

Chapter 20

Leveraging Students' Communicative Repertoires as a Tool for Equitable Learning

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Leveraging is often described as the process of using the home and community languages of children and youth as a tool to access the “academic” or “standard” varieties of languages valued in schools. In this vein, researchers have called on practitioners to leverage the stigmatized language practices of children and youth in schools for their academic development. In this review, we interrogate the notion of leveraging commonly used by language and literacy scholars. We consider what gets leveraged, whose practices get leveraged, when leveraging occurs, and whether or not leveraging leads to robust and transformative learning experiences that sustain the cultural and linguistic practices of children and youth in our schools, particularly for students of color. We review scholarship steeped in Vygotskian-inspired research on learning, culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies, and bilingual education research that forefront the notion that the language practices of children and youth are useful for mediating learning and development. We conclude with a discussion of classroom discourse analysis methods that we believe can provide documentation of transformative learning experiences that uncovers and examines the linguistic resources of students in our twenty-first-century classrooms, and to gain a common language around notions of leveraging in the field.

English as taught in city schools does not always reflect the Englishes city students travel with. Their urban English landscape is enriched by a procession of many voices that march in various directions in, around, and through the monuments of the city. In them are the spoken souls of the crowded, colored earth, the distinguishable dialects and silences that creep loudly but defiantly down the city block and into the linguistic mainstream.

—Kirkland (2010, p. 293)

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Youth enter schools and bring with them a range of linguistic resources that *could* be used in the service of learning. For many youth, however, their linguistic resources or ways of communicating in their homes and communities do not align with ways of communicating privileged in schools. This is particularly true for minoritized and racialized children and youth of color whose linguistic flexibility often indexes for educators a host of deficit categorizations (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Kirkland's (2010) imagery above illustrates for us how "city schools" do not reflect the rich languages that youth bring with them, from their homes and communities. He centralizes the "many voices" that make up the communicative repertoires of city youth that "defiantly" make their way into the linguistic mainstream, despite schools that wish to wash these "Englishes" away. Minoritized and racialized children and youth often experience their ways of speaking as "marked" by educators and in society as well. Yet, despite efforts to rid youth of their languages, they will persist, and likely make their way into the "linguistic mainstream," without due credit.

Researchers inspired by the ethnography of communication tradition (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972) point to differences between languages expected in schools and those spoken at home (Au, 1980; Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983). For example Au (1980) and Philips (1983) documented different ways children used language to participate in conversations across the two settings, noting the closer home practices (language or ways of using language) match with school expectations, the better students generally perform. Some of this work has been thoroughly reviewed elsewhere (see Hull & Schultz, 2001; Orellana, Martinez, Lee, & Montaña, 2012) and includes Kathryn Au's (1980) significant study examining young students in Hawaii and Susan Philips's (1983) important research focusing on the Warm Springs Indians of Central Oregon. These were groundbreaking studies at the time, using discourse analytic tools applied in diverse settings to demonstrate the cultural incongruence between how students had been socialized to communicate in their home communities and the differing expectations at school.

Heath's (1983) classic research examined how adults and children communicate in three communities within the Piedmont Carolinas: Trackton, Roadville, and Maintown. She found that communication styles for each respective community were closely tied to individuals' socialization within a cultural community. The ways children were socialized to language in Trackton, an all-Black working-class community, and Roadville, an all-White working-class community, were examined in contrast to the "mainstream" practices of Black and White children and adults from Maintown who held positions of power economically, educationally, and politically. Practices across three communities differed in how children were ultimately prepared to navigate expected language norms of academic, and eventually work life. In their homes, Maintown children were already engaged in language practices reflecting patterns used in school contexts, preparing them for the language usage and questioning patterns they would encounter in schools. White Maintown children experienced home and school as linked, and their parents engaged children in activities they believed added to their academic knowledge. Many children from Trackton and

Roadville, in contrast, experienced a discontinuity between the two environments and experienced greater school failure than the children of Maintown, despite Heath's finding that the "ways with words" of children from all three communities were sophisticated, yet different from each other.

Au (1980), Heath (1983), and Philips (1983) each made clear that children from "nonmainstream" communities they studied had communicative repertoires that mediated their participation within home and community contexts, yet the discontinuities experienced by these children in school were enough for educational inequities to occur, in various forms. In a similar tradition, other scholars have provided foundational understandings about the language practices of Black children in out of school contexts in Philadelphia (Goodwin, 1990), the code-switching practices of Puerto Rican bilinguals in New York (Zentella, 1997), and the experiences of Mexican mothers and their children in the Arizona borderlands (González, 2001), to name a few. As education researchers interested in the project of equitable schooling, we challenge narratives that mark and stigmatize students' languages as deficient. The actions of educators to demean, belittle, or cast aside any language simply for sounding "different" reduce opportunities for learning in classrooms (Cole, 1998). It is our belief that education researchers interested in language should both address and work toward normalizing the multilingual and multidialectal communicative repertoires of students in our increasingly diverse schooling contexts. Of priority should be to identify how teachers can capitalize on the communicative repertoires of students in ways that mediate their learning and development, what many scholars call "leveraging."

In this review, we interrogate the notion of leveraging commonly used by language and literacy scholars in education. In many empirical studies, there are calls by researchers (including us) asking practitioners to leverage underused, less recognized, and too often stigmatized linguistic practices of children and youth in schools. In reviewing notions of leveraging discussed in relevant language and literacy research in K–12 settings, we explore various approaches to leveraging. We examine *what* gets leveraged, *whose* practices get leveraged, *when* leveraging occurs, and whether or not leveraging may lead to robust and transformative learning experiences that sustain the cultural and linguistic practices of children and youth in our schools, particularly students of color historically deemed as inferior.

We argue for the use of leveraging through a review of scholarship steeped in Vygotskian-inspired research on learning, followed by more recent scholarship that argues for culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014) and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). These traditions already begin from the assumption that the language and literacy practices of children and youth developed outside of schools, in their homes and varying community contexts, are useful tools for mediating their learning and development in school. Next, we examine the scholarship of researchers who discuss leveraging specifically within classrooms. This will be followed by a review of classroom discourse analysis methodologies that we believe can be used by teachers, in addition to researchers, as a powerful tool to uncover and examine the linguistic resources of students in our 21st-century classrooms.

COMMUNICATIVE REPERTOIRES IN MULTILINGUAL SOCIETIES/CLASSROOMS

Prior to entering any discussion about leveraging, it is important to explore how the communicative tools of individuals have been theorized within sociocultural language scholarship, particularly in our use of the term *communicative repertoire*. In revisiting Gumperz's (1964) notion of linguistic repertoire, Betsy Rymes (2010a, 2014) coined the term *communicative repertoire* to capture how individuals use language and literacy, and other semiotic means of communication including gestures, body language, and dress to function effectively in multiple communities. Gumperz's (1964) notion of verbal repertoire was developed in the context of multilingualism in India where switching languages functioned similarly to style switching in monolingual communities, to communicate different meanings in different social situations. Gumperz defined verbal repertoire as "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially significant interaction" (p. 137). For Gumperz, sociocultural context was a significant feature to any communicative interaction. Therefore he argued that the idea of verbal repertoires encompassed more than the term *language* could adequately describe within a multilingual society.

Rymes's (2010a, 2014) notion of communicative repertoire explores how a focus only on the "linguistic" might ignore other dynamic means of communication that individuals draw on to communicate meaning, their identities, and their affiliations with varied cultural communities and groups. Attention to the communicative repertoires of students can garner generative tools for teachers in the task of leveraging students' underexplored and untapped communicative practices in classrooms. In our own work, we have strived to expand what counts as language while working toward expanding the communicative repertoires of students (Martinez & Montaño, 2016) and teachers (Zentella, 1997). Exploring the notion of communicative repertoires highlights the various linguistic tools individuals have available to navigate the multiple communities to which they belong. The previous scholars mentioned, among others, are integral to our understanding that all languages are grammatical and rule governed. With this in mind, we move on to explore how previously mentioned research provides a framework for naming which communicative repertoires should be built on, or leveraged, in our classrooms.

METHOD FOR ORGANIZING REVIEW

In reviewing articles, we sought to cultivate a base of literature where scholars explicitly used the term *leveraging* or *leverage* to describe the purposeful use of children's or youths' communicative repertoires for a classroom-related outcome including the development of a new language-related skill. We did not include parameters for specific years because we were eager to note the first use of the term, and we wanted to cast a wide enough net, initially. Overall we sought research that noted (1) which researchers were influential in highlighting the communicative repertoires of racialized and minoritized groups, (2) which researchers used the term *leveraging* for the purpose

of building on the communicative strengths for learning in classrooms, and more broadly (3) work that aligns with the perspective of taking seriously the language skills that students from racialized and minoritized groups possess and use regularly, while acknowledging the need to expand their communicative repertoires.

We began with a search on Education Resource Information Center of peer-reviewed articles with the terms “leverage,” “leveraging,” and “language.” From a total of 33 results, only 9 articles related to leveraging the communicative repertoires of a specific community for academic purposes (see Table 1). Only five articles had the word or a version of the word “leverage” in the title, and others used the term *leveraging* to discuss notions of “drawing on,” “using,” “cultivating,” or “recruiting” the communicative repertoires of a racialized or minoritized community. We note that Michaels (2005) appears to be the first scholar to use the term *leveraging* in the way that we focus on it within this review, as a way to draw on the linguistic skills and strengths of nondominant and racialized youth who do not come to school proficient in mainstream academic English (MAE).

Finally, we trace the work of language and literacy scholars who come from the tradition of viewing the linguistic differences of racialized and minoritized youth as valid and valuable, with the perspective of desiring these differences be maintained rather than stamped out for the sake of closer alignment to MAE. Broadly, these areas of work include the following: funds of knowledge, bilingual education theory, cultural modeling, and culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF LEVERAGING

As previously stated, Sarah Michaels was the first scholar in our review to mention leveraging for the purposes of recruiting the communicative strengths of working-class children. In her commentary on research reported by Miller, Cho, and Bracey (2005), Michaels (2005) asks in her title, “[Can] working-class storytelling be leveraged in school?” Michaels calls on researchers and practitioners to consider the affordances of building on practices readily available to communities often treated as lacking in language abilities. Michaels makes this argument building on Miller et al. (2005), who found that working-class children from South Baltimore and Chicago, who are commonly treated as “nonverbal” or “inadequately verbal,” engaged in sophisticated storytelling practices. Taking cues from the Miller et al. article, Michaels (2005) argues that we must “take seriously the linguistic and sociocultural strengths of members of nondominant communities in the hope that demonstrations of these strengths could influence schools and the reception and progress of non-mainstream children within them” (p. 137).

While Miller et al. (2005) showcase working-class family storytelling, Michaels (2005) asks larger questions about the validity of these stories for school learning. She continues,

We can note the fact that teachers like the rest of us are seeing through the eyes of their own dominant genres and find it hard on the fly to see the logic and cogency in ways with words or slants on experience

TABLE 1
Search Results for “Leveraging” Communicative Repertoires
of Schooling Tasks

Citation	Term Used	Examples
Gutiérrez, Bien, Selland, and Pierce (2011)	<i>Leverage, leveraged, leveraging</i>	“In this article, we discuss the importance of leveraging DLLs’ [dual language learners] linguistic repertoires towards the development of emergent academic language and writing practices, while promoting their identities as imaginative and productive meaning-makers, that is, learning language and using language to learn (Wells, 1986).” (p. 235)
Hopewell (2011)	<i>Leveraging, leverage</i>	“The teacher must engage students in dialogs and learning activities that explicitly leverage cross-language connections to lighten students’ learning burdens.” (p. 606)
Jiménez et al. (2015)	<i>Leverage, leveraging</i>	“We now present one approach that incorporates the recommended teacher practices, dispositions, and types of knowledge needed for leveraging English learners’ linguistic strengths in instruction. When used as part of an instructional activity, translating has the potential to improve the English reading comprehension of ELs.” (p. 409)
Lee (2006)	<i>Leveraging</i>	“This article explicates the Cultural Modeling Framework for designing robust learning environments that leverage everyday knowledge of culturally diverse students to support subject-matter specific learning.” (p. 305)
Martínez (2010)	<i>Leveraging, leverage</i>	“We can then help them [students] apply the skills embedded in their use of Spanglish to relevant academic literacy tasks and contexts. Leveraging the skills embedded in students’ use of Spanglish could thus radically transform how students view the relationship between everyday and academic knowledge, and thereby have a transformative impact on their academic literacy learning.” (p. 146)
Michaels (2005)	<i>Leveraged</i>	“Can the intellectual affordances of working-class storytelling be leveraged in school?” (p. 136, from title)
Orellana and Reynolds (2008)	<i>Leveraged, leveraging</i>	“The goal of leveraging is neither to simply celebrate students’ everyday linguistic virtuosity nor to transfer those skills in a direct way to schools tasks but rather to expand students’ abilities to work with the various tools in their linguistic toolkits—the full range of practices that they use in both home and school contexts. Leveraging may simultaneously cultivate hybrid abilities that merge different elements from students’ repertoires of practice as these elements are displayed across contexts, tasks, and relationships.” (p. 50)

(continued)

TABLE 1 (CONTINUED)

Citation	Term Used	Examples
Pacheco (2012)	<i>Leverage, leveraged, leveraging</i>	“To resolve these emerging and evolving double binds, social actors engaged in productive learning as they transformed and created new artifacts and instruments. Thus, in making explicit connections to curriculum and schooling, I emphasize that leveraging the cultural resources generated in/through everyday resistance requires a significant recognition of Latina/o students’ problem-solving inclinations and solution-driven actions and activities.” (p. 129)
Vetter (2013)	<i>Leverage, leveraged, leveraging</i>	“I chose the verb leverage , a word traditionally used in the financial world that means ‘to use for maximum advantage,’ to explore how Gina attempted to use students’ language as a tool to gain respectful members of a literacy classroom (“Leverage,” 2012).” (p. 7)

that diverge from their own... We, as a community, have got to go beyond claims and documentation of difference (even differences on their own terms) and show specifically how these differences can be recruited, in school, as strengths. (p. 137)

Michaels (2005) highlights tensions faced by educators when asked to see beyond the “eyes of their own dominant genres.” She, however, offers an important perspective for going “beyond” simply noting differences, asking researchers and practitioners to consider ways to recruit differences “as strengths” in schools. Michaels’s call is not a radical one; however, she makes clear that decades have passed since similar calls were made, and practitioners and researchers still experience difficulties accepting and enacting teaching that recruits the neglected strengths of children and youth for learning. We now urge education researchers to take Michaels’s initial question, can “Working-class storytelling be leveraged in school?” and extend it to other well-researched communities and practices: *Can signifying in the Black community be leveraged in school? Can immigrant children’s language brokering skills be leveraged in school? Can code-switching be leveraged in school?* In other words, researchers now need to investigate what gets leveraged in schools, how, and when.

LEVERAGING: WHAT GETS LEVERAGED, WHO GETS TO LEVERAGE, AND WHEN?

Within education research, various pedagogical approaches recruit the practices of “nonmainstream” children and youth as a resource for learning in schools, particularly when the communicative repertoires of a specific group are noncongruent to those expected in “mainstream” or “traditional” classrooms. In this section, we highlight scholars that document the cultural and communicative repertoires of practices in which their respective participants engaged, such as the rhetorical features of

young Black Language speakers (Lee, 2006), immigrant youth language brokering (Orellana & Reynolds, 2008), and the Spanglish practices of Latina/o youth (Martínez, 2010). These researchers map practices observed through long-term ethnographic methods, onto discipline-specific modes of reasoning and demonstrate how to leverage students' communicative repertoires for academic purposes.

The "cultural modeling" (Lee, 1995) approach demonstrates how teachers can adopt language and literacy practices that links students' tacit knowledge (cultural models) outside of school with academic curriculum. Lee's (2006) cultural modeling study in a Chicago high school serving predominantly African American youth demonstrates how the teachers' use of African American English Vernacular "rhetorical and performance features" (p. 318) facilitated the students' participation in a speech community. Lee emphasizes, "During the modeling phase, the goal of instructional discourse is to make public students' tacit knowledge of how to tackle these problems, and to provide them with a meta-language with which to describe their reasoning" (p. 310). In these classroom moments, students experience being holders of knowledge and disrupt the normalized student–teacher learning hierarchy. This recognition of students' tacit knowledge and naming is particularly momentous for students of color who are often marginalized in classroom settings. Students also developed their reasoning skills with everyday texts and applied these to literary texts. Lee (2006) suggests,

The teacher's role is to help students recognize the similarities between what they did to interpret the cultural data sets and what, in the case of these literature classrooms, students would do to interpret canonical literary texts that also involved major attention to symbolism. (p. 310)

In this manner, students' tacit knowledge was leveraged to facilitate their learning and development.

Orellana (2009) draws from her own decades-long ethnographic research in Los Angeles and Chicago with children of immigrants who served as interpreters and translators, or language brokers, for adults in their homes and communities. Orellana and Reynolds (2008) drew on Lee's (2007) cultural modeling framework seeking to leverage the language brokering skills of children for academic tasks, specifically paraphrasing in the literacy classroom. They explain that leveraging required purposeful attempts to take parts of a linguistic practice with which students were already familiar, "that can be examined with students while also drawing their attention to how these practices connect with disciplinary constructs and ways of thinking" (p. 50). Orellana and Reynolds argue that the language brokering in which these youth engage out of school mapped directly onto the literacy task of paraphrasing. That is, to restate a text "in one's own words" is similar to the translating and interpreting practices engaged in as language brokers (p. 54). They add specifically about leveraging,

The goal of leveraging is neither simply to celebrate students' everyday linguistic virtuosity nor to transfer those skills in a direct way to school tasks but rather to expand students' abilities to work with the various tools in their linguistic toolkits—the full range of practices that they use in *both* home and school contexts. Leveraging may simultaneously cultivate hybrid abilities that merge different elements from students' repertoires of practice as these elements are displayed across contexts, tasks, and relationships. (p. 50)

Leveraging, for Orellana and Reynolds (2008), cultivated a learning environment where youths' home and community communicative repertoires were useful within the classroom context, and beyond. The goal was not to rid the home practice, or deem it as less valuable; rather it was to make clear the usefulness of a practice that is often ignored and left untapped by educators.

Martínez (2010) provides a similar approach to leveraging in his ethnographic research on Latina/o middle school youths' code-switching practices, or Spanglish, in a middle school classroom to explore potential leverages for academic purposes. He found that these youth were engaging in creative and nuanced code-switching practices that mapped onto practices encouraged by the California standards for English language arts at the time, such as the need to communicate "subtle shades of meaning" across words. Martínez (2010) argues that his purpose, similar to others researching "nondominant" language practices, should not be simply to celebrate what these students are already doing well through their everyday use of *Spanglish*.

We certainly need to *begin* by acknowledging the skill and intelligence embedded and displayed in their use of *Spanglish*. However, if we only recognize and celebrate students' everyday language practices without providing them access to *dominant* language and literacy practices, then we do them a fundamental disservice. (p. 140)

For Martínez (2010) the goal of leveraging must be to provide children and youth of color with classroom communities where their language practices are represented. However, he argues that this is not productive unless we are also providing students with access to dominant language practices. This call is central to many scholars who take on an additive approach to language and literacy research.

LITERACY AND LANGUAGE RESEARCH WITH AN ADDITIVE PERSPECTIVE: BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Bilingual and language education research have long featured similar ideas to leveraging when theorizing linguistic transfer. Research on bilingual education programs demonstrates how effective pedagogy uses students' first language, with a language as resource approach (Ruiz, 1995), in order to transfer known information to the second language, resulting in academic and social benefits (Morales & Aldana, 2010). However, some attempts by bilingual researchers and practitioners tended to dichotomize or falsely separate two languages within and across linguistic communities, leading to critiques of privileging idealized notions of standard languages. That is, views of successful bilingualism included idealized notions of a speaker who used "standard" varieties of two language without mixing these language together. This approach limited and made "vernacular" and hybrid language practices invisible in some contexts (García, 2009), or highly marked in others (Urciuoli, 1996; Zentella, 1997). Therefore, questions regarding whose communicative repertoires to leverage and for what purposes are important to consider. In the bilingual classroom setting, are the home languages of children and youth who are

emerging bilinguals being leveraged, and if so, how? Are teachers creating hierarchies in languages when leveraging the home language only to access the dominant language? How might the practice of leveraging create pedagogical practices where communicative repertoires are being expanded while simultaneously sustaining the communicative repertoires of children and youth?

Hornberger and Link (2012) present ethnographic case studies of two educational contexts where teachers draw on the linguistic resources of students, yet vary in the ways they promote standard language. In one setting, teachers allowed youth to use their home languages in class; however, the school, and teachers continued to adopt an English-only approach to instruction, which hindered biliteracy development and essentially diminished students' access to developing Spanish skills. In contrast, the second setting points to the importance of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014) as necessary for bilingual students' development. At this educational site, teachers focused on "the fluid, multilingual, oral, contextualized practices at the local level, because they are essential for learners' development" (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 245) and were better able to engage students in learning tasks given that students of multiple languages and dialects were able to speak freely. The researchers emphasize,

Translanguaging practices in the classroom have the potential to explicitly valorize all points along the continua of biliterate context, media, content, and development. They offer the possibility for teachers and learners to access academic content through the communicative repertoires they bring to the classroom while simultaneously acquiring new ones. (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 245)

For immigrant and emerging bilingual students, sociolinguistic research must expand beyond a first language and second language model of learning to include a more dynamic language model of learning that legitimatizes the communicative repertoires students bring from home and the translanguaging skills they employ when faced with a learning task. Gutiérrez, Morales, and Martinez (2009) call attention to increasing transnational migration, resulting in a range of linguistic practices, reflecting "the ways that the local and the global are always implicated in the everyday linguistic practices of nondominant students, thus challenging narrow and essentialized notions of students' linguistic repertoires" (pp. 215–216).

CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES

For youth of color in particular, their schooling experiences rarely capture their tacit cultural knowledge nor recognize their linguistic dexterity. Culturally relevant teaching highlights how teachers can leverage the cultural and linguistic practices of students but also points to how choosing to leverage students' culture requires a pedagogical approach that aims to see, understand, and love the whole child. In her study of highly effective teachers of African American students, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) used culturally relevant theory to emphasize that teachers need to center on

student experiences and local context as a resource for instruction. She proposed a culturally relevant theory of education as a way to bridge culture and teaching and provide educators a pedagogical approach that could capture the social and cultural context of African American, Latino, and Native American students' lives while also providing an explanation for minority students' academic success. The study defined the characteristics of culturally relevant teachers as "an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483). More important, this body of research challenged educators to do more than tolerate students' language and culture in the classroom but also acknowledge it, embrace it, and teach with it (Gay, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These studies of culturally relevant teaching serve to decenter the White, middle-class child, and position children of color at the center when we ask teachers to leverage the language and culture of students.

Over time, culturally relevant teaching has evolved, taking up various names such as culturally "sensitive," "centered," "congruent," "reflective," "mediated," "contextualized," "synchronized," and "responsive," as various researchers engaged in questions about "why it is important to make classroom instruction more consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students" (Gay, 2009, p. 31). In this tradition, Camangian's (2015) research presents a humanizing pedagogy that emphasizes the experiences of youth of color as academic strengths rather than cultural deficits. Camangian demonstrates pedagogical strategies that leverage student voice and communicative expressions about experience, making authentic student voice a standard resource available in the classroom. He privileges student dialogue or "real talk" that moves students beyond academic interpretations of social theory to rich and sometimes intense conversations about how these theories apply to experiences in their community. His research highlights how teachers can employ the principles of culturally relevant teaching in tandem with critical literacy and critical pedagogy to center on the social and material realities of students of color, youth culture, and critical thinking. This work is an important reminder of the need for research to move beyond the theoretical notions behind culturally relevant teaching towards understanding what it looks like in the classroom, particularly in leveraging youth experiences via their communicative repertoires.

Culturally relevant teaching initially provided the framework to bridge teaching and culture together for educators focused on the education of children of color. In the over 20 years since culturally relevant teaching was first conceived, our country has become increasingly multiracial and multilingual, and teachers might find it difficult to leverage the culture of students given highly fluid and dynamic sets of practices (Paris & Alim, 2014). In increasingly diversifying contexts, the culturally relevant framework may not provide the tools "to support the linguistic and cultural dexterity and plurality (Paris, 2009, 2011) necessary for success and access in our demographically changing U.S. and global schools and communities" (Paris, 2012,

p. 95). In light of these tensions, Paris (2012) offers the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* and explains,

The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. (p. 95)

Moving toward a culturally sustaining pedagogy requires that children and youth maintain their position at the center of instruction and honors the fluidity of youth culture (Paris & Alim, 2014), while asking teachers to affirm the multiple identities and cultures of students in order to fully engage them in their learning. As teachers engage students as subjects in their own learning process, students are better positioned to participate in critical thinking as teachers leverage aspects of their multilayered identities.

Rather than focus singularly on one racial or ethnic group, their work [culturally sustaining pedagogies] pushes us to consider the global identities that are emerging in the arts, literature, music, athletics, and film. It also points to the shifts of identity that now move us toward a hybridity, fluidity, and complexity never before considered in schools and classrooms. (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 82)

A culturally sustaining pedagogy responds to the diversity of classrooms and the fluidity of youth culture, and in turn, future research will need to respond and provide studies that not only demonstrate how language and culture can be leveraged in the classroom but also sustain the language and culture of students. We believe classroom discourse analysis can provide the theoretical and methodological tools to document and provide practical evidence of leveraging to support a transformative, culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy.

DISCOURSE, DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, AND CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In taking up the practice of leveraging for this review, we were aware that researchers benefitted from a range of methods to complete their empirical work. Scholars discussed at the opening of our chapter drew heavily on traditions from the ethnography of communication (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972) that called for ethnographic and linguistic methods to analyze the everyday communicative repertoires of various communities for comparative purposes, and for capturing language in use within its respective sociocultural context. Other work reviewed drew on sociocultural perspectives on language and literacy that weave traditions from linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, literacy, psychology, and sociology while relying on Vygotskian perspectives on learning and development. We want to now look toward classroom discourse analysis as one method we argue provides a powerful framework to explore and examine the everyday communicative repertoires that are deployed within classroom interactions. Through attention to the communicative repertoires of children, youth, and teachers in classrooms, we can explore and document what leveraging looks like, how it is practiced, and for what purposes in the quest to provide equitable

and sustaining learning environments for children and youth. We look to classroom discourse analysis as a tool for researchers and practitioners to document, review, and interrogate the communicative repertoires of children and youth in classrooms.

In her book designed for practitioners, Rymes (2009) argues that classroom discourse analysis is useful for the following reasons:

1. Insights gained from classroom discourses analysis have enhanced mutual understanding between teachers and students.
2. By analyzing classroom discourse themselves, teachers have been able to understand local differences in classroom talk—going beyond stereotypes or other cultural generalizations.
3. When teachers analyze discourse in their own classrooms, academic achievement improves.
4. The process of doing classroom discourse analysis can foster an intrinsic and lifelong love for the practice of teaching and its general life-affirming potential. (p. 1)

Relationships established between students and teacher, teacher learning and understanding of local ways of communicating, improved academic achievement by students, and lifelong love for teaching are powerful reasons for engaging in and supporting classroom discourse analysis research. We believe classroom discourse analysis also has the potential to create data sets for researchers and practitioners to garner a better understanding of what leveraging looks like in practice.

According to Cazden and Beck (2003), “discourse” traditionally meant “any stretch of spoken or written language longer than a single sentence” (p. 166). However, researchers have since made clear how sociocultural factors mediate the discourses individuals deploy in order to perform socially, culturally, and sometimes politically acceptable ways of communicating (Gee, 2005). A seemingly general definition of discourse is *language in use* (Cazden, 2001; Gee, 2005; Rymes, 2009). This definition highlights the sociocultural dimensions of language in that we need more information about the context in which language is being used to make sense of discourse. Rymes (2009) positions her understanding of discourse in contrast with linguists who argue, “A defining feature of language is its ability to be *decontextualized*” (p. 6). Per Rymes’s example, if a student told us, “I saw a tree,” it is because of the ability of language to be decontextualized that we know what a “tree” is without needing to see a tree. Rymes argues that *discourse* as language in use offers researchers the ability to consider analytically, the “capacity of language to do infinitely different things when being used in different kinds of situations” (p. 7). To know *why* a student is uttering, “I saw a tree,” we would need more information. “Understanding what an utterance like ‘I saw a tree’ means involves understanding how that student was *using* the word *tree* in context and her purpose for telling you she saw one” (p. 6). It is therefore accepted that the sociocultural context in which a communicative interaction takes place mediates our understanding of utterances.

Given this, classroom discourse analysis takes the classroom as its context. Classrooms however are not bounded spaces; they are influenced by outside discourses, rules for

participating, and power dynamics that privilege certain participants over others. Cazden (2001) powerfully demonstrated how classroom discourse analysis had the power to shed light on children's ways of participating in classroom routines that silenced some children while privileging others. Like previous scholars mentioned, Cazden was highly influential in demonstrating what might occur in classrooms when the communicative repertoires of children from "nonmainstream" backgrounds were not leveraged for learning. In the first edition of *Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning*, Cazden argued, "The task for both teachers and researchers is to make the usually transparent medium of classroom discourse the object of focal attention" (Cazden, 2001, p. 4). This was a clear argument for discourse analysis in classrooms since researchers and teachers could take the opportunity to review classroom discourse through the replaying of audio or video recordings with the goal of improving instruction.

Rymes (2010a) argues that in addition to teachers developing discourse analytical skills, students can also benefit from becoming aware of their own communicative repertoire, a statement also evoked by Cazden (2001). She points out that students benefit from learning the repertoires of school success, and perhaps just as importantly, teachers learn that students' home and community repertoires are just as valuable for learning.

When students' native communicative repertoires are recognized, they begin to see themselves as academically capable (i.e., capable of expanding their repertoire) . . . for schools to be successful, they do not necessarily need new curriculum or radical restructuring, but a change in culture and attitude—a change that recognizes that with teaching comes a commitment to build knowledge *of* our students as much as to build knowledge *in* our students. (Rymes, 2010a, p. 538–539)

These reflective habits developed in teachers and students are not only critical in our increasingly linguistically and ethnically diverse classrooms, but they allow students to "shuttle between communities, and not to think of only joining *a* community" (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 238, quoted in Rymes, 2010a, p. 544). We argue that this direction is where teacher education programs must go, building on the present skills and lived experiences of students in our classrooms rather than primarily supporting students' developing mainstream linguistic practices.

LEVERAGING DYNAMIC CLASSROOM COMMUNICATIVE REPERTOIRES

In the opening to the previous section, we argued that classroom discourse analysis research has the potential to provide data sets for researchers and practitioners to gain an understanding of leveraging in classroom interactions. In the following section we provide an example of a data set from our own research (Martinez, 2016) to highlight the everyday linguistic dexterity of racialized and minoritized youth in an urban high school. We make use of this transcript to offer a sense of the possibilities of leveraging as we move forward in our thinking about diverse communicative repertoires that children and youth bring with them to schools, and how teachers might

better draw on these resources. As an illustrative example of the communicative repertoires heard in urban U.S. high schools, we provide the following transcript from a 10th-grade English language arts class in a Southern California community. Here, Ms. Luz,¹ a Latina teacher, is in the midst of an activity about Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* with a group of Black and Latin@ youth. In this 22-second interaction, we catch a glimpse of the city "Englishes" that Kirkland (2010) refers to in the opening of this chapter, in addition to city "Spanishes" and other hybrid languages, gestures, and semiotic tools that characterize these youths' communicative repertoires. Youth were seated in pods of three desks facing the front of the classroom where Ms. Luz facilitated a class activity while standing in front of an overhead projector. She asked her students a series of known-answer questions about several characters from the play, specifically whether or not characters were "pro-" or "anti-" Caesar. After skipping Portia because she proved to be "tricky," Ms. Luz returned to this character, whose role in the assassination of Julius Caesar garnered debate among students. The following interaction began as Ms. Luz took the discussion "back to Portia."

TRANSCRIPT 1.0: "BACK TO PORTIA"

- 1 Ms. Luz: Now let's go back to Portia. ((to class))
 2 Portia's tricky. [Okay?
 3 Troy: [Where she- where she from ((to Ms. Luz))
 4 Lorenzo: *Con permiso*. ((to Ms. Luz)) (Excuse me)
 5 Can you push it up [miss?
 6 Ms. Luz: [she's Brutus' **wife**? ((to Troy))
 7 Troy: She a **pro**
 8 Lorenzo: (2.0 sec) pa'rriba:: ((to Ms. Luz)) (up)
 9 Dave: Yeah but she was- she was
 10 Troy: She don't even know whas up
 11 Lorenzo: [Hey miss:: ((to Ms. Luz))
 12 Ms. Luz: [She doesn't know what's going on
 13 but [she's worried about her father right? ((to class))
 14 Troy: [((stands up blocking Lorenzo's view))
 15 Lorenzo: [Stu::pid **move** yo' bald head ma::n ((to Troy))
 16 Ms. Luz: So [**maybe** she would be neutral?
 17 Lorenzo: [Ms. Luz. (1.0 sec)
 18 move yo (xxx xxx) man:: ((to Troy))
 19 Student: Yeah:
 20 Ms. Luz: Yeah. Okay.
 21 Or-so we would just need to add another character
 22 Lorenzo: ((stands up at his seat))(1.5) pick it up miss Luz
 23 **I can't see::**
 24 Ms. Luz: hold on ((adjusts image projection))

Excerpted from Martinez (2016a, p. 67)

In this interaction, Lorenzo, Troy, and Dave made contributions to the official classroom space (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). What becomes clear in this transcript is the range of languages deployed by Lorenzo and Troy in particular. Lorenzo displayed his linguistic flexibility as he shifted from addressing Ms. Luz and Troy throughout the interaction, quickly adapting his utterances to each interlocutor. In Lines 4 and 5, Lorenzo code-switches from English to Spanish while speaking to Ms. Luz, “Con permiso (excuse me), can you pick it up miss?” Lorenzo shifted into what he and his peers identified as “hood” or “ghetto” talk when he addressed Troy in Line 15, “Stu::pid **move** yo’ bald head ma::n” since Troy’s head blocked Lorenzo’s view of the image being displayed. Some might find Lorenzo’s utterances here indicative of language crossing (Rampton, 1995) or sharing (Paris, 2011) since he is a Latino male uttering a language traditionally belonging to Blacks. Finally Lorenzo shifted his communication style when becoming frustrated by Ms. Luz who did not meet his request to move the projection up when he stood up at his desk in Line 22 uttering, “Pick it up miss Luz. **I can’t see::**” moving away from his previous formal code.

Given this short 22-second interaction, Lorenzo flexibly shifts his communication style, providing an example of his extensive communicative repertoire. We also witness Troy engaging in a literary conversation with Ms. Luz and Dave while deploying utterances inflected with features of Black Language. For example, in Line 3 and 7, Troy invokes the use of a zero copula, “Where \emptyset she. Where \emptyset she from?” and “She \emptyset a pro” rather than “mainstream” varieties of English which might translate into “Where is she from” and “She is a pro.” Additionally, Troy utters in Line 10, “She don’t even know whas up” invoking the use of the third-person singular “s” rather than the MAE “doesn’t.” Invoking Kirkland (2010), we note that Lorenzo and Troy shift between their “city” Englishes, and for Lorenzo, his city Spanishes, not bound by traditional rules or ideologies of languages that demarcate where a language starts, ends, or begins again.

Neither Lorenzo nor Troy “checked their languages” at the classroom door to perform an imagined “standard” or “academic” English that many treat as a prerequisite for learning in U.S. classrooms (Fránquiz & de la Luz Reyes, 1998). In moving away from imagined monoglot standard ideologies of language (Silverstein, 1996), Lorenzo and Troy’s linguistic flexibility would be treated as a normative feature of living in urban contexts, particularly a space where Black and Latina/o youth have socialized one another and expanded each other’s communicative repertoires (Martinez, 2016a). Additionally, it is no longer necessary to continue the research trope that compares the languages of racialized and minoritized communities to middle-class monolingual communities (Baquedano-López, Solís, & Kattan, 2005; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2014). A move away from the aforementioned conditions allows for a reimagination of the classroom interaction above. When we consider Lorenzo’s and Troy’s interactions, would Ms. Luz respond to Lorenzo (if she had actually heard him) in Spanish or Spanglish perhaps? In our reimagined classroom, Troy’s contribution in Line 10, “She don’t even know whas up,” would not have been marked as it

was by Ms. Luz's utterance, "She doesn't know what is going on" in Lines 12 and 13. We would hope to imagine a classroom where Troy's communicative repertoire would be leveraged to facilitate his meaning-making about Portia's role in Caesar's assassination in ways that would foster debate without *any* attention being placed on his linguistic features.

In actuality, Lorenzo and Troy do not treat their practices as remarkable in their classroom or larger community. In the larger study, Black and Latina/o youth described their communicative repertoires as filled with the necessary tools required for interacting across school, home, and community contexts, with some youth reporting their desire to learn "good" or "better" English or to learn how to "speak right." Yet this larger study and others highlighted in this chapter make the case that racialized and minoritized children and youth are linguistically flexible, evidence of a sophisticated and untapped resource for learning. While these practices were normative for these youth, they were also aware that teachers evaluated their utterances as flawed and potentially indicative of their lack of motivation to learn, particularly when heard in official classroom spaces.

In addition to showcasing the communicative repertoires of these youth, we interrogate the idea of "leveraging." Given the dynamic communicative repertoires that exist in our increasingly diverse classrooms, we note here that Ms. Luz did not leverage the communicative repertoires of her students. While Lorenzo addressed her in a range of Spanishes and Englishes, Ms. Luz responded to him only in English: "Hold on" in Line 24. This may be understandable given that perhaps Ms. Luz did not hear Lorenzo. However, despite bilingual abilities, Ms. Luz did not use her bilingualism to interact with her students. Additionally, her interaction with Troy confirmed her strict adherence to a standard English-only ideology that mediated her instruction. While Troy deploys utterances that feature copula absences ("She-Ø-a-pro" rather than "She is a pro") and omission of third-person singular ("She don't even know wassup" rather than "She doesn't know what's up/happening"), Ms. Luz provided corrective feedback to Troy. Therefore, while *leveraging* has the potential to facilitate the expansion of students' communicative repertoires, teachers might find corrective and repair practices as the most useful feature of facilitating the learning of a new task, such as a language and/or literacy competency (Razfar, 2005; Martinez, 2016a), this despite inconclusive findings on repair practices (Russell, 2009).

This short interaction provides a data set to the field, with a call for scholars to reimagine the potential for leveraging in language research. Powerful leveraging practices would shift any attempt to devalue the communicative repertoires of *any* student in our classrooms. Powerful leveraging practices would not only treat the communicative repertoires of racialized and minoritized youth as a strength but also raise the prestige of these languages through curricular and pedagogical practices. Transformative leveraging practices would begin with normalizing speakers like Lorenzo and Troy who were using their languages to communicate meaning and make meaning.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: CENTERING CHILDREN AND YOUTHS' COMMUNICATIVE REPERTOIRES

We bring this chapter to an end by considering the contributions of language and literacy scholars of color who shifted the ways in which researchers treated the communicative repertoires of children and youth in schools. Many of these scholars entered their research sites reflecting on their own positionalities, not taking for granted how they occupied spaces where they might be considered “native” ethnographers or researchers (Mangual Figueroa, 2014; Martinez, 2016b; Winn & Ubiles, 2011). These scholars have made clear to the field that we cannot make assumptions about our roles in contexts where we reflect one or more of the cultural groups represented, and that any scholar must enter these spaces working toward humanizing the research experiences for the participants (Paris & Winn, 2014). Souto-Manning (2014) reminds us that we must move away from ethnocentric research that does not centralize children or youth, and their own needs. Mangual Figueroa (2014) also challenges us to consider not only how we enter our research sites but also how we exit, since we leave our research sites after building relationships that our participants may also value beyond our research. These perspectives are important to consider as researchers move toward documenting the various communicative skills with which children and youth today participate.

In Heath's (1983) classic work, her central thesis is that families in the communities of Trackton and Roadville had rich, complex, and useful language practices that reflected norms and values of members of their respective communities, but these practices have varying degrees of difference from the language practices expected by “mainstreamers” in school and business. It may be obvious to most researchers today who study the language practices of nondominant communities that speakers have rich, complex, and useful language practices. However, there is still much distance between what researchers have demonstrated and language ideologies circulating in society today, perhaps best exemplified by the debate around the supposed word gap between toddlers of White, middle-class families and toddlers from more economically underresourced, and nondominant communities (Avineri et al., 2015; González, 2015). Heath contextualized her study as being relevant and necessary for the communities at that specific time and within their particular political context, with the possibility of wider reaching impact for children who come to school with language practices that are not considered mainstream. With more language researchers studying their own communities and language practices that are familiar and normal, what is contextually mainstream is in constant flux, even if teachers remain largely White, middle class, and English monolingual.

An argument made by many scholars who study and conduct research with and alongside communities of color is that we must decenter whiteness in our work. That is, we must no longer support a narrative that treats the (imagined) practices of White middle-class communities as unmarked, normalizing them and viewing their practices as the unexamined targets of instruction for children and youth of color. Recently, Paris and Alim (2014) argued,

We must move away from the pervasiveness of pedagogies that are too closely aligned with linguistic, literate, and cultural hegemony and toward developing a pedagogical agenda that does not concern itself with the seemingly panoptic 'White gaze' (Morrison, 1998) that permeates educational research and practice with and for students of color, their teachers, and their schools. (p. 86)

They continue, "For too long, scholarship on 'access' and 'equity' has centered implicitly or explicitly around the question of how to get working-class students of color to speak and write more like middle-class White ones" (p. 86). Here they point to a crucial need expressed by many scholars who contend that children and youth of color have sophisticated and creative language and literacy practices already, yet some researchers continue to treat the practices of an idealized White middle-class community as the norm. Gutiérrez (2006) calls on scholars to question notions of *White innocence* that may permeate our research by the use of theoretical frameworks and methodologies that "preserves racial subordination and the differential benefits for the *innocent* who retains her own dominant position vis-à-vis the 'objects' of study. From this perspective, we are all implicated in some way in maintaining *white innocence*" (p. 226). It is our hope that a renewed and purposeful interest in leveraging can facilitate conversations, alongside those around culturally sustaining pedagogies, where we work toward disrupting business as usual practices in our schools and redirecting the White gaze that education research has been preoccupied with for too long (Paris & Alim, 2014).

An argument that aligns with notions of White innocence and the need to humanize the learning experiences of children and youth comes from the view that simply providing access to dominant language and literacy codes will guarantee access to dominant institutions of power. For example, Martínez (2010) warns that access to dominant practices does not guarantee upward mobility or economic advancement as often promised by scholars, teachers, policymakers, and parents (Morrell, 2008). This perspective highlights power structures intricately related to language, and how leveraging practices might benefit from pedagogies of language awareness (Alim, 2004; Baker-Bell, 2013). However, educational reform efforts continue to laud approaches to learning that make false promises of upward mobility without taking into consideration institutionalized and educational disparities that limit access for students of color.

In the future work of language and literacy scholars, it would be beneficial to consider how we move away from treating adults, (teachers, educators, more expert others) as the only individuals capable of leveraging a practice for their students. Sociocultural learning scholars remind us that learning is a bidirectional process. Too often this process view adults as the more knowledgeable participant that is capable of leveraging learning (Eksner & Orellana, 2012). We can imagine many instances when a child or youth leverages an adult's cultural and/or linguistic practices for the purposes of learning. Our future research must also move in that direction, to document *how* students in our classrooms become the experts who can successfully leverage for adult learning.

As narratives of increasing diversity in schools continue, so does the normalizing of mainstream American English as the lingua franca of our learning environments, despite reports that linguistic diversity is on the rise. In U.S. schools today, we are witnessing an increase in school segregation patterns resulting in multiple

communities of Black and Latina/o youth in hypersegregated schools with one another more than any other racialized group (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). In these spaces, educators will encounter students who use a range of languages to communicate meaning across their daily lives, bringing in sophisticated, yet highly marked and stigmatized language practices. More than likely, these will not align with what schools have come to privilege. However, as Paris and Alim (2014) point out, as our society becomes more multiracial and multilingual, the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1988) shifts as well.

In this review, we have highlighted the transformative work of scholars who have neither settled on normalizing White “ways with words” nor set as a goal the leveraging of communicative repertoires strictly to acquire or to become socialized into dominant communicative repertoires privileged in schools. Rather, these scholars have contributed to an ongoing conversation that seeks to amplify narratives that position racialized and minoritized children and youth as producers of knowledge mediated by diverse, flexible, and robust communicative repertoires. We believe that classroom discourse analytic methods can provide insightful and educative data that can work to leverage for researchers and practitioners a much more complex and dynamic understanding of how to understand classroom life, at the discourse level, and ways to leverage for transformative learning that works to sustain and raise the prestige of stigmatized communicative repertoires.

NOTE

¹All names of individuals or places are pseudonyms.

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