

Moving toward multiliteracies in foreign language teaching: Past and present perspectives ... and beyond

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Challenges

Texts are never culturally neutral, but rather are embedded in, and shaped by, histories and contexts, language, speech communities, modes, and text types. How does such a multiliteracies approach enable learners to explore not only new words, but new worlds, and to view reading and writing as complementary linguistic processes?

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Abstract

In recent years, literacy has emerged as a key critical term in foreign language (FL) teaching and learning. This essay reflects on the history of literacy and on current developments, in particular those related to the development of multiliteracies paradigms. The article concludes with a discussion of emergent topics related to literacy and language teaching and suggests ways in which research in these domains is posing new questions for the field of FL education.

KEYWORDS

literacy, multiliteracies, reading, writing

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent years, *literacy* has emerged as a critical term in foreign language (FL) teaching and learning. This essay reflects on the history and future of literacy and FL teaching, in particular as reflected in the

past 50 years of *Foreign Language Annals*, and traces key developments from the early days of communicative language teaching, when literacy was synonymous with reading and writing, to contemporary multiliteracies paradigms that stress the importance of situating language use within socially complex multimodal contexts. This article concludes with a discussion of emergent topics related to literacy and language teaching and suggests ways in which research in these domains is beginning to shape research and practice.

2 | FROM READING AND WRITING TO LITERACY

Writing in 1978, during the peak of the communicative turn in FL teaching, Phillips's perhaps somewhat defensively titled "Reading is Communication, Too!" made a case for better integrating reading into the language classroom. The slightly defensive tone of Phillips's title punctuated with the adverb "too" pointed to a persistent tendency to emphasize oral communication over written modes. A similar point was made by McKee (1981), when she argued that one of the problems plaguing the then-current pedagogical context was that writing was not viewed as communication. Similarly, Terry (1989) argued that students must be taught to write for communicative purposes that reflect real-world language use. In early discussions of reading and writing, the focus was on "transferable" (read: transactional) skills, and literacy was almost exclusively functional in nature. Nevertheless, many of these early advocates for treating FL reading and writing as communicative set the stage for later, more multidimensional approaches to literacy by shifting our attention to meaning. In what follows, we describe the state of the discourse on second language (L2) reading and writing from the late 1970s to the end of the 20th century as reflected in some of the early publications of *Foreign Language Annals*.

Comprehension-oriented models dominated the discussions of reading or literacy in the 1980s and early 1990s. In Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman, and Herzog (1984), for example, reading was treated as an important source of comprehensible input (see also Krashen & Terrell, 1983) that necessarily preceded language production, i.e., speaking and writing. The primary purpose of reading comprehension according to this model was to foster the natural acquisition of language, and thus reading was disconnected from the social contexts of use that functional approaches attempted to incorporate into the design of literacy-based tasks. Other authors, including Phillips (1978, 1984), Omaggio (1984), Schulz (1984), Zimmer-Loew (1984), Wolf (1993), and Knutson (1997) took issue with the assumption that learners' first language (L1) reading skills would transfer directly to the language classroom. Instead, they argued that reading in an L2 must be taught and concerned themselves with practical strategies for facilitating reading comprehension by developing learners' control and cognitive strategies for coping with new stretches of text.

In many of the early discussions of L2 literacy, reading was positioned in the service of functional communication skills—that is, students' "ability to cope with the written messages that surround them in a foreign country and that affect their behavior" (Phillips, 1978, p. 281). Comprehension was then not viewed as a purely cognitive process but was tied to questions of communicative purpose. A variation of this can be found in Knutson's (1997) approach to academic literacy in the context of FLs across the curriculum. Knutson's approach considered when and how much reading for gist is enough to satisfy the reader's comprehension needs and purposes. As Knutson noted, "Rarely in real-world reading do we pay equal attention to everything in a text, and exercises that lead students to approach a text in this way may well remove the important element of interest from the reading process" (p. 51).

Whereas vocabulary knowledge and linguistic complexity were often highlighted in these early discussions, beginning in the mid-1980s several studies focused attention on another factor: the role of background knowledge (e.g., Hauptman, 2000; Melendez & Pritchard, 1985). Drawing from research

in L1 and English as a second language contexts, scholars (e.g., Carrell, 1983, 1984; Rumelhart, 1980) made a case for “bottom-up” rather than “top-down” approaches to literacy, which entailed in essence a recognition that learners should attempt to understand new information, be it written or spoken, by first trying to fit it into what they already know about the world. This includes topical background knowledge (e.g., Levine & Haus, 1985) but also cultural schema related to language use. As Bensoussan (1986) argued, “Language proficiency alone does not guarantee the understanding of a text. The reader also needs to be aware of the differences between written texts in the foreign and the native language” (p. 400).

Growing interest in the role of prior experiences with texts and topics, and in particular those that are culture-specific, opened the way to new pedagogical purposes for L2 reading in the late 1980s. For example, Bacon (1987) demonstrated through examples from popular media that culturally specific values and experiences are an important aspect of literacy and argued that postreading exercises should be designed to move beyond the factual, “thus expanding [learners’] appreciation of the target culture” (p. 561). Similarly, C. Brown (1998), Garcia (1991), and Evans and Gonzalez (1993) put the expansion of cultural background information front and center as a learning objective and emphasized that students must be pushed to go beyond the level of descriptive content (who, what, when, where) to interpretation and analysis.

Perhaps because of the philological legacies of early FL teaching and the emphasis on comprehensible input that defined the 1970s and 1980s, reading has received more sustained attention than writing. Many of the earliest publications on writing were motivated by issues that completely parallel the research on reading, such as writing as a communicative skill (e.g., McKee, 1981; Terry, 1989) and the lack of complete transferability between L1 and L2 abilities (e.g., Gascoigne Lally, 2000; McKee, 1981). In general, FL writing in the 1980s and early 1990s was characterized by what Reichelt and Lefkowitz (2012) described as a “writing to learn” approach, meaning that the focus of written tasks should be on fostering linguistic practice or that writing should be used indirectly in the service of teaching or testing content (Liaw, 2001).

A notable shift was found in the mid- to late 1990s in a series of articles on reading-to-write (Kauffmann, 1996; Ruiz-Funes, 1999a, 1999b, 2001). Drawing from scholarship in education, the reading-to-write literature called into question the traditional treatment of reading and writing as separate skills. In stark contrast to the notion of reading as a “receptive skill,” which dominated in the mid-1980s, reading was viewed as an active engagement with a text as learners “elaborate on it, and transform its information in order to create insightful papers” (Ruiz-Funes, 2001, p. 233). By foregrounding learners’ abilities “to read articles or literary selections and to react and respond to them in an insightful and critical manner” (Ruiz-Funes, 2001, p. 226), the reading-to-write scholarship also began to lay the groundwork for curriculum design that dominated discussions of literacy and language learning in the 2000s: the articulation of lower- and upper-level courses.

In sum, literacy has traditionally been defined as the ability to read and write, with both being considered as separate linguistic and cognitive processes. While functional approaches and reading research related to cultural schema integrated a somewhat more social perspective in that they accounted for the situatedness of reading comprehension, reading and writing were largely theorized within transactional models in which literacy amounted to little more than “straightforward acts of information transfer” (Kern, 2003, p. 44). However, in the second half of the 1990s, a shift started to take place with reading and writing increasingly viewed as interconnected communicative modes and greater attention being paid to articulating the FL curricular sequence, to considering cultural and textual schema, and to developing abilities that are more analytical and conceptual rather than focusing simply on comprehension and functional use. The integrative approaches of the 1990s set the stage in many important ways for the discourse-oriented models of literacy that developed in the late 1990s and that we discuss in the following section.

3 | THE “LITERACY TURN” IN EDUCATION: REEXAMINING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LITERATE

In response to the phenomena of mass migration and the emergence of digital communications media that defined the last decade of the 20th century, the New London Group (NLG) called for a broader view of literacy and literacy teaching in its 1996 manifesto, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures*. The group argued that literacy pedagogy in education must (1) reflect the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the contemporary globalized world, and (2) account for the new kinds of texts and textual engagement that have emerged in the wake of new information and multimedia technologies. In order to better capture the plurality of discourses, languages, and media, they proposed the term *multiliteracies*.

Within the NLG’s pedagogy of multiliteracies, language and other modes of communication are viewed as dynamic resources (“available designs”) for meaning making that undergo constant changes in dynamics acts of language use (“designing”) as learners attempt to achieve their own purposes, thereby contributing again to the cycle of available designs (“the redesigned”). Within this broader view of literacy and literacy teaching, learners are no longer “users as decoders of language” but rather “users as designers of meaning.” Meaning is not viewed as something that resides in texts; rather, deriving meaning is considered an active and dynamic process in which learners combine and creatively apply both linguistic and other semiotic resources (e.g., visual, gesture, sound, etc.) with an awareness of “the sets of conventions connected with semiotic activity [. . .] in a given social space” (NLG, 1996, p. 74).

Grounded within the view that learning develops in social, cultural, and material contexts as a result of collaborative interactions, NLG argued that instantiating literacy-based teaching in classrooms calls on the complex integration and interaction of four pedagogical components that are neither hierarchical nor linear and can at times overlap: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Situated practice activities guide learners to tap into their designed and designing experiences as they engage in authentic activities related to texts. In overt instruction activities, learners, with active instructor intervention, develop a metalanguage of design, acquiring the forms and conventions of texts so that they are better able to recognize form-meaning connections, understand how texts are constructed, and discern how ideas are framed. Critical framing activities help learners connect meanings to their social contexts and purposes, engage in constructive criticism of what they learn, and consider its implications. In transformed practice activities, learners demonstrate their ability to apply reflectively the knowledge that they developed through overt instruction and critical framing activities, in new and creative ways “embedded in their own goals and values” (NLG, 1996, p. 87).

Although the NLG’s pedagogy of multiliteracies was conceived as a “statement of general principle” (1996, p. 89) for schools, the group’s call for educators to recognize the diversity and social situatedness of literacy has had a lasting impact on FL teaching and learning. The reception of the group’s work along with that of other scholars from critical pedagogy appeared at a time when the field was becoming less solidly anchored in theories of L2 acquisition and more interested in the social practice of FL education itself. In the section that follows, we describe the current state of FL literacy studies as it has developed in recent years, before finally turning to some very recent emerging trends that we are likely to see develop going forward.

4 | FROM LITERACY TO MULTILITERACIES IN FL EDUCATION

Inspired by the NLG, other scholars of critical pedagogy and recent research in L2 reading (notably Bernhardt [1991] and Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes [1991]), Kern (2000) provided a rationale and a model for a more integrative approach to teaching L2 reading and writing. For Kern, as for the NLG,

literacy was not about “what texts mean in an absolute sense, [but] what people mean *by texts*, and what texts mean *to people* who belong to different discourse communities” (p. 2; emphasis in original). It is this kind of literacy, one that “[considers] reading and writing in their contexts of use, [frames] reading and writing as complementary dimensions of written communication, rather than utterly distinct linguistic and cognitive processes” (p. 2), Kern argued, that can help language learners develop real communicative ability. Communication here is also important but is not understood as uncritical and unconscious language use. On the contrary, FL teaching must better integrate critical framing and transformed practice (in the sense conceptualized by the NLG, 1996, pp. 85–87) at every level of instruction. Parallel critiques have been made by Mantero (2002, 2006) and Donato and Brooks (2004), who reported that text-centered talk, especially around literary texts, largely continues to be instructor-centered and seldom enables complex thinking in complex language.

Building off of the argument that learners must develop a “critical and cultural understanding of language, literacy, and communication” (Kern, 2000, p. 134), Kern argued that a literacy-based approach could help overcome the separation between lower-level and upper-level language courses that has plagued FL programs (see also Parsons, 1985). This same need was emphasized in the Modern Language Association (2007) report, which called for “a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole” (p. 3).

Early and subsequent scholarly work related to these notions appeared in numerous books and journals, including *Foreign Language Annals* (Arens & Swaffar, 2000; Barrette, Paesani, & Vinall, 2010; Péron, 2010; Tesser & Long, 2000; Troyan, 2016; Urlaub, 2013; Warford & White, 2012), primarily centering on issues of curricular and instructional frameworks and the kinds of textual work that need to be instantiated in classrooms. As a way to address the issue of bifurcation and the need to unify the undergraduate FL curriculum, Arens and Swaffar (2000) considered how ACTFL’s Standards (National Standards, 1996) could enable learners to develop literacy, not as language only but as an integrated set of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural skills. Others, however, deliberately took on proficiency frameworks and their limited potential for developing a sense “of what it takes to communicate capably across, or for that matter, even within cultures” (Warford & White, 2012, p. 401). Crane (2006), Maxim (2009), and Troyan (2016), for example, proposed organizing the FL curriculum according to a genre- and discourse-based orientation that would reflect a social understanding of language in use through a careful selection of written and oral texts appropriate for each level.

Several publications (e.g., Paesani, 2006; Péron, 2010; Troyan, 2016) examined writing and, more specifically, writing in relation to reading within a multiliteracies orientation, in some ways picking up where the reading-to-write scholarship of the early 1990s had left off. Troyan’s work is notable here because it was one of the few attempts to bring a multiliteracies approach in line with ACTFL’s Standards and into K–12 language teaching. Dissatisfied with current frameworks’ lack of attention to help students appropriate the linguistic representation of content, he implemented a genre-based pedagogy informed by systemic functional linguistics in order to develop a presentational writing task—a touristic landmark description—in a fourth-grade Spanish class. Troyan’s analysis showed that a genre-based pedagogy can add depth to how instructors and scholars work with the ACTFL proficiency guidelines expressed by the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do statements (ACTFL, 2012; NCSSL and ACTFL, 2017).

Another strand of research has involved the expansion of reading and writing to include multiple modes. For example, Ryshina-Pankova (2013) argued that the critical interpretation and production of different visual genres such as films, posters, and paintings ought to be promoted in the FL classroom to “enable learners to uncover prevalent representational motives, metaphors, and symbols in texts” (p. 164). Her article described an advanced German content- and language-integrated course on “Green Germany,” in which a genre-based and systemic-functional framework was used to expand learners’

engagement with visual texts beyond referential meanings and to allow them to critically analyze how particular points of view are conveyed.

Several other studies worked with filmic media. Many of these studies seemed to share in common with Kaiser (2011) a belief that “film provides instructors with a means of exploring how a foreign culture uses a particular medium to create meaning and represent its values to itself” (p. 248) and as such offers a vehicle to develop translingual and transcultural competence. Drawing from the multiliteracies framework, L. Brown, Iwasaki, and Lee (2016) implemented clips from Korean television dramas and talk shows in a collegiate Korean classroom “to enhance learners’ multimodal competence, promote critical literacy, and empower students in their use of the target language and development of second language identities” (p. 162). Goulah (2007) used digital video as a mediational tool to foster “critical multiliteracies and transformative learning regarding geopolitics and the environment” (p. 62) in learners of Japanese. Putting learners in the role of film makers, Kumagai, Konoeda, Nishimata, and Sato (2016) implemented a video production project with novice-level Japanese learners with the purpose of providing an opportunity to communicate with a wider audience as they drew from a range of multimodal resources to tell a digital story.

While these rich conversations on the most appropriate frameworks and approaches to merge language and content and move beyond a language-based view of communication offer a view of how the goals of FL education can be best realized, challenges exist to implementing a multiliteracies framework, two of which we discuss in detail in the next section.

5 | THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING LITERACY-ORIENTED FL PROGRAMS

Over the last several years, the need for more integrative frameworks that embed literacy and other communicative modes from the beginning levels of language teaching has been recognized by scholars, educators, and curriculum designers, and interest in the multiliteracies pedagogies described in the previous section has grown. At the same time, two primary challenges to the implementation of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the introductory and intermediate levels of collegiate foreign language teaching have been recognized.

The first challenge relates to the professional development of FL instructors, many of whom are graduate teaching assistants with little to no teaching experience or adjunct instructors who often lack the support and time for ongoing professionalization. Yet through many years of observation as FL learners, they come to the classroom with deep-seated notions of language and culture, of language learning, and of teaching practices, and tensions often arise between their beliefs, those reflected in instructional materials, and those of multiliteracies pedagogy. For this reason, it is important that they be given a chance to reflect on these tensions as they develop targeted strategies consistent with a multiliteracies framework (see Allen & Dupuy, 2013; Allen & Paesani, 2010; Dupuy & Allen, 2012). This is not a short or easy process, as Allen (2011) has reported, which means that it requires models of professional development that emphasize the long-term development of conceptual knowledge and strategies rather than one-off training opportunities.

The fact that many of the currently available methods textbooks do not have a multiliteracies orientation exacerbates this situation. A very notable exception is the book *A Multiliteracies Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Teaching* by Paesani, Allen, and Dupuy (2015), which introduces language educators to a literacy-oriented framework. The handbook originated from the *PERCOLATE* project (<http://percolate.arizona.edu/doku.php>), an online resource for instructors developed by the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy

(CERCLL), a Title VI learning resource center at the University of Arizona. Another recently launched professional development initiative spearheaded by ACTFL is the Languages and Literacy Collaboration Center (<https://www.actfl.org/assessment-professional-development/languages-and-literacy>).

The second challenge for implementing a multiliteracies approach is found in the materials themselves. In spite of a chorus of criticism from the field (e.g., Brager & Rice, 2000; Gascoigne, 2002; Kramsch & Vinall, 2015; Lally, 1998; Rifkin, 2003; Swaffar & Arens, 2005; Swaffar et al., 1991), an emphasis on grammatical content and a lack of meaningfully integrated texts continue to be hallmarks of the mainstream commercial textbooks, which form the bedrock of FL instruction and professional development in many curricula. Furthermore, the thematic content of textbooks often continues to be introduced in a “culturally neutral” way, often through short, author-created texts with no clear audience or intent in mind and devoid of ambiguous meaning, which thus precludes their use for examining language choice, author intent, and expressed cultural viewpoints (Maxim, 2006; Swaffar, 2006). Such texts have no other function than integrating targeted grammar and vocabulary in a perceived authentic context. As a result, language program directors and instructors are forced to supplement their textbooks, if they wish to teach authentic texts and to teach texts authentically—that is, in ways that enable learners to engage with them in meaningful ways.

Because instructors need to supplement or at least subvert existing textbooks in order to teach multiliteracies, it is all the more critical that novice instructors learn to develop their own multiliteracies-oriented lessons (see Allen & Paesani, 2010; Barrette et al., 2010; Paesani et al., 2015). Of course, one of the greatest limiting factors in the creation of new materials is time. Empirical studies of how instructors augment texts and tasks in their textbooks in order to orient existing communicative materials for multiliteracies teaching are needed and could in turn be used in professional development to help new instructors not only develop a sense of agency but also become more adept at this kind of curricular work.

One current initiative that seeks to address the need for more long-term and varied forms of professional development related to multiliteracies pedagogies and the reality that existing commercial textbooks is Foreign Languages and the Literary in the Everyday (FLLITE), a collaborative project between CERCLL and the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning. The project, led by Carl Blyth, Joanna Luks, and Chantelle Warner, takes as its central pedagogical objects texts in which language play or creative language, i.e., literary dimensions, are salient. The project Web site (<http://www.fllite.org>) includes model open educational resources (texts and lesson plans) for some languages. These teaching materials have been created by instructors and curriculum developers and are the result of a process involving the development or adaptation of a lesson, feedback from peer experts, revisions, and ultimately publication on the site. In this way FLLITE uses the principles of open educational resource design in order to engage instructors in a professional development cycle as materials developers and adaptors.

6 | EMERGENT DISCUSSIONS: TOWARD MORE CRITICAL LITERACIES

As literacy-based pedagogies continue to develop within the field of FL teaching and learning, scholars and practitioners are working to address the kinds of challenges described in the previous section. In this final section, we describe three examples of these emergent new directions to expand the scope of L2 multiliteracies to new educational contexts, new literacy practices, and new focal points.

6.1 | New contexts

Although, as already indicated, scholarship on multiliteracies pedagogies has focused heavily on collegiate FL classrooms and in particular on the teaching and learning of more commonly taught languages, there are some notable exceptions that show how the discussion is expanding. Attempts to connect multiliteracies to ACTFL standards (e.g., Troyan, 2016; Warford & White, 2012) are likely to serve as a foundation for further research that explores the efficacy of multiliteracies in K–12 FL education, where the approach has already been successfully implemented with English language learners (e.g., Gebhard & Haman, 2011).

While the multiliteracies framework has been gaining momentum in the pedagogy of more commonly taught languages, it has not been the case with less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), where texts continue to be primarily thought of as vehicles for the learning of vocabulary, grammar, and writing systems. L. Brown et al. (2016) underscored that the reasons for this have not been empirically established and urged that more studies be conducted to understand how instructors of LCTLs, especially those with writing systems that differ greatly from the L1, view the place of literacy in their contexts. In recent years, several studies have begun to look at multiliteracies in the teaching of LCTLs, in particular in Japanese (Kumagai & Iwasaki, 2016), Chinese (Wu, 2016), and Korean (L. Brown et al., 2016) language teaching. This research shows that literacy-oriented pedagogies can serve as a useful framework for integrating visual media—something that can be particularly important for languages such as Japanese and Korean, because many learners cite their interest in pop culture such as film, television, and graphic literature as key in their motivation to study these languages; however, more research is needed to develop best practices and recommendations for languages that are orthographically different from Latin-based languages.

Finally, scholars have begun to consider the particular context of heritage language (HL) education and how multiliteracies pedagogies might address the unique relationships that learners have with languages they have inherited. Zapata and Lacorte (2017) and Samaniego and Warner (2016) argued that a multiliteracies framework offers exactly the kind of curriculum that would benefit HLs because they have often engaged more with spoken language in informal family settings. The emphasis on multiplicity creates a clear space for valuing nonstandard and vernacular forms while also enabling learners to develop the secondary genres encountered in more formal, educational settings (Samaniego & Warner, 2016, p. 191). In their coedited book *Multiliteracies Pedagogy and Language Learning: Teaching Spanish to Heritage Speakers*, Zapata and Lacorte (2017) primarily focused on curricular changes in the Spanish HL classroom and their effectiveness with this population of learners. Many of the studies included in their volume reported that a multiliteracies curriculum contributes not only to promote HLs' Spanish literacy skills but also to strengthen their ethnolinguistic identity and their commitment to language maintenance (e.g., Parra, Otero, Flores, & Lavallée, 2017; Zapata, 2017). Focusing on a different HL population, Choi (2015) developed a third-year Korean HL multiliteracies-oriented curriculum and examined its impact on a learner's HL literacies. Similar to the studies reported above, she found that the multiliteracies curriculum increased her learner's motivation to read in Korean, adopt an agentive take on Korean language learning, and form an emerging literate identity in the HL.

6.2 | New literacies

As literacy in the pluralized, multifaceted sense described in the previous section has become a part of the social realities that language educators teach about and within, FL programs have begun to embrace multiple modes and media. This includes not only the types of visual media described in previous sections, e.g., film, images, and posters, but also the many *new* literacy practices enabled through digital communications media.

Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) advocated for an approach that bridges not only the lower and upper levels of a language curriculum but also more academic genres with vernacular language, which is increasingly dominated by technology-mediated literacy practices. Within the context of German as a foreign language, Reinhardt, Warner, and Lange (2014) and Warner and Richardson (2017) have demonstrated that integrating digital gaming and digital social media into a genre-based multiliteracies course can help instructors and learners view their engagement with texts within a larger nexus of social practices and discourses. The spaces enabled by digital communications media also often bring together participants from different countries and different language communities and thus new literacy practices are also pushing FL educators to confront the multilingual reality of the contemporary communities in which learners are likely to participate (see Androutopoulos, 2014; de Nooy, 2017; Warner & Chen, 2017). Future research will need to continue to explore the possible affordances of digital literacy practices as well as the potential role of translanguaging pedagogical practices in the FL classroom (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Gramling & Warner, 2016).

6.3 | New focal points: Social justice and peace

From the earliest conceptions, critical literacy has been central to multiliteracies pedagogies. Critical literacy pedagogy is vital on multiple levels. On the first, literacy involves critical thinking and in particular the awareness that texts are not neutral. Like any form of language use, texts bear the interests, purposes, and ideologies of their producers and users. On another level—which has perhaps been less emphasized in FL pedagogy—critical literacy calls on educators and students to “see themselves as active participants of social change, as learners and students who can be active designers—makers—of social futures” (NLG, 1996, p. 64). Being an active designer of social futures involves developing a sense of agency and expression on one’s own behalf. At the same time, it calls on a recognition on the part of learners and educators that the particular texts, contexts, and discourses with which we make meaning have an ethical dimension vis-à-vis others. From the context of English as a second language, scholars such as Morgan and Vandrick (2009) and Oxford (2017) have made a case that peace education can develop through critical literacy pedagogies that address dehumanizing language and image choices that shape how particular countries and people are perceived or felt about.

Notably, some scholars within FL education, such as Glynn, Wesely, and Wasell (2014) and Phipps and Gonzales (2004), have argued that the *world* language—i.e., the non-English language—classroom has a significant role to play in social justice and peace education. Phipps and Gonzales proposed that the goal of modern language education is to foster the development of “linguagers. . . ‘agents’ or ‘language activists,’ who engage actively with the world, and for whom language learning is a way of embarking on the risky business of stepping out of one’s habitual ways of speaking and acting in order to engage with others whose modes of speech and action are other” (cited in Crosbie, 2009, p. 295). There is some conceptual overlap here with the notion of symbolic competence as conceptualized by Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) as the ability “to shape the multilingual game in which one invests . . . and to reframe human thought and action” (p. 662). As the futures of individuals around the world ride on decisions about social justice and peace, multiliteracies approaches within FL pedagogical contexts are poised to help learners bridge between analysis and action as they develop an awareness of how language shapes the very “misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to structural inequality and discrimination” (Nieto, 2010, p. 46).

If FL education is to take learners seriously as legitimate users of the language, scholars and instructors must consider the different ways in which their students could imagine engaging with the world beyond the context of classroom. Given the ubiquity of digital and new media communications media, learners’ first encounter with new languages and cultures is increasingly often mediated through literacy practices. (It is noteworthy that the rise of Korean, which has been the fastest-growing FL in the United States in recent years, is largely driven by the popularity of K-pop and K-drama, which

is circulated through the Internet.) For this reason, it is all the more important that individuals can navigate between vernacular and formal genres and to engage critically with linguistic and other symbolic choices that perpetuate discrimination and inequity intra- and internationally. By prioritizing an awareness of how different languages and cultures make meaning in and out of the world, multiliteracies pedagogies perhaps direct us toward not only an approach to teaching languages but also an argument for why FL study continues to be pressing and relevant in the current historical moment, in which students' "ability to cope with the written messages that surround them [...] and that affect their behavior," described by Phillips (1978, p. 281), is ever more pertinent and ever less contained to the imagined community of the foreign country.

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