato plano? (Yes but what kind of plate do you need for soup…? A flat plate?)
6 Jesse: No, ¡es un bowl! (It’s a bowl!)
7 Teacher: Sí, necesitas un tazón  (Yes, you need a bowl)
8 Other students: Ahhh… ¡tazón!
Multilingual pedagogies are critical pedagogies.

Teacher leading a lesson from a big book on compound words.
Multilingual pedagogies are critical pedagogies

A language arts lesson on compound words

1 Teacher: ¿Qué quiere decir “tomar el sol”? (what does it mean “to sunbathe” [literally, “to drink the sun”])

2 Virginia: Porque es como you’re drinking it. (Because it’s like you’re drinking it)

[several turns later]

8 Dolores: Es algo que no lo hacemos… (It’s something we don’t do)

9 Teacher: ¿Y por qué no salimos a broncear? (Why don’t we go out to sunbathe?)

10 Dolores: Te hace como cafecito (It likes make you get a little browner)

11 Mateo: Mi mamá no le gusta que yo sea moreno, más moreno (my mother doesn’t like me to get dark-skinned, more dark-skinned)

[discussion continues several more turns]

18 Teacher: Los blancos tiene que salir a tomar el sol porque ese color es hermoso. Nosotros no tenemos que tomar el sol porque ya tenemos ese color. Pero los blancos sí, porque quieren ser como nosotros. (The Whites have to go out to sunbathe because this color [points to her arm], is beautiful. We don’t have to sunbathe because we’re already this color. But the Whites do, because they want to be like us.)
Funds of knowledge

We use the term **funds of knowledge** to refer to these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being.

The primary purpose of this work is to develop innovations in teaching that draw upon the knowledge and skills found in local households. Our claim is that by capitalizing on household and other community resources, we can organize classroom instruction that far exceeds in quality the rote-like instruction these children commonly encounter in schools.

(Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992)

**Linguistic funds of knowledge:** The language resources and practices that children bring to the classroom based on the ways of talking and using language and literacy in their homes and communities.
“Acquiring a non-vernacular social language like the language of some branch of physics or some type of urban gang, is a process of learning new social conventions (learning new ways to pattern together one’s grammatical resources for certain social purposes, like learning what clothes go with what other clothes for a given event or situation). *This is a sociocultural process that nearly all people undergo throughout their lives*—whether this involves acquiring the social language of a church, a craft (like mechanics or carpenters), a gang, a special interest (e.g., bird watching), a profession, a government agency, or an academic area, and so and so forth.”
Furthermore, and importantly, there is no evidence whatsoever that humans vary in their basic ability to acquire non-vernacular social languages. Since the child struggling in school with the beginnings of the language of science (in one of its many forms) may very well have already acquired, say, a great deal of mastery of the language of multiplayer real-time-strategy video games, the child’s problem is not that he or she cannot acquire social languages beyond his or her vernacular, but, rather, that something is going wrong with this process in school.

Gee (2014): “Decontextualized Language: A Problem, Not a Solution”
Language and literacy pracises...
What families do with language

- Playing music and singing songs
- Reciting bible verses and stories
- Telling stories (family stories, *leyendas*)
- Using puns and double-meanings (*albur*)
- Telling jokes
- Learning address forms (*saludos*)
- Learning formal language for festivals (*quinceñas, weddings*)
- Updating Facebook pages
- Using Skype or What’s App to call family members in Mexico
- Doing family errands (*hacer los mandados*)
- Cooking and instructions in the kitchen
Examples

- Riojas-Cortez (2001): “Preschooler’s funds of knowledge displayed through sociodramatic play episodes in a bilingual classroom”
- Moje et al (2004): “Working toward third space in content area literacy: An examination of everyday funds of knowledge and discourse”
An example: One teacher utilized her awareness of one student’s experiences with selling candy from Mexico in the United States by creating a series of interdisciplinary lessons centered around the theme of candy production. During this time, it was discovered that one parent knew how to make Mexican candy, and came to the class to explain the process and help the students make their own candy. By the end of a week, the class had studied math concepts (e.g., average number of ingredients in U.S. candy compared to Mexican candy), science concepts (e.g., chemical content of candy), health concepts (nutrition), consumer education (how to choose which candy is best), cross-cultural practices in the production of candy, marketing and advertising (e.g., how to price their own candy), and food production.

How to do a “funds of knowledge” home visit

1. Start with questions
2. Read about funds of knowledge
3. Identify questions for the conversation
4. Practice asking questions
5. Take notes
6. Learn from interpreters

Ginsberg, Margery (2007): “Lessons from the Kitchen Table: Visiting with Families in their Homes.”
Orientations to language

- Language as a problem
- Language as a right
- Language as a resource

Ruiz (1984): “Orientations in Language Planning”

Changing a deficit perspective:

- How do we as teachers look at the everyday things students do with language as a type of knowledge that is valuable?
- How do we harness that knowledge to build bridges to academic learning?
Linguistic funds of knowledge in pedagogy for ELLs

- Values students’ L1 language practices as resources to be drawn on.
- Takes an ethnographic view of students’ homes and communities; reduces the distance between students’ and teacher’s lived experiences.
- Takes a critical view, and engages with social issues related to students’ identity formation.
Los Pinguinos Snack Shack, Laredo, Texas (Ramos, 2015)
LINGUISTIC FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: BILINGUAL STUDENTS’ VERNACULAR TO MEDIATE ACADEMIC CONTENT AND LANGUAGE

Peter Sayer, The University of Texas at San Antonio
Research Talk at Western Oregon University
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