PART II

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES
CHAPTER 6

HOW DO TEACHERS PARTICIPATE, MEDIATE, AND INTERVENE IN THE CO-CONSTRUCTION OF LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE DURING LEARNER INTERACTIONS?

Melinda Martin-Beltrán

Applying a sociocultural theoretical lens, this chapter examines the teacher's role in socially mediated language learning processes that occur during student interactions. Drawing from data collected during a year-long ethnographic study in a dual language elementary school, findings in this chapter focus on how teachers’ discourse and instructional decisions influence students’ opportunities for language learning. Discursive analysis of learner and teacher interactions and patterns identified in teaching practices over time offer insight to teachers who seek to create a context for language learning among students. Examples from classroom practices illustrate how teachers model languaging and how teachers decide when and how to intervene productively in peer interactions. Findings from this study can inform teacher education as we apply a sociocultural theoretical lens to encourage teacher-learners to become more aware of the opportunities for language learning afforded during dialogic interactions.

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I plan collaborative activities to give students the chance to interact and ask each other questions, but I'm still trying to figure out how I should step in, as their teacher, to push their thinking about language.

(Interview with Ms. F, dual-language elementary teacher)

In the quote above, the teacher expresses a common concern among second-language teachers. Although teachers seem to understand the importance of student interaction in theory, many still wonder what teachers can do to mediate, participate, or intervene in these interactions. This chapter begins to address these questions by synthesizing lessons learned during a year-long ethnographic study observing three veteran teachers and their students in a dual language Spanish/English elementary school. This chapter offers insight to teachers through the analysis of student interactions and a synthesis of teacher meditational strategies that afford language learning opportunities in student-centered classrooms. Although the teachers in this study continued to have many questions, they provided helpful examples of teaching practices that successfully mediated and fostered language learning opportunities (as defined by sociocultural theory). While it is also important to recognize teachers' discursive and social practices that constrain language learning and often preclude students from further participation in learning activities, this chapter is intended to inform teachers who are seeking helpful strategies that can mediate learning; therefore, findings here focus on learning affordances (for a discussion of learning constraints, see Martin-Beltran, 2010b).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interaction among learners has been a central topic of research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which has informed language education practices (see Gass, 1997; Hatch, 1992; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2007; Pica, 1994; Swain, 1985). This research, which began with an emphasis on cognitive or computational models of SLA that view interaction as activating individual, self-contained psycholinguistic acquisition processes (Ellis, 2005), has shifted to incorporate a sociocultural turn in our understanding of SLA (Block, 2003). Based on the work of Vygotsky (1978) who proposed a dialectic relationship between cognitive processes and social context (including the use of cultural artifacts such as language), there is a growing body of research that has given more attention to the social mediation of learning during interaction (Donato, 2000; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Lantolf, 2000; Swain, 2000, 2006; Swain & Deters, 2007; Swain,
Kinnear, & Steinman, 2010). Sociocultural theoretical approaches have opened up new perspectives of interaction research that shed light on *microgenesis* (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978), or the moment-by-moment processes of language learning unfolding during the interactions. Much of this research applying a sociocultural theoretical lens has focused on the learners' mediation of learning for each other during interactions; with little attention to the teacher's role in these peer interactions. As Tocalli-Beller and Swain (2007) write, "Second language learning research informed by a sociocultural theory of mind situates second language learning in the dialogic interactions between learners and learners, learners and themselves and learners and the artifacts available in their world" (p. 145). The teacher's role in these interactions has often been neglected in this research; thus, it is evident that more research is needed to understand how teachers may be coparticipants or mediators in dialogic interaction among students. This chapter addresses this gap in the research by looking more closely at the teacher's role in the socially mediated learning processes that occur during interactions that, until now, have been peer-peer focused.

This study employs a sociocultural conceptual framework, influenced by the work of Vygotsky (1978) and scholars who have applied this work to second language educational contexts (Donato, 2000; Engeström, 1987; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Lantolf, 2000; Sannino, Daniels, & Gutierrez, 2009; Swain, 2006; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2010). This framework shifts the focus of SLA from the individual learner to the social activity of learning, situated in cultural and historical contexts. Thus, language learning, in this study, is conceptualized as a collaborative process and interaction is examined as an opportunity for learners and teachers to co-construct language competence.

In order to examine this interactional process, I draw upon theoretical constructs from sociocultural theory such as the zone of proximal development (Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995; Ohta, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978), Third Space (Gutiérrez, 2008), expansive learning (Engeström, 1987), co-construction (Foster & Ohta, 2005), collaborative dialogue (Swain, 2000), and languaging (Swain, 2000, 2006; Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2007). To complement this framework informed by a sociocultural theory of the mind, I draw upon ethnographic work that has highlighted the importance of building upon learners' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, 2010) as part of the learning ecology. This social ecology is viewed not simply as the context for learning, but the source of learning (van Lier, 2000). It is not within the scope of this chapter to fully review the research that has developed each of these sociocultural theoretical constructs; rather, I will briefly operationalize these terms in order to explain how this conceptual framework guided this study.
The sociocultural concept of *funds of knowledge* acknowledges the experiences, practices and historically accumulated bodies of knowledge that exist in students' households, which are often undervalued at school (Gonzalez, 1995; Moll, 2010; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Identifying and mobilizing funds of knowledge has been shown to shape teachers' perceptions and offer additive pedagogical practices that build upon what students bring to school (Moll, 2010; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). This study builds upon this work and Smith's (2001) definition of linguistic funds of knowledge that focuses more specifically on what students know about their language(s).

As I discuss the examples of classroom interactions below, I draw upon the work of Gutiérrez (2008) and Engeström (1987) who expand the construct of zone of proximal/potential development (ZPD) to suggest that *expansive learning* can reach beyond a bounded zone, when participants construct new knowledge that doesn't exist at the onset of the activity. These scholars explain that the collective ZPD, or the *Third Space*, does not reside in any of the individual participants in the activity, but is a collective learning space that is constituted through interaction as participants co-construct knowledge together.

Related to this collective ZPD, I also draw upon research examining *collaborative dialogue* (Swain, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) as a window into the mediational processes of learners and teachers working together to co-construct knowledge about language. To analyze the interactional discourse in this study, I operationalize *co-construction* drawing upon Foster and Ohta’s (2005) definition as:

> joint creation of an utterance, whether one person completes what another has begun, or whether various people chime in to create an utterance. Co-constructions are seen as allowing learners to participate in forming utterances that they cannot complete individually, building language skills in the process. (p. 420)

This study also applies Swain's (2005) construct of *linguaging* to describe the ways the learners talk about language and use language as a sociocultural tool to mediate and enhance their learning. There is a growing body of research that examines the importance of linguaging in the process of learning a second language (Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin, & Brooks, 2010; Swain & Deters, 2007), and this study will explore ways that teachers can encourage such linguaging in their classrooms.

In sum, sociocultural research has suggested that linguaging, co-construction of knowledge across peers, and the mobilization of learners' linguistic funds of knowledge may enhance language learning; yet, more research is needed to understand how teachers can support these processes in their classroom. In this study, sociocultural theory provides a lens to
understand learners' microgenesis of language development during interactions and a lens to examine and guide teachers' participation in the interactions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Setting and Participants

The data presented in this chapter came from an in-depth year-long study carried out in a dual immersion bilingual school located in central California. The student body was 90% Latino (including recent immigrants and U.S. born children), 10% White and mixed heritage students, 75% English language learners, and 87% received reduced or free lunch. The school used a 90/10 dual language program where students began with 90% of their instruction in Spanish in kindergarten, and reached a 50/50 split of instruction in Spanish and English by the fifth grade, which was the focal grade for the data collection due to the equal time given to both languages for instruction.

In an interview with the school principal, he explained that qualified teachers were central to accomplishing the school's mission. All teachers were expected to be bilingual and were required to have their BCLAD or an equivalent bilingual teaching credential. Teachers at each grade level were encouraged to plan in teams since they often shared the same students across different languages. The fifth grade class had three veteran teachers: two Spanish-model teachers (Mr. K and Ms. F) in the morning and an English-model teacher (Ms. G) in the afternoon. All teachers participated in on-going professional development to implement the dual language educational model at their school and expressed their commitment to developing bilingualism and biliteracy. Mr. K had ten years of teaching experience, Ms. F had 7 years of experience, and Ms. G had been teaching for over 20 years in linguistically diverse classrooms. Interviews with teachers revealed that they had chosen this school because of its strong bilingual program and commitment to improving the education of language minority students.

Data Collection

The research methodologies for this study were modeled after ethnographic and sociolinguistic studies that include participant observation, interviews and audio recordings of classroom discourse (Freeman, 1998; Harklau, 1994; Palmer, 2009; Valdés, 2001). Following guidelines for
interpretive inquiry, ethnography and participant observation (Creswell, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Fieldwork included intensive long-term participation in the school, careful recording and documentation (field notes, observation protocols, event maps, student work, transcription of digital audio and video recordings) as well as ongoing analysis during the data collection process.

I visited the school two to three times a week (staying most of the school day) from August to June (the academic year). Field notes included detailed descriptions of teacher and student interactions, and language related discussions were flagged (see definition of LREs below). I used event maps to track language patterns over time and across contexts (see Martin-Beltran, 2010b). To capture data at the whole class and small group level, audio recorders were placed on students’ desks supplemented by a video camera in the corner of the room. All audio and video recordings were accompanied by detailed field notes (completed daily) and analytical memos, which served to identify areas for more detailed transcriptions and shape further data collection. Throughout the school year, I engaged in ongoing conversations with the teachers who shared their reflections about their teaching while I shared my observations and asked them how they would interpret the language related discussions that I had flagged in my field notes and transcriptions. I formally interviewed the teachers twice, at the beginning and end of the school year. At their second interview and in follow up e-mails, I engaged in member-checking of my preliminary findings and interpretations.

Data Analysis

I coded the transcriptions of classroom interactions for “language related episodes” (LREs), which Swain and Lapkin (1998) define as “any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others” (p. 326). LREs served as a unit of analysis to link cognitive and sociocultural aspects of language learning by shedding light on sociocultural dimensions of communication successes, innovations and co- construction of language in interactions (Foster & Ohta, 2005; Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2007). This analysis focused on LREs as opportunities or contexts for potential language learning, when language competence was explicitly discussed and simultaneously constructed. I found that the teacher played a key role mediating these opportunities for learning; therefore, I returned to the data set to look more closely at teachers’ discursive moves within the LREs.
Teachers' meditational practices were the central phenomena to guide axial and selective coding (Creswell, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 2008) of the larger data set of field notes and classroom discourse recordings. At the stage of axial coding, I identified patterns in teachers' practices of mediation that called attention to language. During selective coding I grouped these codes and examples of teacher practices into larger, thematic categories such as: (1) creating a classroom context, (2) modeling, and (3) intervention. The larger categories that emerged will be explained in the findings section below.

From my classroom observations and preliminary analysis of the audio recordings, I identified activities that promoted the most LREs, which usually involved the creation and revision of written text. The examples of dialogic interaction selected for this chapter come from a writing activity, and these examples represent the content and kind of speech from the larger sample of LREs found throughout my observations and include the teacher as the key interlocutor. The excerpts below are splices of interactions during a joint writing activity when students cowrote letters to a relative, one during English and the other during Spanish instructional time. The teachers required students to switch roles as the writer every couple of sentences, and encouraged students to "write out loud" so their writing partner could hear what they were writing during the composition process. After the letter writing activity, teachers asked students to complete self-evaluation rubrics about collaboration, which guided the students to reflect on their collaboration. For this chapter, I have chosen two excerpts from four students (2 dyads) who represent a range of language proficiencies and literacy levels. The first excerpt occurred with the English teacher during English instructional time, the second excerpt occurred with the Spanish teacher during Spanish instructional time.

FINDINGS

Throughout the school year, I observed several occasions where students and their teachers were successfully engaged in collaborative dialogue and languaging (Swain, 2006). In order to illustrate how languaging, teacher strategies of modelling, and intervention play out in the classroom, this chapter presents two excerpts from video recorded student and teacher interactions. These excerpts do not stand alone; rather, they were given meaning and importance by the utterances that came before and after (Bakhtin, 1981); and they provide a window into the classroom culture that was co-constructed by teachers and students throughout the year.

The examples below demonstrate the linguistic and metacognitive accomplishments of the students and their teachers as they cultivated a
rich context for languaging and expanded opportunities for language learning. For the purposes of this chapter, I foreground the teacher's role and the context that afforded co-construction and recognition of learners' distinct linguistic funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992, Smith, 2001). I found that teachers were key mediators in this learning process by creating context, modelling, and intervention. The findings presented below first illustrate the microanalysis of moment-to-moment mediation occurring during two dialogic interactions and next, explain patterns of teaching mediation observed across the year.

**Asking Questions Across Languages Inspires Co-construction and Transformation**

The language related episode in *Excerpt 1* occurred when Daniel and Javier were discussing scary experiences related to their letter, and the teacher participated by asking further questions. As Daniel wrote the word "nightmares" and read it out loud, the students and teacher began languaging and co-constructing linguistic knowledge as they began to discuss the meaning and structure of words.

**Example 1**

1. **Daniel:** 'But he didn't have nightmares' [Daniel writes, reading out loud] ....Why do they call them nightmares if they're not - night mirrors?
2. **Ms. G:** 'That's a good question!'  
3. **Javier:** 'That's a scientist ::(inaudible overlap)::-::mirror::-  
4. **Daniel:** Yeah, I've been thinking since like 5 years old... mirrors  
5. **Ms. G:** Do you think they're like a mirror of what you've seen all day?  
6. **Daniel:** Yeah...  
   Once I watched a movie and... there was this garden and this lady wanted to save the kids... the movie was called 'The Haunting'. In the garden she saw somebody hanging from the top, the kid... and she was like [drops his jaw, slaps his hands on cheeks] @@
7. **Javier:** @@
8. **Daniel:** And then all the other people were like ahh! ... And when I went to sleep I had a nightmare. You know how flashing stuff like... scares you?  
9. **Javier:** Oh flashing like... flashing through your eyes?
10. Daniel: Like shoom, shoom, that happened to me and I was like sweating!

11. Javier: Ok, My turn my turn!
   One time, at night it was the middle of the woods or
   something

12. Daniel: Oooooh [pretending to be scared]

13. Javier: I was hiding. Here's like the tree, I was hiding like that
   [with the pencil demonstration and the eraser behind
   the tree]
   there was a ghost floating like that.... I turned back, he
   said boo! I ran but I couldn't run that fast because it was
   an escalator. Then some dead people rised up from the
   ground and I waked up... It was like one in the morning
   and I could not sleep anymore! It was a bad nightmare!

   How do you say it in Spanish?

15. Daniel: Un neetmare [trying to use Spanish phonology]

16. Javier: No no..... "Suerno mal" [bad dream] or something like
   that... or pesa... oh yeah, "pesadilla": [overlap with
   Daniel]

17. Daniel: Pensamiento? [thought]

18. Javier: No, pesadilla [nightmare]

19. Daniel: Oh yeah, "pesos"... Oh I know "pesa" like your "dia" was
   "pesado"
   [Oh yeah "weights" Oh I know like "to weigh" like your
   "day" was "hard/heavy"]

20. Javier: "Día" like hard day, "pesado día" like "pesa...dia"
   ["Day" like hard day, "heavy day" like nightmare]

21. Daniel: Oh! ...I think I know what 'mare' means, it's like a
   schmare... is like something scary that doesn't really
   happen, but you believe in it!

22. Both: @@ [they both laugh]

In this excerpt we can see how languaging, recognition of learners' linguisic funds of knowledge, and co-construction of language expertise unfolds in this interaction between students and teacher. First, the teacher recognized and affirmed Daniel's rhetorical question about nightmares as a "good question," despite the fact that this could be considered off-task behavior. Javier joined the teacher's affirmation when he described his partner as a "scientist." This comment was linked to previous classroom
discourse. I observed Ms. G and Ms. F repeatedly emphasizing that good scientists ask good questions, which is a key strategy these teachers used to create a context for languaging and learning in their classrooms across the school year. Ms. G's validation of Daniel's question opened a space for language play, and she followed up with further questioning to deepen his semantic and etymological analysis. The teacher allowed the students to elaborate their understanding of the word nightmare with their vivid descriptions of personal experiences, and she expanded the space for language play across languages when she asked them to draw upon their linguistic funds of knowledge in Spanish.

When the teacher asked them how to say nightmare in Spanish, the boys collaboratively engaged in word analysis, co-constructing their knowledge across languages. They used Spanish and English as mediational tools and objects for analysis (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, they began by breaking down the word "pesadilla" into smaller parts for analysis. Together the students deduced that pesadilla must come from the words, "peso" and "dia" and transformed this into the phrase for "hard day." In this interactional space, Daniel verbalized his analysis (and externalized his learning) and his partner, Javier, extended this analysis. Daniel and Javier's back and forth storytelling and animated discussion illustrated many instances of co-constructions as defined by Foster and Ohta (2005).

The teacher supported this Third Space (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999) for expansive learning when they crossed over into Spanish to engage in metalinguistic analysis and returned to English with new observations and hypotheses about word meaning. They invented a new word to represent an abstract concept that seemed beyond words, as they described "something scary that doesn't really happen, but you believe in it." The teacher allowed for expansive learning (Engeström, 1987) and nurtured this Third Space to play with language, in which students had time to elaborate and build upon their curiosity about language to generate new, unexpected knowledge.

This excerpt also illuminates the ways that teachers can mobilize students' diverse funds of knowledge within one classroom activity. Daniel brought his expertise and curiosity about English when he began to analyze the word nightmare, and he drew upon his prior classroom experiences searching for cognates to try to apply these rules to produce "neetmare." Javier drew upon his funds of knowledge in Spanish to correct Daniel's translation as he provided the more precise word, pesadilla, embedded in a meaningful context, which led to further co-construction of language knowledge. Without Javier's expertise, Daniel would not have expanded his Spanish vocabulary to include pesadilla, nor would they have reached their new level of insight about the word nightmare. The students
combined their funds of knowledge to generate new understanding, arguably greater understanding than either could have accomplished alone.

In sum, this excerpt illustrates how the teacher created a context where linguistic funds of knowledge are mobilized as she modeled curiosity about language. The teacher's questions or intervention served as scaffolding within their ZPD directing students' attention to language and co-constructing knowledge with them. The teacher afforded space for students to ask each other, rather than simply providing the words for them. This was an unexpected opportunity for language learning that was not in the teacher's lesson plan. Instead, the teacher allowed for a transformation of the goals of the activity as she was aware of the students' language acquisition process on the fly (or in the microgenesis in the moment) and attended to the ways that students asked questions. When reflecting on this lesson, the teacher explained that she had not planned to use Spanish nor had she planned for students to compare root words across languages, but the students showed curiosity and the teacher played a key role nurturing that curiosity. The teacher seized this opportunity that emerged from the students and pushed them into the upper limits of their collective ZPD.

Inspiring Deeper Thinking about Word Choice and Expanding the ZPD

In the next excerpt the two boys were re-reading the letter that they had co-written to Johnny's cousin. As Lorenzo began reading aloud, he initiated an LRE when he paused and turned to his partner and teacher to ask if they should refine their word choice. The teacher plays a key role in this interaction as she expanded her students' collective ZPD.

Excerpt 2

Original Utterance

1. Lorenzo: 'Querido Miguel'

Estimado mejor ¿no?

2. Ms. R: ¡Depende de ... ¿qué crees?

English Gloss (when needed)

[actions and comments in brackets]

'Dear Miguel'

[Reading the written letter aloud]

Better to say esteemed, no?

'It depends ... what do you think?' [looking at Johnny]

(Excerpt 2 continues on next page)
Excerpt 2 continued

Original Utterance

3. Lorenzo: ¿Lo quieres mucho, mucho, mucho? ... ‘... o ‘estimado’
4. Johnny: Estimado
5. Ms. F: ¿Por qué? Tu crees que estimado es más como—?::
6. Johnny : I don’t know.
7. Lorenzo: Porque querido suena como más.... Como...
8. Ms. F: ¿Con quien usas querido?
9. Lorenzo: Como querido ... como con :tu mamá::
10. Johnny: : Como con alguien que quieres? ¿O amo? ::
11. Ms. F::: ¿Con tumbamá?::
12. Johnny I like my cousin!
13. Ms. F: Entonces ¿Martín es un primo querido para ti?
14. Lorenzo: Mejor ... xxx
15. Johnny: Yeah

English Gloss (when needed)
[actions and comments in brackets]

Do you really, really, really love him?... [asking Johnny]
... Or ... ‘estimado’

Esteemed
Why? Do you think esteemed is more like...?

Because dear sounds more like ...
With whom do you use ‘dear’?
Like dear ... like with your mom

Like with someone you like ?
... or I love?
With your mother?

So, Martin is a dear [close] cousin for you?

Better.xxx
[Jonny nods and they decide to leave ‘querido’ on paper.
Lorenzo goes on to read the next sentence]

The student initiated this LRE as he reflected on his partner’s word choice and asked his teacher if they should change the word. To promote further languaging, the teacher did not give a simple yes/no response that might have precluded any further discussion. Instead, she brought forward the idea of contextual dependence of word choice, when she said, “it depends ... what do you think?” Ms. F promoted co-construction of knowledge between the peers when she redirected the question to Lorenzo’s peer, Johnny. The teacher’s model of asking questions seemed to inspire Lorenzo to ask further questions about context and the author’s relationship with the intended audience of the letter. At first Johnny was quick to agree with Lorenzo and simply accept his revision to “estimado.” However, once again, the teacher intervened to ask more reflective questions about language
usage and appropriateness. When Johnny responded, "I don’t know," Ms. I continued to encourage Johnny to participate as she pushed out the boundaries of this collective ZPD. This interaction illustrated how “determining a learner’s ZPD is an act of negotiated discovery that is realized through dialogic interaction between learner and expert. In other words, the learner and expert engage each other in an attempt to discover precisely what the learner is able to achieve without help and what the learner can accomplish with assistance” (Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995, p. 820). As the teacher built upon Jonny’s knowledge, she mediated his learning when she scaffolded or rephrased her question. Since Johnny could not answer her first probing question, she tried adjusting her question to one she knew he could answer. Rather than simply accept Johnny’s “I don’t know” as a failed response, she offered other mediating tools to think through this linguistic problem together.

Although the text was not modified, their discussion about language afforded a learning opportunity to analyze word choice and consider the ways that language signifies social relationships. The teacher was a key mediator to push forward this collaborative dialogue that raised all participants’ awareness of the connection between language and social context. Without the teacher’s intervention in this interaction, it is unlikely that the boys would have engaged in languaging or social analysis, co-constructed in this moment. The teacher drew upon these students’ funds of knowledge to create an opportunity to learn about what word choice may signal, and how to evaluate appropriateness. This was also an example of a collaborative ZPD (Gutierrez, 2008) that was not dependent solely on teacher knowledge, but was co-constructed with the students who were able to draw upon their own prior experiences in social communication outside the school, not available in many traditional, monolingual classrooms.

Patterns in Teaching Practices that Mediate Language Learning Opportunities

The excerpts analyzed above are representative of interactions observed throughout the year that inspired LREs and languaging. From field notes and recordings collected across teaching and learning contexts, I identified patterns and features of teaching practices that created affordances for languaging. In analyzing the pedagogical value of interactional contexts, I coded teaching practices that co-occurred with LREs and therefore cultivated a space for enhanced language learning. This section of the chapter synthesizes the findings from this analysis from which three broad categories of teacher meditational practices emerged: (1) creating a context, (2) modeling, and (3) intervention (see Table 6.1). Table 6.1 was generated as a heuristic to illustrate how sociocultural theory is applied in
teaching practices, focusing specifically on social mediation of language learning. In the second column definitions of teachers' meditational practices are operationalized, and the third column offers concrete examples of teaching practices from findings to show how teachers can apply principles of sociocultural theory to their practices as they seek to mediate student learning. The examples of teaching discourse in the third column include quotes excerpted from field notes and composites of recorded teacher discourse found in transcripts.

Table 6.1. Teaching Strategies That Mediate Students' Language Learning Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Practices of Mediation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples of Teaching Practices &amp; Classroom Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Creating classroom context for language</td>
<td>• Encourage the use of students' home languages (and target languages) as tools for academic problem solving</td>
<td>• Create learning experiences that require multiple voices and encourage participants to draw upon their different strengths in different languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recognize students' distinct linguistic funds of knowledge</td>
<td>• Arrange students in flexible, collaborative groups to engage in learning activities that require co-construction among students with diverse linguistic funds of knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Position students as experts, potential teachers, and ongoing learners</td>
<td>• Create language-rich environment with comparisons across languages (i.e. ongoing cognate lists posted on bulletin board)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cultivate curiosity about language</td>
<td>• Use bilingual discourse and recognize students who draw upon bilingual resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a space for language play across multiple languages</td>
<td>• Create group-worthy activities and establish guidelines for collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote co-construction/collaboration as part of the classroom culture</td>
<td>Examples of teacher discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Modeling</td>
<td>• Ask questions about language</td>
<td>• I wonder why this language is...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask students for help with language</td>
<td>• How would you say...?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Show how mistakes can be opportunities to learn</td>
<td>• I made a mistake here, could you help me learn how to correct it?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Model co-writing and revision processes (manipulate text and try out different language)</td>
<td>• I don't think this sounds right, how could I say this better?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Model &quot;think alouds&quot; about language</td>
<td>• I noticed that we say ___ in English, in my home language we say ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I wonder why we should use this kind of language here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Intervention in peer interactions
- Ask students to think about cross-linguistic comparisons in pairs
- Ask reflective questions about language usage and appropriateness as students produce language
- Encourage students to listen and paraphrase what their peers say
- Redirect questions to peers
- Offer strategies to solve linguistic problems
- Evaluate student collaboration explicitly

### Examples of teacher discourse
- How would you and your partner say this in your home language/target language?
- When/why do you use that word?
- How else could you express that?
- Can your partner help with this?
- Show your partner what you mean (use gestures or drawings to inquire about language)
- Use rubrics that highlight collaboration as part of self- and teacher-evaluation

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The first category, *creating classroom context for languaging*, describes the ways that a teacher creates a culture of collaboration and multilingualism in her classroom. This category is based on the sociocultural proposition that the social context is not only the setting but also a source for learning (Vygotsky, 1978; van Lier, 2000). The excerpts described above were made possible within a context that afforded peer collaboration and co-construction. For example, the teacher provided guidelines for collaboration during peer revisions, required students to evaluate their group’s learning and cooperation, and she also placed priority on cooperation during her own evaluation of student work. A teacher constructs a context for languaging as she makes choices about the language of instruction and the languages that are sanctioned for use among students. The teacher who supports languaging uses multiple languages as academic tools, recognizes students’ distinct language expertise, and creates activities that allow for co-construction. Valuing languages as resources is also reflected in the environmental print and use of languages to mediate academic learning. For example, the teachers I observed posted ongoing lists of cognates on their bulletin boards that were co-constructed with students. Other instructional decisions, which constitute this context, include creating group-worthy tasks (Cohen, 1994) that require students to draw upon their diverse linguistic funds of knowledge. For example, I observed most opportunities for languaging when students coauthored texts, used bilingual resources to solve problems, and played with both languages to compare meaning. Flexible grouping that allowed students multiple opportunities to be positioned as both experts and learners offered greater affordances for language development (see Martin-Beltran, 2010b). Research has shown that using and hearing more than one language to engage in academic tasks offers...
additional language learning affordances, as languages become tools for mediation and analysis in cross-linguistic comparisons (Martin-Beltran, 2009, 2010a).

The second category of teacher strategies for mediation, *modeling*, captures the ways that teachers encourage language by engaging in languaging themselves. Findings demonstrated that when teachers publicly asked questions about language, positioning themselves as learners, students were more likely to engage in languaging with each other (see Martin-Beltran, 2010a). For example, by using "think alouds" teachers modeled their metacognitive processes or metalinguistic analysis of language, and they often framed mistakes as opportunities to learn. Teachers who showed curiosity about language as a constant topic of inquiry in the classroom engaged students in more instances of languaging. Throughout the year, I observed the teacher asking questions about language and drawing upon students' funds of knowledge thereby legitimizing students as co-constructors of knowledge.

The third category of teacher mediation, *intervention in peer interactions*, identified different ways that teachers play a part in the co-construction of knowledge during dialogic interaction, often pushing students forward in their zone of proximal development. Even in a student-centered classroom where peer interaction and peer feedback is emphasized, teacher intervention is important to redirect or call attention to language learning affordances that students' may overlook. Teachers in this study were found to be key mediators between students who were learning languages from each other. As students were involved in joint activities, teachers asked questions and redirected peers to ask questions of each, often stretching the students' collective zone of proximal development. Knowing when *not* to intervene in interactions was also important to allow students the space to problem solve and co-construct knowledge with their peers, thus amplifying language learning opportunities for both expert and novice students. A teacher's choice to remain silent during student interactions was often as important as her interjections in the dialogue.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

This study contributes to the field of second language education research by applying a sociocultural lens to shed light on the ways that teachers can create a classroom context and be involved in student interactions to guide and promote language learning opportunities. This study has implications for teachers who seek concrete teaching practices that can support sociocultural principles of second language learning. The analysis of student and teacher interactions presented in this chapter provides a
window into the complex process of languaging (Swain, 2006), co-
constructing knowledge (Foster & Ohta, 2005), and expanding the
collective ZPD (Engeström, 1987; Gutiérrez, 2008). Although much SLA
research has discussed the importance of peer interaction for language
learning (Long, 1983, 1996; Mackey, 2007) and scholarship has suggested
instructional methods that incorporate interactive learning activities
(Brown, 2007; Long & Doughty, 2009; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), little
research has provided a close analysis of how teachers may intervene or
play a mediating role in that interaction. Findings from this chapter fill that
gap and contribute to second language teachers’ knowledge base.

The micro-analysis of learner and teacher interactions and patterns
identified in teacher practices over time presented in this chapter offer
teachers insights about how to create a context for language learning, how
to model languaging, and how to decide when and how to intervene pro-
ductively in peer interactions. Findings from this study can inform
teacher education as we apply a sociocultural theoretical lens to encour-
age teacher-learners to become more aware of the opportunities for lan-
guage learning afforded during dialogic interactions. The findings
synthesized in Table 6.1 offer a framework for analysis or point of depa-
ture for further discussion and questions about teaching practices that
apply sociocultural theory. During teaching practicum, teacher educators
can inspire teacher-learners to engage in close analysis of their own discu-
sive practices similar to the data analysis presented here, attending to
the co-construction of knowledge with students, and brainstorming more
way to create a context that affords languaging. Future research is needed
with teachers engaged in inquiry of their own practices to further investi-
gate the ways that teachers can play a key role mediating second language
learning among learners.

NOTES

1. At the time of this study, teachers providing instruction to English learners
in California needed to be credentialed through the CLAD (Crosscultural
Language and Academic Development), BCLAD (Bilingual, Crosscultural
Language and Academic Development) and/or a test-based certification
process. The CLAD and BCLAD required extra coursework beyond the
K-6 credential, which included courses on second language acquisition,
policy, and teaching methods for ELLs. The BCLAD credential prepared a
teacher to provide instruction to English learners in a language other than
English, in this case, Spanish.

2. In this excerpt English translations are inserted in (curly brackets) only
when needed.
REFERENCES


