

Reimagining Literature Circles Using a Critical Translingual Approach in the English Language Arts Classroom

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This paper explores the practice of literature circles in secondary literacy classrooms as spaces that are rooted in student choice and inquiry. Student-led literature circles promote students' voice and choice, and are rich environments for students to bring their full linguistic and cultural repertoires. By applying new theoretical frameworks to the practice of literature circles and the roles that students traditionally hold, like "connector" and "questioner," this paper provides a conceptual renovation of the traditional literature circle roles (Daniels, 2002, p. 13). I reimagine my own experience as a literacy teacher had they applied these renovated roles to their own practice. Putting these roles into action, I hope that teachers, literacy specialists, and any educator who is looking to use literacy practices in their classroom to help students understand content (novels, informational texts across content, historical documents, etc.) can apply these roles in ways that value and draw on students' full funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

Participating in reading has always brought me joy. As a student, I was always intrigued by books and loved to talk; I will never forget the year that my fifth-grade teacher had us participate in literature circles to engage with *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. Created in 1994 by Harvey Daniels and a group of "twenty great teachers," and then revisited and remastered by Daniels (2002), literature circles embrace traditional roles, hallmarks of literature circle practice from classrooms to adult book clubs (p. 1). Defining the "four 'basic' roles," Daniels (2002) asserts that they "reflect fundamental kinds of thinking that real readers habitually use" (p. 103). These roles are: "the connector" who "connect[s] what they read" across contexts – their own lives, other novels, the community, etc.; next is "the questioner" who is "always wondering and analyzing" – posing questions to the group to consider and discuss; the third traditional role of literature circles is "the literary luminary / passage master" who highlights "memorable, special, [and] important sections of the text, to savor, reread, analyze, or share them aloud;" and finally we come to "the illustrator role" who "reminds us that skillful reading requires visualizing" and who offers visual representation and "nonlinguistic response to the text" (Daniels, 2002, p. 103). These traditional roles come with their accompanying role sheets with responsibilities and space to produce the meaning and analysis that students will share with their groups and are the hallmarks of literature circles.

I remember my ecstatic participation as a "literary luminary," finding important quotes and leading the group conversation to dig deeper into the meaning of a literary device or an impactful moment. I remember my dejection when I was

the “illustrator” because of my perceived limited drawing abilities and by the small boxes on printed paper I felt confined by the limitations to my illustrations. Conversely, I remember my joy as a middle school reading and language arts teacher when I decided to have my own students join literature circles to engage with a novel study unit.

In my classroom, books were passed out to predetermined groups from the black plastic milk crates that housed them between readings, and students would take out their packets with their standard literature circle roles: connector, illustrator, literary luminary, and questioner. Roles were passed from group member to member for the entirety of the six-week unit, and the confinement I felt ten years prior when being held to the exact same literature circle roles I was now imposing on my own students. They were held within a literature circle structure that had become predetermined and rigid whereas I had hoped to create a space of dialogue and inquiry amongst students.

The term “literature circles” was coined by a group of 20 “great” teachers, including Harvey Daniels (2002) who has continued to do research and champion the power of student-led discussion (p. 1). This group was a collection of colleagues working in and around Chicago with students from kindergarten through college. Their hope was to create a workable and generalizable literature circle framework for teachers to employ in classrooms across contexts. Daniels (2002), alongside the teacher group, defined literature circles as “small peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book” (p. 2). While their literature circle framework has become a very implementable practice, the fixed definitions of student roles has become a barrier for students to bring their full knowledges and creativity into the literature circle space. In his 2002 edition of “Literature Circles,” Daniels does discuss how these roles have become overused and should not limit literature circles in practice; however, it is not discussed how literature circle roles and participation could be in conversation with student centered theories like Moll et al.’s (1992) “funds of knowledge,” Wei and García’s (2022) “translanguaging,” and Paris and Alim’s (2017) linguistically and “culturally sustaining pedagogies.”

To understand how these concepts cohesively provide a foundation for renovated and transformational literature circles, I define them as follows. Moll et al. (1992) establish funds of knowledge as referring to “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills” that students bring to school from their home, family, and community (p. 133). Building on scholarship surrounding translanguaging, Wei and García (2022) extend “translanguaging spaces” as places where multilingual learners “can use their linguistic and semiotic repertoire freely and flexibly” while being encouraged to “question and challenge the standard and named language ideologies” (p. 10). As a continuation of Ladson-Billings’ (1995, 2014) culturally responsive pedagogy, Paris and Alim (2017) further propose “culturally sustaining pedagogy,” which takes an additive approach to “the cultural and linguistic practices of our students” (p. 3). They ask us to use culturally sustaining pedagogies as a way to “include the linguistic, literate, and other cultural practices... of our communities meaningfully as assets in educational spaces” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 5). Literature circle roles and spaces have the potential to be a meaningful place for these theoretical frameworks to come to life.

This paper reflects on the scholarship of traditional literature circles and seeks to put this classroom practice in conversation with theoretical frameworks that would support a renovation of traditional literature circle roles and context. To situate the conversation between Daniels' (1994, 2002) design of literature circles, and the concepts of "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992), translanguaging (Wei & García, 2022), and culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom practices (Paris & Alim, 2017), this paper will be grounded in a "critical translanguaging approach" in the classroom (Seltzer, 2020) and take a communities of inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). By grounding this discussion in critical translanguaging and student inquiry communities, I hope to highlight the potential for literature circle roles as a standard to become transformative for students. Through this conversation, I assert that a renovated culturally and linguistically sustaining and affirming literature circle architecture can be constructed that encourages students to use their full linguistic repertoires in dialogue and to make deeper connections with literature (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Literature circle roles should not be fixed, but rather should require connections to the real world and student experience, while "encourage[ing] teachers to modify these roles and create new ones" (Low & Jacobs, 2018, p. 323). Students themselves should be encouraged to shift or add roles as they see need in their own literature circle and inquiry communities. These critical literature circle roles will support deeper connections by drawing on students' cultural and linguistic capital (Cuauhtin et al., 2019). These cultural and linguistic knowledges that students bring with them to school are the capital, or the wealth and background knowledge, that they bring to make meaning of the world and texts (Moll et al, 1992; Cuauhtin et al., 2019).

This paper addresses the following questions: how can literature circle roles be reconstructed to reflect within a critical translanguaging classroom? How can renovated literature circle roles impact the literacy experience of multilingual learners in an English Language Arts (ELA) setting?

Positionality

As a former teacher, and a self-described book worm, I wanted to encourage my students to love reading and to be excited to discuss the texts that we read with each other. I taught in an urban school district on the east coast of the United States, and approximately half of my students were labeled as English Language Learners (ELLs) by the district. I recognized how important it was for my students to share their stories and knowledge, and I often sought opportunities for them to connect their lives and their community to our reading and objectives. As I continue to reflect on my years as a teacher and how I supported my multilingual students, I see even more the importance of both culturally and linguistically sustaining work (Paris & Alim, 2017) and taking a translanguaging stance (García & Wei, 2022) in classrooms. I see literature circle roles as a particularly interesting place to apply these educational frameworks. I believe that valuing and sustaining student knowledge and language practices can be a transformative way for students to engage with literacy.

Historial Perspective: Literature Circles

In their inception by Daniels (2002), literature circles were framed as places where students “were reading lots of good books, thinking deeply about them, writing notes,” and “joining in lovely, informed literature discussions” (p. 1). They are places where students are given “choices, time, responsibility, a little guidance, and a workable structure” that they can take ownership of within their group (p. 1). This literature circle framework encourages a community of inquiry and supports dialogue amongst students. However, Daniels’ literature circles have largely remained static since his first creation of them in the 90s. Daniels helped coin the literature circle roles of: connector, questioner, literary luminary, and illustrator. The primary functions of each of these roles has generally been:

- The connector is the group member responsible for making text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-person connections.
- A group’s questioner comes to the circle with general and text-dependent questions to lead the circle’s discussion.
- As literary luminary, a group member highlights specific passages and moments within a text for discussion because of their perceived importance.
- Finally, the illustrator picks key moments from the text to illustrate for the group.

These roles are a great start for an inquiry community; however, they do not take into account students’ full linguistic and cultural repertoires. The same roles have been employed for decades, including by me as both a student and teacher. Literature circle roles have become reduced to those originally posed by Daniels and his group of teachers. They are rigid and unable to engage with and respond to students who employ a multiplicity of complex literacies to “read the word and read the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 57). Similar to how Low and Jacobs’ (2018) re-envisioned “literature circle roles for graphics discussion,” a critical translanguaging literacy circle will ask students to meaningfully use their funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge (p. 323). In Daniels’ (2002) second edition, he acknowledges that “the pathway to analysis, to more sophisticated and defensible interpretations of literature, must go through personal response, not around it;” this makes literary discussion and community inquiry around texts “always a confrontation, a collaboration, between a reader’s prior experience and the words of the author” (p. 38). Conceptualizing literature circles and the purpose of student roles as a guide to deeper literary discussion and understanding, Daniels (2002) is opening space for literature circles to be culturally and linguistically sustaining by explicitly ask students to connect texts to their own funds of knowledge, engage with translingual dialogue. I agree with Daniels (2002) that “we need to give kids plenty of time to practice applying these strategies, not in drills or worksheets, but in real conversations about real books,” (p. 38) but what strategies and ways of engaging with texts are we teaching students? And how can these reconceptualized literature circle roles support multilingual learners in ELA classrooms?

Theoretical Frameworks

When students use their full linguistic repertoires and funds of knowledge to make meaning, literature circles have a greater impact on learning. Employing a critical translanguaging approach alongside a community of inquiry to revise literature circle roles, students' community and familial knowledge, and linguistic expertise, is valued in the classroom.

Language Ideologies and Practice

Language and literacy have historically been systemically sorted into hierarchies with credibility only given to those seen as "socially dominant discourses" (Bauman & Briggs, 2000, p. 140). For decades, linguistic and racial hierarchies have sorted peoples into "high" and "low," or those capable of written language, and thus higher intellect, and those whose language is oral and who must be incapable of higher knowledge or factual knowledge sharing (Goody & Watt, 1963). In the United States, despite not having an official national language, english¹ is the medium for instruction and the language used to demonstrate proficiency and learning. And this is certainly true of the language practices that are valued and centered in traditional literature circles. Moving from a White Mainstream English (WME) prioritizing practice to one that embraces a critical translanguaging stance, literature circles and their roles are a space that should celebrate and require students to make meaning through their full repertoires.

Linguistic Ideologies

When thinking through culturally and linguistically sustaining practices within literature circles, it is important to name the dominance of and the power given to dominant white english as the language of power in academics. Students must be able to use their full linguistic repertoires, but also to recognize "racial grammar" and engage with critical dialogue around author's linguistic choices and language ideologies. Bonilla-Silva (2011) defines "racial grammar" as a "domination" that "normalizes the standard[s] of white supremacy" (p. 174). Racial grammar is employed insidiously throughout our society and literature, both written and spoken, and the "standard" or "norm" becomes whiteness; minoritized Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) students and voices are othered. Not only does racial grammar "affect[] people of colour deeply," but "racial grammar shapes whites' racial cognitions too," and perpetuates white supremacist values (Bonilla-Silva, 2011, p. 186). Aligning with Flores and Rosa's (2015) definition of raciolinguistic ideologies, "certain racialized bodies" are equated "with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices" (p. 150). These dominant ideologies regarding the inferiority of students' linguistic practices dominate ELA classrooms and trickle down into the linguistic expectations of literature circles and how to "correctly" fulfill an assigned literature circle role. Interrogating racial grammar and raciolinguistic ideologies within texts and engaging with critical dialogue in literature circles will empower students to make connections to their

¹ Throughout this paper, I will not be capitalizing english as a language to show that it should not be positioned as "the" language of the classroom or the "academic" language by which all students must demonstrate their learning.

own experiences and take action to create language justice and equity.

Calling out the power of language explicitly, Baker-Bell (2020) establishes “linguistic justice” and “deliberately uses the terms *Black Language* (BL) and *White Mainstream English* (WME) to foreground the relationship between language, race, anti-Black racism, and white linguistic supremacy” (p. 2). What Baker-Bell coins as WME has become the currency of literature circles, the language that is used to trade and exchange ideas, to make meaning and grapple with topics and make sense of what an author wants to show us. Raciolinguistic ideologies, defined by Flores and Rosa (2015), “produce racialized speaking subjects who are constructed as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative” (p. 150). Despite using the language that is “appropriate” or “academic” for school (what Baker-Bell coins as WME) at the same level of their white peers, minoritized and racialized students are continually perceived as diverging from and not meeting the standards. Baker-Bell (2020) declares that teachers and schools must encourage students, especially racialized and minoritized students, to “be the first versions of themselves,” not hold them to WME ideologically created standards (p. 30). To do this, “we must be honest about” how we engage in “language instruction” and “we cannot continue to push respectability language pedagogies that require Black students to project a white middle-class identity” (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 31). Communities of inquiry within the classroom, and literature circles, foundationally should be places of critical dialogue that are inclusive of all language practices, not exclusively places of “appropriate” WME.

Translanguaging

Wei and García (2022) propose translanguaging spaces as ones which encourage students to embrace all linguistic practices, not be limited to the hierarchy of named languages. When students in literature circles consciously translanguage it not only expands their meaning making and discussion, but it opens up the possibilities of how they explore their literature circle role. As a practice, translanguaging seeks to transform and work against the continuation of the colonial project in the education system. Students in critical translanguaging classrooms inhabit a space where their linguistic repertoires and cultural funds of knowledge are acknowledged as assets and intentionally woven into the classroom conversation. Spaces that implement translanguaging become places “where bilingual learners can use their linguistic and semiotic repertoire freely and flexibly” and in this way challenge linguistic hierarchies that wish to order named languages and give more credence to some modes of communication over others (Wei & García, 2022, p. 10). Challenging linguistic borders allows individuals to make relevant connections and inspires deeper comprehension as they use their full linguistic and cultural knowledge. Translanguaging views a person as one individual with one linguistic fund of knowledge and not two or more separate monolingual individuals using separate funds of knowledge to make meaning in isolation. Encouraging students to engage with translanguaging within the literature circle and classroom inquiry community supports a more reflective and critical connection to the texts that students are exploring.

Critical Communities of Inquiry

Communities of Inquiry are a practice that is utilized across contexts inside and outside of education. Lave and Wenger (1991) explore the idea of “communities of practitioners” and how individuals are invited into the “community of practice” (p. 29). They describe how an individual becomes more invested in their learning and making meaning within a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Literature circles as a classroom practice encourage a space where students can engage in the social interaction of learning. Lave and Wenger offer a framework that can be adopted into this remodeling of literature circle roles, one that uses a “structured pattern of learning experiences without being taught, examined, or reduced to mechanical copiers” (p. 30). Anyone participating in a community of practice and inquiry is given the space to dialogue and explore in social community with others and make meaning within a group.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) explore “practitioner inquiry” within education and teacher practice (p. 5). This definition of communities of inquiry within the classroom places the importance on student-led inquiry and exploration as opposed to teachers holding and disseminating all knowledge into students (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Literature circles are student driven communities of inquiry. As an example of what this can look like in practice, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) consider the roles of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in creating these student inquiry communities. These authors connect Weinbaum et al.’s (2004) “Teaching as Inquiry,” as a conceptual framework in which both teachers and students collaboratively engage in learning and questioning together. Building on this and the community of practice named by Lave and Wenger (1991), Cochran and Lytle propose a classroom community of inquiry that supports students’ social dialogue and exploration to navigate their learning. By adopting this community of inquiry stance, literature circles can be rooted in a belief in meaningful and critical dialogue that is created by students.

Critical dialogue must be a foundation for communities of inquiry within a classroom and within literature circles. Freire (1970) examines the “critical intervention” of “dialoguing with the people” (p. 53). In creating space for critical dialogue, teachers and students must analyze text, history, and content, they must penetrate the word and context, and find meaning through their community of co-learners and co-teachers. This structure of critical dialogue and community inquiry lives as the antithesis to “the banking concept of education,” which “will never propose to students that they critically consider reality” (p. 74). When literature circles can be places of criticality, they equip students with the tools and language to engage in these critical conversations as a community of inquirers and position students and teachers as co-learners, facilitating the discussion together. A critical translanguaging literature circle is a dialogue without hierarchy, where students enact their roles equally and decode both text and language to make meaning.

Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogies

In a similar act of bringing individuals into meaning making and practice, hooks (1991) describes “‘theorizing’ in making sense out of what is happening” (p. 2). Theory, in hooks’ definition, is generated through the “‘lived’ experience of critical thinking, of reflection and analysis” (p. 2). For hooks, criticality becomes part of a reflexive praxis; a cyclical process by which we engage in critical and

evaluative reasoning, deliberate on thoughts and actions, and continually inspect and inquire. This paper proposes an addition to this critical cycle that includes community dialogue and exploration in the search for meaning, and seeks to apply this notion of theorizing to students' engagement in critical literature circles. As students engage in dialogue and discussion about literature, they should be encouraged to not look for one "correct" answer, but rather to continually reflect and renegotiate meaning. hooks endorses a practice of "relentlessly questioning" that aligns with our communities of inquiry and also employs this critically reflective process as a way to interrogate positionality and "hierarchies of thought which reinscribe the politics of domination" (p. 4). Classrooms utilizing hooks' theoretical framework in practice are places where students bring in their full experience and knowledge repertoires to understand and make connections with the classroom literature and curriculum. When renovating the literature circle roles of the past, encouraging students to wear critical lenses no matter what role they inhabit will help them to lead discussion and continually reflect and build on their learning as a literature community.

Additionally, culturally sustaining and relevant pedagogies value and incorporate students' diverse practices into the classroom. Building on Ladson-Billings' (2014) theory of culturally responsive pedagogy, Paris and Alim (2017) define culturally sustaining pedagogy as "see[ing] the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive" and "as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits" (p. 1). In opposition to WME and raciolinguistic ideologies that seek to assimilate students to a "correct" version of English, which minoritized students can never achieve, classrooms employing culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies view students' "languages, literacies, histories and cultural ways of being" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2) as assets and funds of knowledge (Mol et al., 1992) that must be encouraged and used in the classroom. Literature circles have a unique opportunity to sustain students' cultures and languages through implementing diverse texts and asking for students to use their own cultural and linguistic repertoires.

Multimodal Literacies

Lying outside of the hierarchy of language are visual or multimodal literacies, and the grammar of visuals (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) discuss the power that is given to the written word over visual and multimodal grammar. For Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), "visual grammar" is "a social resource of a particular group" (p. 3). Visual literacy is created within a group and as a cultural literacy, it is a language of "explicit and implicit knowledge and practices around a resource, consisting of the elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 3). Similarly to the social grounding of inquiry groups (Lave & Wenger, 1991), visual literacies are created and comprehended through a social community. Employing multimodality challenges the power dynamic and linguistic hierarchy that defines "appropriate" modes of communicating learning in an academic setting. When using visual and multimodal literacy, students are allowed to participate in different ways, and can provide an avenue for student engagement in visual texts, like graphic novels, and for them to show their knowledge in new and creative

ways. Traditionally, the only visual or multimodal literature circle role has been the illustrator, and they most often used pencil and paper to draw illustrations. Opening literature circle roles to the diversity of multimodal literacies and student creation brings more space for students to use their linguistic repertoires and funds of knowledge.

When students are given more space within their social groups and classroom context to create their own literacies and engage in multimodal knowledge construction, they can more deeply engage with texts. As an example of what multimodal knowledges in practice can look like, Cioè-Peña (2022) explores the intersection between translanguaging and Universal Design for Learning, or TrUDL, as pedagogy and in practice. Asserting the power of TrUDL, Cioè-Peña (2022) states that “when teachers employ multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal strategies, student accessibility increases on accounts of language *and* learning style” (p. 803). This convergence of translanguaging/multilingual practices, culturally sustaining pedagogies, and multimodal strategies is what is needed in literature circles. Students who are encouraged to engage with “multilingual, multimodal practices that are self-directed increase students’ abilities” to grapple with “independent learning while facilitating learning output” (Cioè-Peña, 2022, pp. 803-804). In literature circles, students can be encouraged to participate in roles that support deeper understanding and promote learning through “multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal strategies” (p. 803).

Conceptual Renovations – Rethinking Practice

In this section, I will challenge the traditional literature circle and begin to propose new roles and foundations for operating when engaging with literature circles in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. Literature circles are primed to be spaces of “inquiry-based activity” in the classroom, and through flexibility and these proposed roles, can “challenge language ideologies and problematize the intersections between language, race, and power” (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 82). Grounding in this goal, critical translanguaging literature circles will develop alongside three main principles: critical inquiry, language interrogation, and cyclical community dialogue and reflection. In pushing for these three foundational aspects of critical literature circles, I propose new student/ community roles that fall within these scopes.

Critical Inquiry

“Critical Connector.”

The Critical Connector role within the critical literacy circle encourages critical dialogue with respect to its connections to student experience and contemporary or historical moments. In supporting fellow students to make these critical connections, the connector might ask: to what historical or modern moments/ time periods is the text referencing? How is the text in conversation with historical movements/events? How do you think the text feels about these moments? Do you agree with the author’s perspective? What connections can you make to the characters or their experiences?

This role of Critical Connector is created in response to the traditional connector role as described by Daniels (2002). The conventional role asks students to make connections between the texts they read and their own emotions, their lives, the world, and other texts they have read. When grounded in a critical translanguaging stance, the Critical Connector role generates space where students feel safe to fully deploy their cultural and linguistic knowledge. Students become interrogators who can look at the language and experiences presented in the text and critically think about and compare these to their own lives. Fostering metalinguistic dialogue in literature circles deepens critical interpretations and connections and expands students' meaningful understanding in discussion and in their own writing (Seltzer, 2020).

Incorporating questions that ask their co-learners to grapple with their own connections and experiences in relation to the text, the Critical Connector plays an important role in cultivating meaningful inquiry. This role supports students by employing their full funds of knowledge and linguistic repertoires to engage with "community sharing" that requires deep student-led connections to their experiences and their worlds (Cuauhtin et al., 2019, p. 112). These connections and understandings support students in challenging power hierarchies and creating change through critical dialogue. As students make these connections, they can also build their own narratives and critically engage with restorying in the context of the texts they are reading and using their own cultural and linguistic repertoires (Coleman, 2021). Originally coined by Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016), Coleman (2021) defines restorying as a "framework for imagining and composing toward futures" that are unrestricted by "today's normative ways of reading and writing" (p. 3). The Critical Connector supports these conversations and can model and support these extensions and restorying narratives within their group.

"Conversation Consultant."

As the Conversation Consultant, a student gently leads and pushes the dialogue amongst the community. This leader takes on "the role of the problem-posing educator" in the hopes of aspiring "for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (Freire, 1993, p. 81). Guiding the conversation includes both holding group members accountable to understanding the requirements of their roles and posing questions that ask the community to have an inquiry stance and engage in a critical dialogue around a moment or excerpt from the text. The conversation consultant might ask: why does character X respond to Y's situation by Z? Or they might read an excerpt and ask the group what feelings or thoughts this passage surfaces for them and why? And as the conversation unfolds, the consultant supports the critical dialogue and embraces everyone's role as a "critical co-investigator," where everyone makes meaning together (Freire, 1993).

In contrast to the traditional role of Questioner (Daniels, 2002), the Conversation Consultant advises and guides the conversation, but does not only follow a list of text dependent questions. As Conversation Consultant, students invite their literature circle community to critically explore topics, problems, or passages within the text. Exceeding the original role of questioner, the Conversation Consultant is supported to take a culturally sustaining approach to interrogating and critiquing a text and "rais[ing] critical consciousness" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p.

10). Dialogue nurtured by this role engages with the text beyond a close reading of the characters and text itself but involves a discussion of the world and how the text exists in relation to the world and readers (Seltzer, 2020).

Language Interrogation

“Multimodal Maker.”

The Multimodal Maker challenges the hierarchy of linguistic power and the traditional illustrator role by creating space for the multimodality of expression. Embracing multimodal literacies and student creativity, the Multimodal Maker pushes the traditional illustrator role to disregard bounded illustrations. Students engaging with this role are encouraged to employ a range of literacies – e.g., visual, oral, embodied – and to take a “multimodal [and] multilingual” (Cioè-Peña, 2022, p. 803) approach to their expression. Translingual literature circle communities engaging in the multimodal meaning making expand on the text, put it in conversation with their own linguistic and cultural repertoires, and can even begin to engage in their own restorying and narrative creation.

In the Multimodal Maker role, students make meaning through art, design, oral reading/storytelling, their own digital media or visual literacy creations that were sparked by the text, etc. Students are not bounded to conventional “academic” language varieties. As the multimodal creator, this literature circle community member is a “maker[] of signs” wherein they are “making [a] representation” that is “arising out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 7). Students are the creators of content, and the experts in the literacy that they choose to represent the text. As stated earlier, the power dynamic of language is problematized in this role, and multimodal literacies and modes of expression are centered and celebrated.

“Linguistic Highlighter.”

Functioning as a critical analyst of language and its purpose, the Linguistic Highlighter in the critical literature circle community spotlights and proposes discussion around language choices within the text. Language interrogation can stem from a discussion of why an author chose to use multiple languages and literacies within a text. In the translingual literature circle community, students might examine an author’s use of WME versus their use of named or non-named languages. Students could explore examples of dialogue between characters and language practices as characters navigate speaking with different audiences within the text. This could include questions like: what languages or language practices does a character use with their friends versus with their family versus with teachers? Why might this change happen? Why might the author be making these linguistic choices?

The role of Linguistic Highlighter was envisioned to fundamentally intertwine translanguaging and translingual approaches into literature circle communities. Traditionally, literature circles have had literary luminaries (Daniels, 2002) to return to and analyze important passages in a text, or an “optional” vocabulary role that spotlighted and defined difficult words (Daniels, 2002). While the Linguistic

Highlighter will call attention to passages and word choice, these discussions will be grounded in critical translanguaging that legitimates the complex ways multilingual students make meaning (Wei & García, 2022; Seltzer, 2020). All students within the translanguaging literature circle will be encouraged to use their full linguistic repertoires to make meaning of the text, to engage in dialogue, and to explore the author's linguistic choices.

Intentionally tapping into translanguaging for this role is especially important and may require some additional modeling and support from the teacher. Utilizing translanguaging as a theory "is not about adding more named languages" to schools, "but is fundamentally reconstitutive and transformative of the power relations between the named languages in society" (Wei & García, 2022, p. 10), in that it begins to delegitimize the hierarchy and elevate the legitimacy of all language practice to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. There is no "appropriate" or "academic" way of communicating that is best positioned for school, and translanguaging can establish all language resources as valid and authentic in education (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Promoting the use of an individual's entire linguistic repertoire: verbal, written, and performance-based, translanguaging values all communication, identities, and cultural expressions. By encouraging students to highlight and elevate moments of translanguaging and linguistically sustaining moments in the books they read, they are able to engage in critical dialogue and also critically reflect on their own language use and practices.

Community Dialogue and Reflection

"Tour d'Horizon."

This role is named Tour d'Horizon because of its translated meaning in English and more robust meaning in French. Tour d'Horizon literally translated means summary. In French it is more encompassing of taking a look across the entire horizon. Looking across the full landscape of a text, and students' experiences alongside the text, the Tour d'Horizon extends both the function of summarizing while reading and the traditional connector role (Daniels, 2002). Students in critical translanguaging literature circles can summarize texts while putting these key moments in critical conversation with their own connections. As a literary tour guide of sorts, the Tour d'Horizon walks us through big picture implications from the text and promotes critical dialogue that connects the text to a myriad of experiences and encounters students have had with other texts, each other, the world, and popular culture.

The Tour d'Horizon role takes on the job of situating the group within the context, setting, and characters. The literary tour guide, the Tour d'Horizon role truly gives the critical literacy group an overview guide of the landscape through which we have traveled within the text and the dialogue and provides space for reflection personally and within the community. The role of this group member is really to support the "critical thinking" and application of the group's derived theory "into action" (hooks, 1991). As the Tour d'Horizon, the student grounds the group in all the work that has been done in the critical inquiry and dialogue, and situates the reflection and closing questions around takeaways, lingering

connections, and action steps, which literacy circle members may want to become a part of or generate.

Implications for Further Thought

In implementing these roles, it is important to reflect on the community context and student experience and interest. Educators implementing critical literature circle roles must engage in critical dialogue and reflection alongside students. When students and teachers interrogate the effectiveness of literature circle roles and chosen literature, there is space to advocate and make changes, and create their own theories that they see as needed for their unique classroom conditions (hooks, 1991; Freire, 1993). These theoretical frameworks should not only live in the critical literature circle space; rather, it is important that these frameworks be positioned throughout the class and used as lenses in other instructional practices. In this way, teachers can model the application of these theories and lenses into dialogue and personal connection/reflection. It is also important to remember the crucial role of literature selections for critical translanguaging literature circles. Decisions on literature should be made carefully given unique contexts and cannot be recommended on a grand scale along with proposed roles (Ascenzi-Moreno & Quiñones, 2022; Seltzer, 2020). Teachers should carefully select texts and provide choice, and students can support by proposing texts that reflect student identity and context.

Revisiting my own classroom practice, I can re-envision the classroom roles that I had previously employed using these new proposed roles: Critical Connector, Conversation Consultant, Multimodal Maker, Linguistic Highlighter, and Tour d'Horizon. The role of Critical Connector encourages and empowers students to make connections across texts and world contexts that they know, while also intentionally connecting their own lived experiences without fearing these lived knowledges won't be considered "academic." This role expands the traditional role of Connector, as described by Daniels. A Critical Connector more deeply analyzes and critically connects experiences, texts, stories, etc. in a culturally relevant and sustaining way for students.

A Conversation Consultant and Linguistic Highlighter have the authority to use their full linguistic repertoires, as well as the linguistic repertoires of their group mates, and the texts themselves, to discuss and make meaning. They are linguistic experts. Rethinking the Questioner role, the Conversation Consultant guides dialogue and asks questions to prompt discussion and examination of the literature. As a consultant, this role acts as an advisor, posing questions when needed, allowing room for fellow literature circle members to dialogue and pose their own questions, and supporting the group in using their full linguistic repertoires to engage with the conversation. Building on the original role of Vocabulary Enricher/Word Wizard, the Linguistic Highlighter directs the group's attention to important vocabulary and word choice with a text. As the Linguistic Highlighter, a student in this role not only supports vocabulary learning in English, but makes important linguistic connections across languages, and uses full linguistic knowledge to make meaning and grow their repertoires.

A revamping of the traditional Illustrator role, the Multimodal Maker role allows students to embrace multimodal literacies and embodiments to connect

and explore a text beyond the words on the page. Illustrations are not limited to pencil and paper, but multimodal creations that allow students to show their understanding and extend stories and literature into new and creative formats. And finally, the Tour d'Horizon transcends the traditional Summarizer role and embraces the horizon and full range of experience of a text. Students in the Tour d'Horizon role can use their linguistic and multimodal repertoires to explain, describe, and illuminate a full picture of the overall impact and significance of a text.

The hope in creating these renovated critical literature circle roles is that students can transcend bounded ideas of “appropriateness” in academic language circles, and truly embrace their linguistic and cultural knowledge sets in order to more deeply engage and make meaning from the texts read in a critical literature circle community. When students are able to make use of these frameworks in smaller community settings, these will become common classroom practices and lenses that are used to investigate and interrogate texts they encounter in all settings. In posing these restructured and updated roles, I have put literature circle practices in conversation with theoretical frameworks that center student linguistic and cultural knowledge and take an additive and asset-based approach to student literacy. This new role structure provides guidance and support for embedding a critical translanguaging approach into literature circles, while also acknowledging the need for these roles to be adaptable and malleable to student need and repertoires. Teachers and students employing critical translanguaging literature circles must continually reflect, discuss, and adapt to ensure that multilingual learners are able to make meaning and discuss using their full and complete wealth of knowledge.

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