LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

Recommended citation of this article

Citation for LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

About the Organization

LESLLA aims to support adults who are learning to read and write for the first time in their lives in a new language. We promote, on a worldwide, multidisciplinary basis, the sharing of research findings, effective pedagogical practices, and information on policy.

LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

https://lesllasp.journals.publicknowledgeproject.org

Website

https://www.leslla.org/

ACQUIRING ENGLISH AND LITERACY WHILE LEARNING TO DO SCHOOL: RESISTANCE AND ACCOMMODATION

Kendall A. King & Martha Bigelow
University of Minnesota

Introduction

This study explores how English learners in a largely adult high school "do school" when their backgrounds often do not include print literacy or formal schooling. We analyze particularly revealing examples from two of our focal students – two Somali girls named Ayan and Nadifa. We assumed that our participants would bring linguistic resources, learning strategies, and coping mechanisms to their new schooling experiences in the United States. We assumed that they would engage in ways of solving problems and interacting with classmates and teachers that are grounded in cultural norms and informed by pre- and post-immigration experiences, including home-based and digital media literacies. However, we did not know how these assumptions would unfold in a classroom.

Like all people, our participants are cultural beings. Ayan and Nadifa, while new to school, bring funds of knowledge, resilience and emerging social and cultural capital useful to navigating institutions in the United States as shown in other studies (e.g., Bigelow, 2007, 2010). While we recognize the potential for the experience of being in school for the first time to be dramatic – possibly disorienting, exciting, stressful,

engaging, fun and strange to newcomers – this analysis seeks to move beyond the qualitative experience surrounding the newness of school and literacy to a close analysis of a small number of everyday classroom events. These instances are informative to educators seeking deeper understandings of how youth with limited formal schooling learn in mixed-literacy level high school classes.

All students, including newcomers, traverse every day the dynamic social and interpersonal aspects of the home, the school, and the multiple classroom learning environments students. In these ecologies, we assume that there are issues of power and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1991) enmeshed in English language acquisition among adolescent newcomers. Furthermore, we are keenly aware that youth are actively creating, resisting, flip-flopping, and negotiating their social position at school. Adolescents' identities – what is known about them and what they wish others to know about them – have observable effects in the classroom in terms of social status as peripheral or legitimate members of the classroom community. We acknowledge that systems of oppression in the new learning environment push and pull youth through the identity work they are doing at school (Bigelow, 2008). We also acknowledge that youth who are in school for the first time are often up against a deficit discourse among teachers, in the media, and even among peers who characterizes them as incapable (e.g., the *pobrecito* syndrome).

Academic success is also mediated by the curriculum: its cultural relevance and its permeability. There often seems to be countless reasons for the opening and closing of learning opportunities. Regardless of common institutional barriers in public schooling (Darden & Cavendish, 2012), and limitations in how teachers are selected, prepared and supported (Childs et al., 2011; Skinner, Garretón, & Schultz, 2011; Stillman, 2011), students have agency (Mercer, 2011) as they traverse school policies, (dis)engage in tests, assignments and everyday classroom learning opportunities. It is with

full recognition of the complexity of context that we attempt to understand what it means to learn English and develop emergent literacy skills for newcomers.

Literature Review

There are few accounts in our major journals of how adolescent emergent readers acquire a new language (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004). It is also uncommon to encounter data about how this population of English learners engages in classroom language learning. Because the phenomenon of interrupted or limited formal schooling is not new among adolescent immigrants and refugees to the United States, we can only assume that these learners have been in SLA, learning strategy, and classroom studies, although not explicitly identified. Some studies carried out in schools, however, have noted that their participants were emergent readers. For example, in an ethnography of a high school Valenzuela (1999) describes Carolina, Lupita and Estéban, all adolescents learning to read for the first time. In group interviews reported in their study (pp. 133-140), the students relay experiences of humiliation and shame in school. Lupita felt that she wasted her first six weeks of school because the teacher could not teach her anything. Estéban said that none of them expected special treatment, but that the mistreatment they had to bear had been very difficult. Estéban took the initiative to negotiate his grades with his teachers and take oral rather than written tests. He reports being granted permission to copy from a textbook for a grade rather than write an essay. He also told about sitting in the back of the room so that a fellow student could read aloud to him. Sadly, these strategies did not sustain him. In fact, all three of them dropped out that year. Valenzuela argues that because there were no classes for emergent readers like Carolina, Lupita and Estéban, the locus of their disenfranchisement rested "squarely with the structure of the curriculum" (p. 139). This study, while suggesting some ways for surviving in high school without print literacy

did not, however, explore in detail what was happening in the classroom for these students.

In a case study of a Liberian child in a third-grade classroom (Mary), Platt and Troudi (1997) examined teaching, tutoring and learning experiences from a sociocultural perspective. In Mary's school, the English learners received pull-out ESOL services and were in grade-level classes for most of their day. The case study arose after Mary's teacher co-led a professional development opportunity in her district for other teachers on ESOL strategies. The classroom teacher and the researcher wished to learn more about Mary because she "could barely read, write, solve math problems, or speak English" (p. 30). Platt and Troudi wished to explore the nature of Mary's learning and the nature of her interaction with her classmates. The researcher videotaped Mary in large- and small-group learning in which Mary's learning processes, coping strategies and interaction were captured in detail. The theoretical frameworks drawn upon in their article to gives an important dimension to classroom learning. For example, the authors critique the mainstream cognitive SLA work of the time (i.e., Krashen's input only view) and instead opt for Vygotsky's view of language learning as an ongoing human activity crucial for developing higher mental processes. Central to their understanding of how language is acquired is the notion of assisted performance, or learning with a more competent interlocutor. The authors coin the term "zone of actual development" (ZAD) as a way of identifying what Mary can do on her own, versus the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which is what she can do with assistance.

Through analysis of videotape and fieldnotes, Platt and Troudi found that Mary fulfilled her teacher's expectations of culturally adjusting to the third-grade classroom. Mary also shows indications that she was moving toward self-regulation with the assistance of her classmates and teacher. In a lesson about planets, Mary volunteered facts she learned (e.g., "Saturn has rings.") and participated willingly via an imitative mode. When she was not asked to perform academic skills, Mary was an equal participant in her class. Data from tutoring sessions revealed that Mary was not making progress in her ability to recognize more than a few words. She relied on pictures to make meaning from texts. With peers, Mary was often able to obtain unsolicited help which, authors argue, helped her develop functional language skills without needing print literacy. Theoretically, Mary was self-regulated. She knew how to function in the classroom and her classmates knew implicitly how to work within her ZPD to help her "complete her performance" (Holzman, 1995). By distributing readings skills to peers, Mary was able to play the computer games with a peer, as a total task, and her outward behaviors suggested she participated; however, she was able to emulate the behavior of control. In pair work, Mary was good at looking busy and had practices that helped her stall (e.g., looking up as if she's thinking, writing, erasing, sharpening pencils, looking in her bag). Researchers report a very telling instance from their data when Mary was trying to work alone, stalled for as long as possible, but was on the wrong page and was unable to follow.

In a study with many similarities to Platt and Troudi's study of Mary, but with an adult female in an intensive English program, we see that "good student" behaviors can mask gaps in academic language through high school and into the university. Vásquez (2007) conducted a case study of "Festina," who came to the U.S. at the age of 13 as an Albanian refugee. Their observational and interview data showed that teachers viewed Festina very positively despite her weak writing skills. Festina's strong oral proficiency in English enabled her to garner positive regard over many years and avoid acquiring the academic language needed for her to be successful in her courses beyond the intensive English program. Vásquez reports that Festina had been in a refugee camp, but not that her formal schooling was seriously interrupted. Her high school transcript shows her grades moving

from Cs, Ds, and Fs to As and Bs by her third year in high school. Despite good grades by the end of high school, Festina scored quite low on the TOEFL and was required to enroll in the university's intensive English program (IEP). When she was allowed to enroll in university classes, she was not successful (GPA 1.27). These findings contribute to other research documenting a common phenomenon of long-term academic language challenges resulting in additional years beyond high school in universities or community colleges (Bigelow, 2010; Harklau, 2000; Lopez, 2003; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This literature documents a contradiction between teachers' assessments of English learners' skills as strong with grades and other academic markers of success. It is obviously essential for high school curricula to equip English learners, including emergent readers, with strong academic English, regardless of their ability to "do school" or exhibit "good student" behavior.

Studies focusing specifically on learning strategies among L2 learners seem to have largely ignored or overlooked adolescent or adult emergent readers. Instead, this line of research has concentrated on what a "good learner" does with the assumption that strategies may include print literacy. Literature from the field tells us that strategies can be taught, can be conscious, and can become automatic over time. An important finding is that strategy use is that more proficient learners employ a wider range of cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more efficiently than less proficient learners (Green & Oxford, 1995; Kaylani, 1996; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Philips, 1991). Directional causality is often unclear in this work; that is, perhaps these individuals became more proficient because they used "good learner" strategies.

Cohen (in press) definition of language learning strategies focuses on the aspect of conscious choice: "thoughts and actions, consciously chosen and operationalised by language learners, to assist them in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks

from the very onset of learning to the most advanced levels of target-language performance." However, this research program and the empirically derived conclusions generated thus far, we fear, are based on literate learners. There are a few studies focusing on classroom language learning strategies with emergent readers, which have not been disseminated widely. For example, Degenhardt (2005) studied adult English learners (Karen, Hmong, Latino) in a community-based ESL program. She documented strategies used by her participants as they worked on a project together finding that the Hmong and Karen students used interactive, social strategies less than the Spanish speakers. In a similar vein, Reimer (2008) conducted a classroom-based study with 11 Hmong emergent readers with no prior formal schooling. Reimer framed her study using mainstream research on language learning strategies (e.g., A. Cohen, 1998; A. Cohen, 2011; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) with the intent to bring a more diverse learner into this research agenda. Through interviews and classroom observations, Reimer found that adult Hmong students use a variety of strategies effectively. Reimer approached her research deductively by looking for cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social strategies found in the strategies literature and then exploring unique strategies in her data through inductive means. The most common effective strategies included the following examples:

1. Having paper and pens ready
2. Copying from the board
3. Attending to classroom activity
4. Copying from the board
5. Asking questions to show comprehension
6. Repeating dialogues and words
7. Using text, pictures to orient themselves to the class materials
8. Asking the teacher for help.

Some of the ineffective strategies she identified included

keeping track of papers, copying with only attention to form, not meaning, and avoiding interaction with the teacher.

Our read of this literature leads us to suggest that culture, albeit in largely implicit ways, potentially informs learning strategies. We question, however, what this means when print-based strategies are culturally juxtaposed to strategies involving interaction and oral language use. In other words, societies which use more print literacy include cultures which somehow prefer learning through tools involving print and societies which do not use print literacy as much somehow prefer learning through interpersonal, hands on ways. These conclusions are problematic because even heavily print-based societies also use oral language across a wide range of genres. Furthermore, if students do not have the option of relying on print-based learning strategies such as note taking, it is impossible to say that orally-based strategies are a preference. Learning through means which are not print-based is the only option until basic print literacy is achieved.

Given the potential importance of learning strategies, and the dearth of research on how newcomers with limited experiences with print negotiate many new academic demands, this study sought to examine classroom practices and behaviors of learners new to the U.S. and new to school. Our aim was to investigate examine some of the potential ways in which newcomers learn to do school in a new language, while simultaneously acquiring new literacy skills and new academic content.

The study
To address these issues, this paper draws from four months of intensive, ethnographic observation in two newcomer classes in one all-English-language-learner high school (Franken International). Researchers worked closely with school leadership and teachers across one academic year. For four months in the Spring term, we observed two class periods three-to-five days each week; conducted interviews

and language and literacy assessments with students individually or in small groups; and collected copies of student work. Most sessions were audio and video-taped, resulting in more than 100 hours of classroom video data.

The context
All students at Franken International are English language learners who have come to the U.S. as adolescents or young adults. For many, Franken International is their first encounter with formal schooling. Students range in age from 14 to 21, and the majority have either Somali or Spanish as a first language, although there are also speakers of Oromo, Amharic, Vietnamese, Lao, French, Hmong, and Nepalese. Franken's publically stated aims are to "support high academic achievement in an accredited high school setting and by working in partnership with local colleges". Franken International has ten full-time teaching staff and enrolls about 150 students, 90% of whom are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Franken International is housed in one wing of a large urban comprehensive high school which serves primarily African American and Latino students. In part because of its small size but also due to the staff's enthusiasm and dedication, the tone of the school is friendly and upbeat. Students and staff routinely greet and banter with each other; students are supportive of one another and, for instance, quick to help a new arrival understand her course schedule; and the school is not characterized by the national, racial, ethnic or religious inter-group tensions well documented in other contexts (Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong, 1997; Fordham, 1996; Lee, 2005; Lopez, 2003; Pollock, 2004; Yon, 2000),

Our role and stance
We began our work at the request of Franken's principal, who sought to establish a university-school research partnership. For four months, we observed classes across the school day, participated in weekly faculty training and leadership meetings,

and worked with some teachers on their unit and lesson plans. In February, we began intensive participant observation in two classes, taught by the same teacher, Ms. Mavis. For the remainder of the school year, we occupied varied roles in those two classes. We served at times as teaching assistants (e.g., working with students in small groups, passing out materials, helping students individually), as confidants (sharing students' problems, triumphs and small stories in the hall), and on some days as university researchers (testing students in the library, setting up the recorders and taking notes on our laptops in the back of the room) (Ainley, 1999; Rounds, 1996). The majority of students and staff explicitly welcomed us, although not all and not always. For instance, several students withdrew from study, stating they did not wish to be interviewed or video-taped in class, and not all staff opened their classroom doors to us as widely as Ms. Mavis chose to (Duff & Early, 1996).

Focal teacher

Ms. Mavis held reading and ESL licenses. She had lived in Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer, and spoke French and some Spanish. Ms. Mavis made a point of discussing and validating students' native languages in the classroom although they were not systemically used for instructional purposes. Overall she treated her students respectfully, as intelligent young adults; students frequently stated they learned a lot in her class. Both periods were focused on developmental literacy skills (including vocabulary, grammar, bottom-up phonics), and students included the most recent arrivals to Franken International. Despite students' beginning-level English proficiency, Ms. M. also attempted to include higher order skills such as prediction and plot analysis, as well as materials she felt would be culturally familiar (e.g. stories with a moral, often from another country).

Data analysis

Across four months, the project yielded 59 hours of audio-

video-taped classroom observation, 5 hours of interviews, and 44 hours of individual or small group tutoring sessions. Our qualitative analysis focused on recordings of classroom interactions; students' written work; and 10 focal students' performance on elicited assessments in English and their dominant language (i.e., Somali, Spanish, Amharic or Lao).

As our focus was on identifying students' strategies for learning and doing school, that is on analyzing strategies as practiced by *these* students in *this* particular context, our initial step in analysis was to review classroom observations and field notes with the goal of identifying salient strategies within the local ecologies of these two classroom. Through this inductive coding approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), we identified many different strategies. These included 'seeking interpersonal support', 'pronounced oral participation', 'bilingual note-taking', 'self-vocalization', and 'work arounds', among others. We simultaneously identified 'critical incidents', that is interactions evident in the observations that were unusual, involved conflict, or clear enactment of resistance to school or teacher policy. We then looked for patterns across the students, classrooms, and activities. Informed by this broader coding, below, we provide detailed microethnographic analysis of specific classroom events in order to illustrate some of the strategies used by these learners.

Research Findings and Analysis

The remainder of the article focuses on two of our study's focal students: Ayan and Nadifa. The following are instances where these two focal students made choices about how to engage in classroom learning activities.

Ayan

This is Ayan's second year in Ms. Mavis' introductory English class yet her English writing skills and productive oral skills are among the weakest in the class. At the time of the study, she had been in the U.S. for one year; Franken Interna-

tional was her first formal school experience. Ayan caught our attention immediately as she frequently sought support from us, the teacher, and fellow students. She was often the target of Ms. Mavis' reminders and reprimands for talking out of turn or not staying on task. Ayan sometimes engaged in overtly oppositional resistance to teacher requests. In addition, the academic skills that Ayan possesses were at times overlooked and undermined in class. For instance, while she does not write in Somali, she is a proficient speaker of that language; yet another was routinely ratified as the expert in the class.

Ayan relied on two, inter-related strategies which facilitated her engage with academic work: (a) peer support/interaction, and (b) physical movement and bodily contact with other students. As evident in Excerpt 1 ('Ayan, no copying!') below, she is highly skilled at both. We now turn to analyzing in detail one segment of classroom interaction involving Ayan. Our aim is to illustrate some of the many skills that Ayan possesses that allow her 'to do school' effectively; many of these are apparent only through close, microanalysis of her interactional moves, and thus difficult to observe in real time, in real classrooms.

The focus of this particular class was past and present irregular verbs. Students were given a worksheet with a list of 16 irregular verbs in the past tense (e.g., *saw, went, began, was, drank, blew, hid*) and told their task was to provide the present tense. These verbs had appeared in the folk story the students had been working with over the last few weeks. Ms. Mavis explicitly recognized that this would be a challenging task for them. After modeling the task at the front of the room with document projector, she tells them: "Ok, you see how many you can do. Try to find verbs you know. See how many you can do on your own, OK? Try to do some on your own." Immediately, Ayan signals to Ms. Mavis that she needs help with *saw*. Ms. Mavis walks over to her desk and assists her through body language (point at eye). The interactions described below are what follow when Ms. Mavis moves on to help another student. (See transcription conventions in the Appendix)

Excerpt 1: 'Ayan, no copying!' (March, 2011)

1	Ayan	((turns head and body towards her Amharic-speaking seatmate, Aisha, and begins to fill out her worksheet, silently moving her head back and forth as she looks first at her seatmate's paper and then at her own))	6.25-6.55
2	Ayan	((whispers to seatmate, smiles and then slaps her playfully on the shoulder))	6.56-7.01
3	Ayan	((turns her gaze and body behind her, making eye-contact with Somali boy, Said, who had stronger English skills; then in one quick swoop grabs his worksheet and puts on her own desk))	7.02-7.06
4	Ayan	((looks silently at this Said's worksheet))	7.07-7.14
5	Ayan	((twists head around to smile slightly at Said, with tongue out of her mouth))	7.15-7.16
6	Ayan	((compares her and Aisha's worksheets with that of Said))	7.17-7.34
7	Ms. Mavis	((approaches Said's desk))	7.35
8	Ayan	(twists around in alarm, making eye contact with him))	7.36
9	Ms. Mavis	Said, you don't have this paper?	7.37
10	Ayan	((twists, smiles and returns Said's paper))	7.38
11	Ms. Mavis	Ayan, no copying.	7.39

12	Ayan	((pats Aisha on the shoulder and then collapses on top of her giggles, simultaneously making eye contact with Said))	*7.40-7.46*
13	Ayan	((twists around to grab Ms. Mavis at the elbow forcing Ms. Mavis to turn her body 180 degrees))	*7.47-7.48*
14	Ayan	TEACHER! ((holds up her worksheet above her head with two hands))	*7.49*
15	Ms. Mavis	ok. good Ayan. ((continuing to walk towards the front of the room and over to another group of students))	*7.50-7.51*
16	Ayan	((leans over her worksheet, moving her head back and forth))	*7.50-8.16*
17	Ayan	((turns around and attempts to make eye contact with Said))	*8.17*
18	Ayan	((turns around again and attempts to make eye contact with Said))	*8.26*
19	Ayan	((taps Aisha on the shoulder))	*8.30*
20	Ayan	((holds up her worksheet so visible to Said, twists head around, smiles, says something inaudible and then takes his worksheet, with his apparent consent)	*8.35-8.41*
21	Ayan	((writes, and occasionally erases, at her desk intensively, moving head back and forth while Ms. Mavis is just one student over))	*8.42-9.33*
22	Ayan	((silently and slowly returns paper to Said without making eye-contact))	*9.33-9.34*
23	Ayan	((leans over her paper and looks closely))	*9.35-9.36*
24	Ayan	'Teacher! Teacher!' ((waves and tries to touch Bigelow as she walks by))	*9.40-9.44*
25	Ayan	((laughs and waves paper around audibly))	*9.45-9.50*
26	Ayan	((consults with Aisha, looks around room))	*9.51-10.25*
27	Ms. Mavis	((approaches Ayan's desk, looks over her paper from above))	*10.26*
		Ok. this goes here. and this goes here. ((pointing at her worksheet, and then demonstrates 'hop' by physically acting out))	*10.29*

In this roughly four-minute segment, we see how Ayan simultaneously and seamlessly manages multiple social relationships (e.g., with Aisha, Said, and Ms. Mavis) and succeeds in effectively 'doing school' by making progress on her assigned worksheet. Also evident here is a sharp contrast between Ms. Mavis' directions to work independently and Ayan's intensive recruitment of interpersonal support. In quick succession, she establishes collaborative relationships with two students around her, primarily through physical contact and body language; borrows twice the worksheet of more-English-proficient student behind her; and elicits support and praise from teacher at three different points. In the span of four minutes, she completes at least fifteen overt, interpersonal moves. In addition, during this same work period she also gets up to hug another Somali girl and walks across the room to get candy from a Latino boy. This excerpt highlights how skilled Ayan is at multi-tasking and being very aware of who is nearby (e.g., head turning with Ms. M's voice), and how to manage relationships with classmates while simultaneously doing written task.

This segment also reveals Ayan's proficiency in 'doing school', and her understanding of what is officially and unofficially sanctioned in this classroom. For instance, she understands that *officially* she is not supposed to copy, as evident by her alertness at Ms. Mavis' approach (moves 7 and 8) and

her return of the worksheet *before* Ms. Mavis says 'no coping', as well as her laughter after the fact (moves 10-12). Ayan also seems to understand that *unofficially* there is no real punishment for doing so (as she repeats 'offense' in move 20 with Ms. Mavis very nearby). Indeed, despite multiple flagrant violations of classroom rules (e.g., no copying, working independently for this task), Ayan successfully 'gets by': that is, she completes the task (and even gets a compliment of 'good' from M.) and does not get in trouble.

Nadifa

Nadifa has been in the U.S. and at Franken for two years. Nadifa's gaze is often on her own paper and toward the front of the room. She is typically sitting up very straight, with her papers out and her pen in her hand. She consults with other students, like Ayan, but for particular reasons, not as her default for getting her work done. She brings strong interpersonal skills to her interactions with classmates and teachers. Nadifa is outgoing and talkative, asks questions, seems to try hard, has good attendance, smiles a lot, is well-behaved and clearly enjoys school. She is a storyteller herself, with a repertoire newcomer stories– some funny, some very heartfelt.

Nadifa has a range of effective learning strategies. These include: using lists and taking notes (mostly in English – compared to some of her peers with some L1 literacy who use bilingual lists); seeking interpersonal support (not so much in terms of getting help getting work done, like Ayan, but we see longer oral negotiations in Somali and English); looking at pictures to help comprehend stories; she is able to engage with text at the teacher's pace and stays focused, and pronounced oral participation (typically repeated, solo and loud).

Nadifa is also skilled at doing 'work arounds,' that is she sometimes finds ways of getting the task done, but also possibly missing the intended learning opportunity of the task (e.g., when doing matching card activities that entail putting in columns flash cards with certain sounds/letter combos,

she might use color coding to sort rather than by spelling/sound; skillfully copying). Nevertheless, in many ways she is a good student and highly proficient in 'doing school', that is keeping notebook organized, organizing papers, conforming to classroom expectations.

However at times, Nadifa's ways of doing school are informed by her oral language skills and culturally-based ways of enjoying oral texts. We suggest that   Nadifa's way of doing school is intertwined with a cultural stance toward literacy. In Excepts 2 and 3, we see how she engages fully with the texts, briefly resists, and then complies with formal, some resistance, and then compliance to school literacy practices.

Regularly across the year, Ms. Mavis would play animated videos based on the current folktale students were reading (www.storycove.com). In these videos, a narrator reads verbatim from the children's book and the characters are minimally animated. Nadifa, in particular, found these videos amusing and highly engaging. She and other Somali students would laugh each time at the same point the story was played (e.g., when the main character put a pot of beans on his head, in *Anasi the Spider*) (fieldnotes 2.23.11). The students would laugh at the punch line many times over – and even sometimes when there was no obvious punch line.

This pleasurable engagement with texts was at odds at time with Ms. Mavis' attempts to have students critically analyze the structure of the stories. Throughout the year, Ms. Mavis attempted to have students identify the story characters, setting, the main problem, climax, resolution and moral of the stories. This was highly challenging for most students. Ms. Mavis would attempt to promote this skill by frequently stopping the video and asking questions of students as evident in Except 2. In this segment, the class is watching the video of *How the Tiger Lost his Stripes*. Many students seem to enjoy the video, laughing and smiling.

Excerpt 2 ('Nadifa engages with text') (Feb 2012)

1	video narrator	And back at my house I will go and get him. The man started to walk off.	0-7.54 (sec)
2	Nadifa	((alert with eyes on screen and erect posture))	0-7.54 (sec)
3	Ms. Mavis	((click stop on the video))	7.55
4	Nadifa	((claps hands above head, turns body to the side and chuckles))	7.56-9.20
5	Ms. Mavis	So, how many of you think that is the climax?	10-12.37
6	Nadifa	((covers her mouth while raising her right hand))	12.50

Here we see how Nadifa manages her own frustration that the story has been interrupted. She claps and laughs, but immediately raises her hand in response to Ms. Mavis' question about the climax of the story. In Excerpt 3 below, in contrast, we see Nadifa's resistance to this sort of analysis. Here, Ms. Mavis stops the video to ask students to predict what will happen next.

Excerpt 3 ('Nadifa protests predicting') (Feb 2012)

1	Video narrator	A change has come said the tiger.	0-4.43 (sec)
2	Nadifa	HEA! ((loudly, in a deep voice))	6.18
3	Ms. Mavis	So now remember (.) you will the rest of it, ok?	8.81-11.38
4	Nadifa	Oh my god ((turns to side of room and smiles))	
5		We are going to make predictions. I will show it again from the beginning, OK?	13.33-15.76

6	Nadifa	NO!!! xxx finish. ((loudly and then smiles and turns to side of room))	15.79-18.65
7	Ms. Mavis	Don't worry about seeing the rest. ((not clear))	
8	Nadifa	((turns to classmate, speaks in Somali))	30.79
9		OK (.) this time while you watch think (.) about (.) the plot (.) how it begins (.) the timing (.) the climax (.) What do you think the resolution will be? OK?	33.32 – 46.23
10	Video	((music playing))	36.27
11	Nadifa	((turns to the side and looks away from the video))	36.27
12	Video narrator	Title … written by XXX Illustrated by XXX	46.23
13	Nadifa	((as narration starts Nadifa turns back towards the screen))	46.23

Here we see Nadifa's clear irritation with Ms. Mavis' more academic agenda. She protests the stopping of the video; she seems to want to enjoy the story in its entirety. Ms. Mavis, in contrast has another agenda: a more abstract analysis of plot. Here we see how Nadifa advocates for her wishes, but also resists academic literacy demands. She turns her body away from Ms. Mavis and the screen (at the front of the room) to resist; notably returns her gaze immediately when the story is restarted. Further, shortly after this protest, Nadifa acquiesces and returns to actively answering the teacher's comprehension questions (e.g., "Why does he think he is better than man?").

Discussion
These examples suggest ways in which strategies can be productive (or functional) for students in terms of promoting engaged learning and/or in what we call 'doing school' – e.g.,

getting school tasks done efficiently but not always seeming to learn from classroom tasks. For instance, Ayan's interactional strategies were functional in helping her 'do school', but it is questionable to what extent they helped her really engage with material and to learn. These strategies, in some instances, also violated explicit rules and were not sanctioned by teachers.

Nadifa, in turn, adjusted her preferred (and possibly culturally-informed) way to listen to a story to the school context. She resisted the unnatural pausing in the story but chose to stay engaged and answer the teacher's questions about the text. Nadifa gave in to 'doing school', and also gave up enjoying a folktale for a little while. This example illustrates some of the ways in which literacy practices in school-based settings often collide with ways of engaging with text outside of the school walls. Particularly in a reading class, students are using text to learn, rather than learning through text. They are explicitly taught how make sense of text in ways that are particular to the context of school. This means manipulating the text to practice reading strategies (rather than listening, laughing at the jokes, learning), answering questions to show comprehension (rather than debating the ending, discussing the moral), and documenting the contour of the story on plot diagrams (rather than enjoying the craft of the storyteller). An even more culturally distinct way of understanding a story is the plot diagram. Segmenting an entertaining story in a way that fits a triangle is a very abstract way of engaging with narrative when new to print. Nadifa was able to excel at this task because she sets aside authentic ways of understanding a story and embraces this very academic way of making a story abstract. In the name of becoming a reader in a school context, Nadifa was willing to shift her orientation to this new way of engaging with text.

As we examined these and other interactions in our data we reflected on the tenets of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy. In this respect, we have more

questions than answers. For instance, the classroom content relied heavily on 'multicultural' folktales, but many of the ways of learning and interacting around these folktales did not leverage cultural preferences, nor culturally-grounded ways of learning or knowing. However, if the class were to be similar to classes in Somalia or the refugee camps in Kenya, students would likely have to listen to the teacher most of the time, copy from the chalk board, repeat what the teacher says, and memorize a great deal. If this is culturally relevant pedagogy, in that it is similar to the students' past experiences, it does not seem to be something that most educators (including us) would advocate for.

Finally, these data call into question to what extent such behaviors are language learning strategies and whether, instead, they are better considered coping mechanisms of some sort. As these newcomer students face multiple and overlapping challenges with respect to language learning, academic content learning, and literacy learning in vastly new cultural contexts, some of these behaviors might well be as much about negotiating, navigating, and surviving these demands as they are consciously chosen language learning strategies. Fine-tuning this distinction (between language learning strategies and survival strategies) is perhaps not essential — for researchers or teachers, and certainly not for students themselves. What is important, as we hope this paper has illustrated, is close attention to the particular ways that students engage with academic tasks and cope with classroom demands, and greater awareness and inquiry by teachers and researchers into if and how these behaviors ultimately support or undermine their academic progress.

References

Ainley, J. (1999). Who are you today? Complementary and conflicting roles in school-based research. *For the Learning of Mathematics, 19*(1), 39-47.

Bigelow, M. (2007). Social and cultural capital at school: The case of a Somali teenage girl with limited formal schooling. In N. R. Faux (Ed.), *Low-educated adult second language and literacy acquisition proceedings of symposium* (pp. 7-22). Richmond, VA: Literacy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Bigelow, M. (2008). Somali adolescents' negotiation of religious and racial bias in and out of school. *Theory into Practice, 47*(1), 27-34.

Bigelow, M. (2010). *Mogadishu on the Mississippi: Language, racialized identity and education in a new land*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bigelow, M., & Tarone, E. (2004). The role of literacy level in SLA: Doesn't who we study determine what we know? *TESOL Quarterly, 39*(1).

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic capital*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Childs, R. A., Broad, K., Gallagher-Mackay, K., Sher, Y., Escayq, K.-A., & McGrath, C. (2011). Pursuing equity in and through teacher education program admissions. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 19*(24), 1-19.

Cohen, A. (1998). Strategies and processes in test-taking and SLA. In L. F. Bachman & A. D. Cohen (Eds.), *Interfaces between SLA and language testing research*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, A. (2011). L2 learner strategies. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 681-698). Abingdong, England: Routledge.

Cohen, A. (in press). Strategies: The interface of styles, strategies, and motivation on tasks. In S. Mercer, S. Ryan & M. Williams

(Eds.), *Language learning psychology: Research, theory, and pedagogy*. Basingstoke, England:: Palgrave Macmillan.

Darden, E. C., & Cavendish, E. (2012). Achieving resource equity within a single school district: Erasing te opportunity gap by examining school board decisions. *Education and Urban Society, 44*(1), 61-82.

DeCapua, A., & Marshall, H. (2010). *Breaking new ground: Teaching studetns with limited or interrupted formal schooling in secondary schools*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Degenhardt, K. (2005). *Language learning strategies and low-level adult English language learners*. (Master's thesis), Hamline University, St. Paul.

Duff, P., & Early, M. (1996). Problematics of classroom research across sociopolitical contexts. In J. Schachter & S. Gass (Eds.), *Second language classroom research; issues and opportunities* (pp. 1-30). NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1), 1-11.

Fine, M., Weis, L., Powell, L., & Wong, L. (Eds.). (1997). *Off white: Readings on race, power, and society*. New York: Routledge.

Fordham, S. (1996). *Blacked out: Dilemmas of race, identity, and success at Capital High*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Harklau, L. (2000). From the 'good kids' to the 'worst': Representation of English language learners across educational settings. *TESOL Quarterly, 34*, 35-67.

Lee, S. (2005). *Up against whiteness: Race, school and immigrant youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lopez, N. (2003). *Hopeful girls, troubled boys: Race and gender disparity in urban education*. New York: Routledge.

Mercer, S. (2011). Understanding learner agency as a complex dynamic system. *System: An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics, 39*(4), 427-436.

O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Platt, E., & Troudi, S. (1997). Mary and her teachers: A Grebo-speaking child's place in the mainstream classroom. *Modern Language Journal, 81*, 28-49.

Pollock, M. (2004). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Reimer, J. (2008). Learning strategies and low-literacy Hmong adult students. *Minne/WITESOL Journal, 25*, http://minnetesol.org/journal/vol25_html_pages/26_Reimer.htm.

Rounds, P. L. (1996). The classroom-based researcher as fieldworker: Strangers in a strange land. In J. Schachter & S. Gass (Eds.), *Second language classroom research; issues and opportunities* (pp. 45-60). NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Short, D., & Fitzsimmons, S. (2007). *Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English language learners*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Skinner, E. A., Garretón, M. T., & Schultz, B. D. (Eds.). (2011). *Grow your own teachers*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Stillman, J. (2011). Teacher learning in an era of high-stakes accountability: Productive tension and critical professional practice. *Teachers College Record, 113*(1), 133-180.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany: State University of New York Press, Albany.

Vásquez, C. (2007). Comments from the classroom: A case study of a generation-1.5 student in a university IEP and beyond. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 63*(3), 345-370.

Yon, D. A. (2000). *Elusive culture: Schooling, race, and identity in global times*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

CAPS	spoken with emphasis (minimum unit is morpheme)
.	falling intonation at the end of words
,	rising intonation at the end of words
?	rising intonation in clause
->	continuing or flat intonation (as in lists)
!	animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation
(.)	pause
[	overlapping speech
+/…	interruption (self or other)
@	laughter
::	elongated sound
" "	reported speech
(( ))	transcriber's comment