Chapter 72
Family Literacy and Social Justice:
Using Storytelling to Develop Bilingual Identities

Shartriya Collier-Stewart

California State University – Northridge, USA

ABSTRACT

The new Common Core State Standards are shifting education in a powerful way. Specifically, they are now tasking university teacher educators, K-12 administrators, and teachers to equip students with lifelong literacy skills. Students must learn skills such as how to develop effective argumentation and analyze and interpret complex texts. While such tasks can be quite daunting for the average monolingual speaker, they are even more challenging for children and families who do not speak English as a first language. This chapter examines the development of an eight-week intergenerational family literacy program: Teaching the Acquisition of Language Through English and Storytelling (T.A.L.E.S.). Through the use of the arts and storytelling, families were able to cultivate their bilingual voices and celebrate their multicultural identities. This chapter explores how such programs may be used as a vehicle for social justice, designed to integrate a community literacy model in which all stakeholders are accountable.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How can the arts be used to scaffold language development in family literacy programs?
2. What strategies are most effective for helping parents of second language learners to support the academic development of their children?
3. What strategies can be used to support bilingual development in family literacy programs when parents and children have varying degrees of language proficiency?
4. How can bilingual family literacy programs be used to address social justice?

Children are made readers on the laps of their parents. -Emilie Buchwald

INTRODUCTION

The African proverb, "It takes a Village," has now become the engrained mantra for many teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. Yet, in order to engage "the village," we must first pose several questions: Who exactly is the village? What resources are available to the village? Moreover, when the role of "the village" is defined relative to language and literacy development, the questions become more complex. What does literacy look like in my village? What language/s are valued in my village? Are intergenerational oral traditions utilized in my village? If so, in what ways and how can I tap into these pre-existing literacy structures and use them as a tool to support lifelong literacy?

More than ever, such questions must be answered. The era of Common Core Standards (CCS), New Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and the plethora of revised educational policies has advanced the imperative to discuss how literacy is defined. According to Webster, literacy has been defined traditionally, on the most basic level, as "the ability to read and write." In the field of education, this has been expanded to a more comprehensive view of literacy. In alignment with authors and researchers such as James Gee and Lucy Calkins, sociocultural perspectives of literacy suggest moving beyond viewing reading and writing as discrete, isolated, unconnected skills. Adherents of this perspective view language and literacy as social practices that embody a broad range of multiple literacies as one enters a classroom (Calkins, 1994; Caraballo & Souto-Manning, 2017; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Graves, 1994; New London Group, 1996, 2000). This view allows educators to focus on making connections between the real world and academic discourses. It also addresses the institutional constructs that encourage or inhibit families in becoming literate and achieving success in their prescribed communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Literacy is not only a mechanical process; it is also deeply connected to the internal construction of one's identity (Gee et al., 1996).

Historically, immigrant parents have faced many challenges in seeking to support their children in school (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Ovando & Coombs, 2014; Valdes, 2002). A variety of factors influence participation by parents of bilingual and English Language Learner (ELL) students, such as work commitments, cultural factors, socialization, and, most importantly, language (Soyoung, 2005). In order to create an optimal environment for bilingual and second language literacy development, curricula must be implemented that celebrate the bilingual identities of both parents and children. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) argued that bilingualism often requires speakers to perform and enact multiple identities, which can at times be conflicting. For example, Norton's (2002) landmark study of four bilingual women demonstrated that the mothers were strong and confident in their native language (L1) but often felt silenced, disempowered, and ignored as second language speakers of English (L2). Teachers and administrators in K–12 settings must learn how to support and nurture development of bilingual literacies, so students and families can excel in multicultural and multilingual school environments.

This chapter examines how one family literacy program, Teaching the Acquisition of English through Language and Storytelling (T.A.L.E.S Program), utilized the arts and storytelling to support bilingual identities and biliteracy development of both parents and children. An analysis of the program curriculum and parent exit survey responses show how such family literacy programs can serve as powerful contexts for social justice and parent partnerships. The first section examines Hornberger and Skilton-Slyvester's (2003) continua of biliteracy model as a lens for identifying the variables that must be considered when developing biliteracy. The second section explores how the arts can be used to support and develop biliteracy, specifically by discussing the power of storytelling as a tool for raising social justice and

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/family-literacy-and-social-justice/270152

Related Content

African American Students, Racism, and Academic Injustice: Igniting a FUSE
Patrice W. Glenn Jonesand Warren C. Hope (2021). *Research Anthology on Empowering Marginalized Communities and Mitigating Racism and Discrimination (pp. 666-689).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/african-american-students-racism-and-academic-injustice/277589

Sociopolitical Implications to Consider When Working With the LGBTQIA+ Community
Gregory C. Robinsonand Andrea L. Toliver-Smith (2021). *Critical Perspectives on Social Justice in Speech-Language Pathology (pp. 18-38).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/sociopolitical-implications-to-consider-when-working-with-the-lgbtqia-community/281862

Education for Citizenship in the Latin American Context
Joan Pagès Blanch, Carolina García Gonzálezand Martha Cecilia Gutiérrez Giraldo (2021). *Research Anthology on Instilling Social Justice in the Classroom (pp. 1487-1509).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/education-for-citizenship-in-the-latin-american-context/270164

Public Financial Management and Systems of Accountability in Sub-National Governance in Developing Economies
Christopher Boachie (2020). *Open Government: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1623-1647).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/public-financial-management-and-systems-of-accountability-in-sub-national-governance-in-developing-economies/235248

Local Government and Governance in Mexico
Francisco Javier Porras-Sanchez (2020). *Open Government: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1508-1533).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/local-government-and-governance-in-mexico/235243