

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Towards a literacy pedagogy of 'Thirdspace'

*Chto delat'?* (What is to be done?)

Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1989/1863)

#### Introduction

In this final chapter I explore the possibilities of what I call Thirdspace pedagogy for ESL literacy education in multicultural conditions, one that interrogates some of the assumption commonly held by politicians about the acquisition of cultural literacy (Hirsch 1987, 1993) and, related to this, social, political, and historical perceptions of cultural-linguistic difference. By drawing on the concept of 'Thirdspace' (Bhabha 1994; Harvey 1996; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996, 2000), I attempt to challenge dichotomising tendencies in thinking about L2 learners, with the aim of locating literacy learning in the borderland or on the fault-line between cultures - a space of radical openness. In so doing, I endeavour to identify those political agendas that stand behind various approaches to L2 literacy pedagogy. I do recognise that in my quest to deconstruct this field of education I run the risk of not doing justice to those practices that lie at all points along the 'conservative - liberal - critical/post-critical' continuum identified in this chapter. However, as Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Turner (1997: 370) argue, the diversity of current language and literacy education practices cluster around two main approaches - that is, a) "a uni-dimensional 'one size fits all' approach" (which I define as a conservative or traditional approach), or b) an "eclectic 'mix and match' approach" (defined here roughly as a liberal approach). In my intention to problematise these essentialising approaches, I draw on the 'radical middle' position to argue for a more constructive view of literacy learning/teaching space(s). I examine the trialectic of pedagogic spaces and the political strategy of Thirling in classroom communities of difference, to suggest how this perspective, in its cross-fertilisation with Vygotskian perspectives on literacy learning, may be used productively in reconceptualising literacy pedagogy in/for conditions of multicultural life.

#### 7.1 Political cleavages over literacy education for cultural-linguistic minorities

Historically, politicians discussing the funding of ESL pedagogy in major immigrant-receiving countries have followed an assimilationist and then integrationist agenda rooted in the cultural politics of maintaining the vision and practice of a single unified culture.

The primary project of these agendas has been the acculturation of migrants to the cultural-linguistic capital of the dominant culture. ESL has been seen by governments as one of the most influential means of propelling assimilation and normalisation of cultural difference within the broader politics of order-through-domination and unity-through-incorporation (Haraway 1991; Phillipson 1992; Tollefson 1995). In spite of the insistence that schools are neutral and democratic institutions, a conservative power in government has traditionally maintained the need for an ideologically charged mission of ESL in weaving the idea of a monolingual common culture into the fabric of public education. As a result, the roles of ESL programs have often been aligned with the construction of homogenising cultural representations and have played a distinctive social role in shaping the subjectivities of culturally different students. This traditional view of the role of ESL education then can be conceived of as fundamentally nested within the broader production of a monosemic unitary cultural space in schools focussed upon the promotion of a 'common cultural literacy' (Macedo 1994, 2000).

### **7.1.1 Debates over cultural literacy**

H. Donald Hirsch (1999: 136-137) announced recently that it is "a duty of the public schools to Americanise the children of immigrants". That duty turns out to be ever more pressing as the social fabric of the state "becomes more fragile". The public schools "have lost their way over the past five decades" in transmitting the cultural core knowledge and in teaching effective mastery of English, due to the 'romanticism' of bilingual and multicultural movements. The ethnic particularism of these movements, according to Hirsch, has prevented minority students from becoming proficient users of nuanced English (in speech and writing), and hence has limited "[their] opportunity, freedom, and the amount of money in [their] purse". Moreover, 'ineffective' bilingualism and 'incoherent' multiculturalism are conceived by Hirsch as directly responsible for the poverty and other socio-economic disadvantages of migrant and minority groups. This is because, he says, these orientations in schooling breed communicative incompetence - "the inability to read, write, speak, and listen" (ibid.). By formulating the causes of literacy problems in such a way, Hirsch calls for the restoration of the universalist civic and political ideal as a principle of sociopolitical life and education. The only way of doing this, according to Hirsch (1987, 1993, 1999), is to teach all children a common body of knowledge, or 'cultural literacy'.

The rationale behind this concept of cultural literacy and the pedagogical model it informs lies precisely in the acquisition of unexamined, canonised and universally shared information, seen as needed for all competent speakers, readers and writers to function effectively in society. In this view of literacy, the knowledge of canonical texts and

information is a "ticket to full citizenship" or "one's membership card" to mainstream culture - "*the* basic culture of the nation" (Hirsch 1987: 22). Furthermore, in his more recent works, such as *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* and a series of books on 'what every student needs to know', Hirsch aggrandises this common knowledge or the collective memory of a nation to such an extent that this becomes a necessary prerequisite for a truly functional 'mature literacy'. The transmission of canonical literacy in schools is believed to play a key role in ensuring national development and communication among a diverse population divided by ethnic, political and social affiliations.

This position is directly connected to those discourses of modernisation and national development which imply a socio-categorical distinction between culturally illiterate and literate individuals, and the progressive movement of the former toward literacy. Advocates of canon transmission see in the knowledge of the dominant cultural episteme a 'solution' for social ills and a 'liberatory' capital that helps people from the underclass to rise economically (cf. Donald 1993; Cope & Kalantzis 1993). But the other side of the cultural literacy coin implies the unconditional assimilation of minorities and people from the underclass to dominant cultural codes. In this view, there is no need for multicultural education because the dominant culture is already "the most democratic culture" (Hirsch 1987: 21). What is more, multicultural education "should not be the primary focus of national education ... or interfere with our schools' responsibility to ensure our children's mastery of American literate culture" (ibid.). Such a program of cultural literacy for a diverse populace therefore subjugates other cultural knowledges in a rather undemocratic way and maintains existing inequalities.

Hirsch and other right wing commentators place exclusive emphasis on school education and fail to accept that people learn cultural literacy as much from their local cultural environments as from formal education. By evacuating 'minor' knowledges (Deleuze & Guattari 1986) from the definition of cultural literacy, they naturalise important social and material inequalities under "the mask of knowledge" (Foucault 1977b: 225) and, thus, defer any critical analysis of those political technologies which lead to the disenfranchisement of minority students. In addition, the conservatives assume that the ideological model of literacy (Gee 1992, 1996a; Street 1993, 1995) - one that revives multiliteracies and concerns about the struggle over the subject of knowledge - threatens to fragment national culture and condemns disadvantaged minorities to illiteracy (Hirsch 1987; 1993). Clearly, then, in attacking the 'critical' accounts of literacy, they advance a single 'cultural literacy' as a powerful instrument for maintaining the hegemonic cultural order, reifying the episteme of a particular cultural milieu to the status of universal common knowledge. This presents one of the main hurdles for teaching those literacies

and knowledges that are needed in a society constantly evolving in a multiplicity of social forms and cultural practices.

This position of Hirsch and others can be seen as lying towards one end of a continuum of thinking about the role of cultural literacy (and ESL education) in multicultural societies. At the other end of such a spectrum of views, however, there could be said to be a liberal tendency in language and literacy education that Hirsch (1999) refers to as 'liberal racism'. At first glance, liberalism might appear to be in apparent strong contrast to Hirsch's position - and to be a much preferred one, perhaps. However, Hirsch's scathing term of 'liberal racism' gives us pause; and in any case we must look closely and critically at this position.

While in general liberalism opposes the mystical essentialism of domination by saying that no culture, religion or tradition is superior to any other (Eckermann 1994), some liberals attempt to manage the crisis of cultural universalism through the politics of difference. In doing so, they construct establishment (celebratory) pluralism in which the Other is seen through a positivistic grid of static and discrete ethnic identities. This position is backgrounded in so-called 'scientific culturalism' (McConaghy 2000) that essentialises racial binary oppositions. It describes minority groups as having ways of thinking, learning and perceiving the world that are radically different from the mainstream. The diversity of cultural forms is seen as a natural condition of cultural existence, rather than as the effect of an enunciation of difference that constitutes asymmetries of power in interethnic relations (Luke & Luke 1999). As a result, such a vision of multiculturalism is complicit with the nationalist project of late capitalism that objectifies and reduces the Other to the "particular ethnic Thing" (Žižek 1997: 43). This celebration of the autonomy and uniqueness of local cultures, minority and immigrant identities by liberals reinscribes patronising attitudes to difference, treating "each local culture the way the colonizer treats colonized people - as 'natives' whose mores are to be carefully studied and 'respected'" (ibid. : 44). As Stuart Hall (1992) observes, this multicultural strategy of the convenient Othering and exoticisation of ethnicity merely confirms and stabilises the hegemonic cultural order by naming the Other as marginal or peripheral to the mainstream.

Hence, paradoxical as it may sound, celebratory multiculturalism can destroy local cultural literacies, knowledges and languages in searching for the essential, root features of identities and practices and formulating them as the basic human rights of monadic ethnicities. Because the liberal multicultural agenda can obfuscate hegemonic processes in wider cultural politics, these rights in practice can be realised only in relations of power-knowledge within a homogenising educational system. Inserting fragmented information, texts, and teaching materials about difference and diversity into a curriculum deeply

invested with middle-class whiteness, values and language actually subordinates and devalues local knowledges and literacy practices. This promotes an acritical multicultural curriculum and creates what we can call, after Bourdieu (1991), the illusion of linguistic and epistemological communism. It is precisely through the patronising subordination of diversity within the overall framework of textual ideology that the dominant cultural capital remains intact from scrutiny. The dominant episteme becomes the norm, a point of reference and measure, by which an attitude to sociocultural difference is defined and evaluated. As a result, in a general striving to become 'accepted', cultural and language minorities often devalue their primary languages, dialects and cultural practices, and thus actively participate in a process of 'auto-colonization' (Žižek 1997).

In general, then, neither a conservative nor a contradictory liberal model of cultural literacy is able to provide a solution for teaching multiple cultural literacies as a precondition for a more just democratic society. If we must admit the existence of a literacy crisis on a national scale, then it should be seen not so much in terms of the 'cultural illiteracy' of disadvantaged and minority students. Rather, it is due to the social making of real-life multiple literacies into the abstract category of the common cultural literacy, as a hegemonic design for living in a multicultural state. Hence, the shift from cultural literacy to multicultural literacy is hardly possible without determining those relations of domination and subordination, incorporation and resistance, that are at play in conditions of cultural complexity. Neither form of modern ethnic absolutism (both seeking cultural purity and root identity) is able to focus on multiple disjunctures and conjunctions that emerge not in fixed cultural spaces but in the dynamics of cultural practices and semiotic exchanges, in radically local experiences and in human mobility.

### **7.1.2 Debates over the monolingual/bilingual education of L2 learners**

As I mentioned in opening this section, political discussion about ESL education is situated within this broader political debate about cultural literacy. The opposition and/or contradictory mixture of conservative and liberal ideas can be seen in the way politicians support (i.e. are prepared to fund) either a monolingual or bilingual approach to L2 literacy education. In the debate over the issue of how to organise pedagogic practices for second language learners, the traditional viewpoint aligns with those researchers who believe that L1 knowledge 'interferes' with L2 learning. It is presumed therefore that L2 learning is best facilitated when learners are immersed in L2 and given only minimal continuing support in their first language, hence advocating a monolingual approach to education. In contrast, those of the 'liberal' persuasion have been more convinced by research emphasising that learning in L2 is greatly facilitated by maintaining the use of L1 in content instruction during the transition period. As a result, the monolingual/bilingual debate has acquired a

largely scientific and apolitical orientation which comes down to such issues as the validity, quality and methodological acceptability of research (August & Hakuta 1997). The main issue turns out to be the production of objective evidence that supports or finds fault in research findings regarding the interdependence between the L1 and L2 proficiency of learners and their attainment in academic subject matter. The issue of interference versus reinforcement remains in this debate largely controversial, stimulating divergent educational program designs based predominantly on 'autonomous' and essentialising views of L2 learning and language. Although this debate raises important technical issues of language learning, it also reflects the broader politics of difference and multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism (and bilingualism) is commonly met with both overt and covert conservative resistance by those who fund and manage systems of formal education. It appears that the multicultural agenda often faces ESL orthodoxies - 'established ideologies' (Rampton 1995: 326) at the levels of politics and conflicting research - that may ignore the practices and attitudes of the multilingual student population by reducing these to technical solutions (e.g. bilingualism for transition or language awareness programs). Conservatives see multiculturalism as a threat to national identity and cultural homogeneity. They put emphasis on the mainstreaming of cultural difference through normalisation. That is, the acquisition of the cultural canon and 'proper English' is seen to connect fragmented ethnic identities under the 'protective covering' of the national totality, something which is captured in critical studies by the word 'Englishness' (Hall 1988). There is no moral doubt in mainstreaming-through-normalisation programs because the conservatives assume that equality and democracy already exist and only need to be accessed. 'Traditional' ESL education claims to provide such an access, urging the development of English-language competency for all minority learners. While this is a fair goal to pursue, a conservative ESL pedagogy based solely on this point of view would bypass the complex problematic of inclusionary mainstreaming.

As Kanpol (1994) and others argue, this pedagogic practice is positivistically and ideologically laden, with an emphasis on social control, excessive competition and survival of the fittest (most powerful and competent). The issue of access to the 'best' of cultural knowledge, discourses of power and 'nuanced' English furnishes the process of L2 learning as a progressive approximation to what is conceived as a standard performance. While ever L2 learners' performance is evaluated against this standard - the imagined standard performance of a 'native speaker' - they have no chance of being fit enough to survive as different or Other (Rampton 1995). Instead, they come either to inhabit liminal spaces in classroom practices, becoming labelled as 'at risk', 'struggling' or 'disabled' students (Alvermann 2001), or they are forced to assimilate as quickly as possible and forget their

native languages and cultural practices. The L2 learner's trajectory along the way to 'access' is controlled and assessed, and involves practices of both exclusion (through marginalisation and labelling) and inclusion (through normalisation and assimilation).

Therefore, some critically minded researchers emphasise that learning English is not just a matter of decoding an alphabet, learning vocabulary, and hearing subtleties of accent, i.e., the development of the technical side of fluency in English language (Crawford 1992; Cummins 1996). For immigrant students, the seemingly straightforward task - students in a classroom with a teacher helping them understand and learn to use English - is imbued with a weight of social and political complexity that goes far beyond simply the matter of acquiring the L2. For this reason, such researchers as Cummins, Delpit, Kalantzis, Lo Bianco, Singh, Vasquez, and others connect L2 learning to issues of power relations in broader society and in particular educational settings, and to the negotiation of cultural identity (e.g. Cummins 1996; Hall & Eggington 2000). By embedding L2 learning in the sociopolitical context of cultural practices, these researchers argue for the construction of a cosmopolitan multilingual culture and, in particular, for the 'cosmopolitics' of language education (Singh 2001). They see in bilingual education a political potential to counterpose to Anglo-fundamentalism in multicultural conditions.

Obviously, the monolingual/bilingual debate over L2 literacy learning extends far beyond matters of objective, politically disinterested research dealing with the evaluation, treatment and comparison of controlled groups. Rather, this debate is a culturally sensitive issue which cuts across traditional liberal/conservative cleavages in politics, in particular, with the conservative striving towards monoculturalism and the liberal striving towards cosmopolitan multiculturalism. Because this debate can not easily be settled, monolingualism and bilingualism in education have always been politically charged ideas, frequently leading to judicial intervention into the issue of language instruction in the public schools (e.g. *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974; *Bushwick Parents Organisation v. the State of New York* in 1995; Proposition 227 in 1998). As the liberal/conservative debate over language education has polarised, we are witnessing the adoption of English-only policies in some states of the USA, the move towards mainstreaming of ESL support after the Swann Report in the UK, and the phasing-out of long-established bilingual programs for Aboriginal students in the Northern Territory of Australia. Gutiérrez (2001) argues that conservative policies in response to the liberal multicultural agenda have led to a 'backlash pedagogy' aiming to maintain the status quo of the dominant culture in education and to further marginalise minority students. In such current situations, however, there is a need in the field of L2 education not only to vehemently criticise the monocultural movement but also to see the limitations of liberal multiculturalism (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997).

The conservative/liberal polarisation is based on a logic of essentialism in the construction of L2 learners' educational programs. Conservative forces in L2 education essentialise white, middle-class, patriarchal values as the historically static norm in teaching minority students. Traditional ESL education, transitional bilingual education and a structured English immersion model currently represent neo-colonial strategies to a) construct culturally different identities and knowledges as lesser in value and often as deviant and pathological, and b) normalise difference through a pedagogy of enculturation to the essentialised norm, standard and canon, i.e., to Western 'traditional' essences. Liberals, on the other hand, tend to essentialise difference with regard to broader categories such as race, gender and class and emphasise the need for diversity and cultural-linguistic pluralism in education. For instance, dual-immersion programs embrace the cosmopolitan culture goal by engaging school children in academic content in two languages. It is assumed that bilingualism is one of the conditions which give students more equal opportunities to access and master academic knowledge. While this humanistic approach is progressive in intent, it also often presumes that inequality ceases to exist when access is granted.

In most cases liberals start with a critical examination of the essential social, cultural and linguistic borders in multicultural society. But the critical dimension of liberal bilingual and multicultural initiatives is then frequently subsumed into an overall progressivist discourse (Sanguinetti 1998: 129). By promoting the construction of an egalitarian society, they see education as an arena in which human understanding, common sense and equality can be reached on the basis of common knowledge, transcending boundaries of difference. However, as both critical and post-critical (i.e., sceptical of a single hegemonic view of empowerment and emancipation) perspectives on education and learning have emphasised, negotiation of difference against a backdrop of common understanding always involves irreconcilable and permanently divisive political discourses (e.g. Giroux 1993; Gore 1993; Green 1998; Lather 1992; McLaren 1997). Hence, first, to focus on difference in educational practices means acknowledging that "knowledges are forged in histories riven with differentially constituted relations of power: that is, knowledges, subjectivities, and social practices are forged within 'asymmetrical and incommensurate cultural spheres'" (McLaren 1994: 201). While the liberals side-step some 'values' and 'norms' on which common knowledge is based, they nonetheless also align themselves with educational policies that lead to the reproduction of inequality. Overlooking social conflict and cultural contradictions in favour of access makes the liberal agenda similar to the conservative one. And, second, essentialising difference in terms of either fixed ethnic, gender and social class identities, or particular learning styles, bodies of knowledge, and ways of thinking, means failing to appreciate the multiplicity of contexts in which identity



and consciousness are constantly shifting in relation to discursive, epistemological and ideological formations (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997).

The salient point made by critical and post-critical multiculturalists is that the conservative/liberal cleavages about education are "trapped within the logic of democracy ... under the sway of late capitalism" (McLaren 1994: 201). While conservatives and liberals alike view common sense as an unproblematic space in which language learning takes place, these perspectives emphasise that literacy pedagogy occurs in the heteroglossic space of struggle over meaning, a complex and contested arena in which numerous voices compete (hooks 1994; Luke 1996). This position encourages us to explore L2 literacy pedagogy through the relationship of *knowledge, power, and space* (McLaren 1998).

Firstly, teaching always involves power relations and the privileging of certain forms of knowledge. Inevitably, these forms of knowledge serve to reproduce sociocultural inequalities. Critical and post-critical perspectives on literacy learning invite teachers therefore to recognise this underside of teaching and learning - "the private struggles we engage as we construct not only our teaching practices and all the relationships this entails, but our teaching voices and identities" (Britzman 1991: 1). For L2 practitioners, and for teachers in multicultural classrooms in general, this means "unsettl[ing] received definitions of pedagogy" by engaging in a kind of ongoing self-critique of their privileged positions as teachers and "trying to unlearn that privilege" (Ellsworth 1989: 323).

Secondly, these perspectives on learning also invite students to look critically at those discourses that shape their identities both inside and outside schools as well as to read texts 'against the grain' in order to uncover the social construction of knowledge. In this view, by attending to the social critique of power relationships implicated in textual practices (Andersen & Collins 1997) and by making the critical dimension a central pedagogic activity, students become engaged in a form of societal transformation (Apple 1998; Shannon 1998; Vygotsky 1997). This requires a complex approach to the multiplicity of identity- and knowledge-constitutive discourses. What is important here, according to Green (1997), is not to impose on students a single, stultifying critical position but, rather, to open up a debate deconstructive of all always already political positions. Only in this way can literacy be reclaimed as "an instrument and a resource for change, for challenging and changing the Wor(l)d" (ibid.: 241).

Thirdly, critical and post-critical perspectives on literacy invite L2 researchers, beyond the monolingual/bilingual debate about accessing unexamined common knowledge, to explore those relations of power which come into play when two (or more) cultures collide. This

stance on L2 literacy learning is needed to unveil the processes of cultural and linguistic border-crossings. One way of doing this, according to McLaren (1998), is to develop a critical perspective on the production of pedagogical space. That is, the power-knowledge relationship has a direct connection with the construction of space for literacy learning. Space is involved in how classroom practices are organised in terms of inclusion and exclusion, how teachers and students construct (both consciously and unconsciously) multiple borders in textual practices of learning and knowing, and how they carry out their performative actions, both reproducing those dividing boundaries and contesting them in a process of semiotic border-crossing.

For this reason, the challenge for L2 research is to develop a critical pedagogy of space that reflects the multiple and contested nature of literacy learning in multicultural classrooms. This is needed to deconstruct the politics of 'seeing' the Other from a distance, as an object that can be isolated, essentialised, compared and studied, much as in the empirical procedures of conventional social and natural sciences. Because both conservatives and liberals are trapped within this dividing practice of Othering, they explicitly (the former) and implicitly (the latter) legitimise preferred social relations, knowledge and meaning in controlling, disciplining and normalising those which are not preferred or different (Foucault 1984). As Foucault (1986) and others (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Harvey 1996; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996, 2000) have recognised, a parallel can be drawn between the production of discourse and the use of space. The use of pedagogic space - a created space of organising material artefacts, textual resources, students and their activities - reveals the deployment of bifurcated discourses as a political strategy for dealing with difference. Both conservatives and liberals fail to make meaningful connections to "the world of the everyday" - "a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur" (hooks 1990: 31).

What is required then is a framework in which the politics of seeing the Other and the 'us-them' binarism in literacy education is rethought productively to formulate a pedagogy of Thirdspace. The starting point here is to approach literacy learning in classroom communities of difference as the domain of life, the unfixed, the dialectic, the dynamic - an intercultural space of action and meaning. Students need to learn how power-knowledge relationships saturate their lived experiences within the boundaries of constructed, multiple, 'real-and-imagined' places (Soja 1996). They need to know how binaries are constructed in these asymmetrical relationships. However, the aim of a Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy is to transcend sociocultural binarisms by deconstructing the essentialised representations of meanings and identities and by introducing 'other-than' choices. 'Thirling' is not a simple combination of the dominant and the marginal cultural knowledges and practices but, rather, an open alternative that is both "strikingly similar

and different", radically open to difference and otherness and to a continuous production of new identities and meanings (Soja 1996: 61). Without this kind of critical perspectives, L2 pedagogy will continue to be nothing more than another apology for the status quo of cultural literacy which Hirsch and others are trying to impose on minorities as the only design for learning and living in a multicultural society.

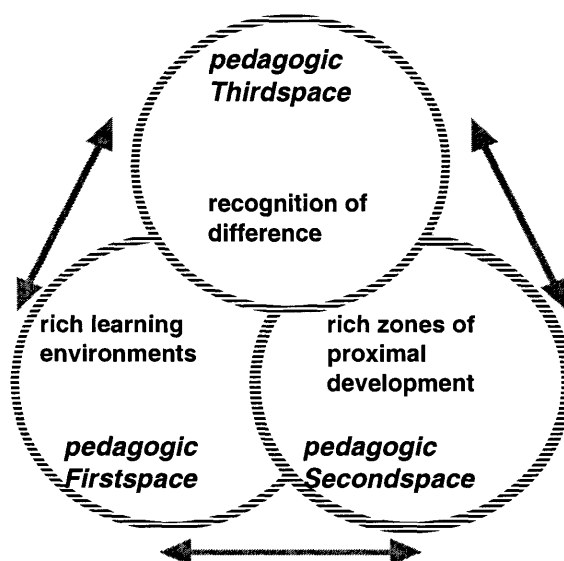
## 7.2 Conceptualising a 'Thirdspace' pedagogy of literacy

In my attempt to conceptualise a literacy pedagogy of 'Thirdspace', I am drawing on critical studies of spatiality (Harvey 1996; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996, 2000) to elaborate the implications of Vygotskian pedagogic perspectives in the contemporary context of educational practice. According to Henri Lefebvre (1991), the systematic study of space - a 'science of space' - reveals the trialectic interaction of *spatial practice* (material, physical or perceived space), *representations of space* (discursive, mental or conceived space) and *spaces of representation* (lived space).

The first ontological category in these trialectics of space is spatial practice. This embraces such notions as the production and reproduction of material forms of spatiality - particular locations or sociocultural settings of practices. This is termed by Edward Soja (1996) as 'Firstspace'. The second category - representations of space - is tied to the relations of production, and to the "order" that those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes and to "frontal" relations (Lefebvre 1991: 33). This 'representations' component is concerned with how sociocultural space is understood and discursively managed. In Soja's (1996: 67) terminology, this is 'Secondspace' - a symbolic space of "power and ideology, of control and surveillance". Spaces of representation is the third category of spatiality, where the real action takes place with respect to the manner in which spatiality informs or conditions discursive practice. Soja (1996: 68) terms this 'Thirdspace', or "space as directly lived", characterised by relations of dominance, subordination, resistance and radical openness. The important point seems to be that Thirdspace, or lived space, both encompasses and is distinct from the other two. It is Thirthing-as-Othering - "the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also ..." (ibid: 60). Thirdspace is "a product of a 'thirthing' of the spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance and meaning" (ibid: 11).

It is interesting, with regard to the trialectics of space, how the pedagogic space of traditional or monosemic L2 literacy education can be transcended to formulate the principles of a 'Thirdspace' pedagogy, such as is needed in conditions of multiculturalism.

In so doing, I deploy the trialectics of space to offer a new way of thinking about literacy pedagogy in multicultural classrooms (Figure 7.1). I use the notion of 'Firstspace' of the pedagogic to refer to the domain of classroom practice organisation. This is the *material-semiotic* domain of constructing particular learning environments. I argue for a critical conception of the pedagogic Firstspace in order to move toward a formulation and construction of *rich learning environments* that are supportive of socially disadvantaged and minority students' learning (Gutiérrez 2000). The pedagogic Firstspace from a critical perspective is about the construction of new patterns of classroom practice organisation: those that encourage cultural pluralism and a diversity of material-semiotic resources in literacy learning.



**Figure 7.1** A literacy pedagogy of Thirdspace

The pedagogic Secondspace is understood here as an *intellectual* sphere of classroom practices. Its critical analysis focuses on *logos* - semiotic-cultural representations of knowledges and meanings, as well as on their tensions. Productive literacy learning in the pedagogic Secondspace is related to the construction of *rich collective ZPDs* (zones of proximal development), in which L2 students' prior sociocultural experiences are the starting point for further intellectual growth.

Lastly, the pedagogic Thirdspace is conceived of as consisting of *living* dialogical events in literacy learning practices. It subsumes the previous two spaces and hence is here given a sociopolitical priority. Thirdspace is about pedagogic events in which *difference is recognised*, valued, and used as a resource for the productive learning and the active participation of all students in classroom activities (Gore 2001). Within these trialectics, the pedagogic spaces in multicultural classrooms are *dependent* upon each other and need

to be taken simultaneously into account to formulate the dimensions of a multicultural, multimodal, post-formal, and radically open pedagogy of literacy.

### **7.2.1 The pedagogic Firstspace of literacy: Constructing the material-semiotic environments for learning**

It is not a ground-breaking assertion that education reproduces and validates the basic organisational patterns of the larger social system of production. As Deborah Britzman (2000: 200) rightly points out, "the old question of what schooling is for becomes utterly entangled with what it means to think about school and teacher education as part and parcel of the world". In a similar vein, Vygotsky (1997: 55) argues that:

We only have to glance over the various educational systems in their historical development in order to discover that the goals of education have, in fact, always been entirely specific and fundamental, and have always corresponded to the ideals of the epoch and of those particular economic and social structures of society that define the whole history of the epoch.

Education, for Vygotsky and other sociocultural researchers, is not independent from the larger society which configures particular learning environments and, by filling them with ideologies, constructs them as political places. To grasp how the Firstspace (the material-semiotic) of pedagogic practices is organised, then, means to connect configurations of classroom practices to social models of production.

For instance, the old Fordist model of the economy, which was concerned with the hierarchical or authoritarian control of workers and vertical chains of command (New London Group 1996), was also reproduced in the system of education. Such was the case in the physical arrangements of classroom practices, material resources and students, and in the knowledge-transmissive modes of teaching concerned with the education of obedient and uncomplaining citizens. Due to the hierarchical organisation of educational Firstspace, the structure of schooling functioned like a learning machine, but also like a machine for surveillance, hierarchising, punishing and rewarding (Foucault 1977a). The spatial distribution of students - the classroom political geography - provided a whole series of distinctions at once: according to students' progress, worth, character, application, cleanliness and parents' fortune (Toohey 2000). In this way, the classroom spaces of difference were created to distance 'normal' and 'fortunate' students from various 'bads'. Teachers could construct the degrees of spatial proximity by manipulating seating arrangements for various purposes (e.g. to control, to discipline, to reward some and to keep others in their place).

With the collapse of the Fordist model of economy in the 1960s, hierarchical structures were gradually replaced by the horizontal relations of teamwork (New London Group 1996). Unlike the old robust structures, teams are smaller, more efficient, flexible and focused; they are self-controlling and self-organising units or distributed systems (Gee 2000b). These same patterns of configuration have become increasingly popular in schools. Now classrooms are conceived as small communities of learners which are engaged in the social work of developing collaborative pedagogic practices. However, as we observe the shift in the Firstspace of classroom practices from structured individualism to communitarianism, we also have to be mindful of how new configurations of practices in communities of learners are coopted by an emerging 'new capitalism' (Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996) and of what implications this may have for the inclusive literacy education of minorities and 'strangers'.

The 'new capitalist' tendency tends to side-step the issue of power relations by presenting a community model as an unproblematic learning environment, in which an 'expert' or a more experienced and capable person assists newcomers. For several decades now, mainstream research on learning has claimed that a collaborative and cooperative model of classroom organisation is a productive way of creating non-coercive learning environments (Barnes et al. 1986; Johnson & Johnson 1992; Slavin 1995; Stahl 1994; etc.). Typical findings involve claims that collaborative team-work allows students and teachers to share responsibility for learning; helps prepare students for workplaces that increasingly value self-motivated, self-confident, team-oriented employees; provides an environment for democratic decision-making; allows participants to acquire insights into the potential and power of groups as well as to develop their independence as learners; helps individuals to develop better judgment through exposure to and resolution of racial, ethnic and gender prejudices. While recognising and valuing the principles and benefits of collaborative practices, however, it should be noted that in emptying the Firstspace of community practices from the notion of asymmetrical relations of spatiality, we will have little success in understanding the effect that peripheral positioning has on students who are poor, members of racially or ethnically marginalised groups, and speakers of first languages other than mainstream or academic English.

There are many problems and discrepancies within the community model of classroom practices in which ESL students participate. For instance, ethnographic studies of culturally mixed groups alert our attention to complex and often conflictual classroom events in which minority students struggle with their multishaped identities and subjectivities. Simply put, what the relations of race, class, and gender may be to them can be in flux with L2 learning. If the 'common' language is an *a priori* condition of inclusion into the learning community (Peirce 1995), many minority students have difficulty gaining

access to anglophone social networks due to the spatial marginalisation of their sociocultural identities. It is not only that access to communicative and practice networks of native speakers is physically blocked but, rather, the L2 learners' identities are already constructed in *spatial* terms through the messages of marginality, depreciation and being seen as 'at risk' in learning. To the extent that identity is socially constructed in schools by remedial ESL programs for 'dummies' (Harclau 1994; McKay & Wong 1996) and, in the larger context, by 'the politics of recognition' (Taylor 1992), it is difficult to sustain positive or nonperipheral identities. As Freire (1993: 49) remarks, "self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them". Hence, Toohey's (2000) observation, that even a growing individual proficiency in L2 does not necessarily result in L2 students becoming full-fledged members of a classroom community, is a necessary corrective to the overoptimistic view of collaborative configurations of pedagogic Firstspace that ignores relations of power in a spatial practice of Othering and inclusion/exclusion.

It should be stressed that a community of practice is itself a spatially stratified entity consisting of a centre and a periphery. According to Lave & Wenger (1991), participants in the practices of a community can be thought of as more central (oldtimers) and as peripheral (newcomers). To become a central participant of a community requires, on the one hand, "access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources and opportunities for participation" (ibid: 100-101). But, on the other hand, spatial practices within a community of learners are structured in such a way that they tend to distance peripheral participants from central resources and engagement. Naming L2 learners as foreign, alien, 'at risk' or culturally and linguistically different indicates their placement in this doubled sense: firstly, the sociocultural other is an outsider and hence a person without place/home; and, secondly, s/he is 'peripheral' by virtue of this, which places her/him in a hierarchy of classroom spaces with respect to those who are fortunate enough to be 'more central' participants or insiders or 'at home'. Spatial practices in communities of learners therefore presuppose interaction between and among spaces as constructed through discursive practice and recognised in naming (or labelling).

It thus becomes important to address the collaborative and inclusive configurations of classroom learning in sociopolitical terms. By making familiar classroom practices strange again, we can reveal why the spatial configurations of learning practice, based on centre/periphery, insider/outsider, home/unhomeliness distinctions, are working for some and not for others. First and foremost, pedagogic Firstspace, even if it is patterned in collaborative terms, nonetheless preserves previous historical types of classroom learning organisation. It is imbued with the contradictions between new democratic forms of

Therefore, collaborative classroom practice, when it is based just on dominant knowledge, values and beliefs, in fact tends to create a 'disabling' learning environment for culturally diverse students (Green & Kostogriz, in press). They become either excluded from or resistant to the narrow sociocultural centrism manifested both in the classroom learning practices and in the selection of learning resources: materials and texts.

While learning resources together with practice patterns of literacy learning constitute the pedagogic Firstspace, the literature in L2 education calls repeatedly for programs enhancing relevance to students' sociocultural experiences. However, only a small percentage of these literacy programs display characteristics that reflect learners' realities, interests and out-of-school practices. For instance, in a recent study of 271 adult literacy programs by Purcell-Gates, Degener and Jacobson (1998), 73% are described as using activities and materials that are not related to their students' lives. Obviously, the organisation of collaborative learning environments in these programs tends again to be the transmission and distribution of privileged and decontextualised cultural knowledge, albeit in a collaborative mode. But even when multicultural materials and activities are represented with language, narratives, food, games, music, etc. to include some cultural differences, a learning activity can still function as a part of a conservative multicultural agenda of assimilating and normalising difference.

As Kanpol (1999: 41) puts it, "learning about cultural differences and their attending values doesn't necessarily imply acceptance of these values as being equal to ... Western cultural norms and values". The cultural resources of the Other in most cases fall outside the knowledge and values of the dominant groups, on the basis of which curriculum is designed. The discursive management of pedagogic Firstspace, one that authorises mainstream material-semiotic resources as a point of intercultural comparison, devalues or ignores the importance of minority students' resources (e.g. languages and textual practices) in literacy learning. This results in material-semiotic configurations of pedagogic Firstspace that are enabling for some students and disabling for others. Therefore, Vygotskian perspectives on literacy learning can be helpful here in rethinking collaborative learning environments in multicultural classrooms.

Vygotsky sees a learning environment as a space which people historically and dynamically organise through mediating means. This is a social space of practices in which consciousness arises. Literacy learning is dependent in many ways on the semiotic organisation of learning environments, i.e., on the uses of the available mediating resources that afford and/or constrain learning. By putting the emphasis on the role of cultural semiotic resources in learning, this perspective calls for dramatic changes in the ways in which literacy learning is organised in multicultural classroom communities. First



and foremost, the task of educators and policy makers must be to make diversity a resource rather than a problem (Gutiérrez 2000). Literacy instruction practices that restrict students from using multiple semiotic resources (including their home and community resources) have negative social *and* cognitive consequences for L2 learners. By contrast, the incorporation of the primary resources of minority students within the learning activities of a classroom will help mediate an individual's relationship to the sociocultural world (Ochs 1988) by connecting classroom literacy learning to multiple cultural practices and bodies of knowledge. High-quality literacy learning, according to Gutiérrez (2000), is possible only in *rich learning environments* in which a community of learners uses multiple mediating tools and utilises all the social, cultural, and linguistic resources of its participants. Heterogeneity of resources for literacy/*literacies* learning is then a necessary corrective to traditional models of collaborative classroom organisation.

From Vygotskian perspectives, if we are to create rich learning environments which give minority students more (or equal) opportunities for participation, then those environments must also be *supportive*. Consequently, a (re)design of pedagogic Firstspace requires, besides a pluralism of semiotic materials and texts, changes in the patterns of collaborative literacy learning as well. Classroom collaborative practices should be spaces where multiple voices are heard, rather than places where the single voice is privileged. A critical task of L2 literacy education is then to "engender a politics of articulation, a social space that gives voice to those who have been historically silenced and authorizes them to speak for themselves" (Mutnick 1996: 191). The first step for teachers in this direction is learning how to read students' own texts, narratives and the discourses in which they are embedded. To do this, a critical pedagogue needs a complex theoretical base (e.g. sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, postmodern and feminist theories, etc.) which enables him/her to view the practices of ethnic minorities as different from and equal to the dominant culture in their multiple formations (Kantopol 1999). Second, the organisation of non-coercive learning environments on the basis of critical and post-critical multiculturalism requires a close examination of the present situation in both educational settings and in broader social contexts. By drawing on critical analyses of larger social and cultural discourses, teachers can explicate hidden patterns within the collaborative practice of classroom learning. That is, critical theory and critical pedagogy are inextricably bound together in the organisation of a new cooperative and supportive learning environment; one that rejects any forms of ethnocentrism, hegemony and exclusion, and encourages multicultural rhetoric and transformative learning.

Teachers and students engaged in a re-design of the pedagogic Firstspace may need support to help them recognise the problematic nature of learning environment patterns, i.e., that learning environments are social constructs related to the broader social order

(Auerbach 1995). Monocentrism in society is also responsible for not learning and not participating in classroom practices. Therefore, a re-design of pedagogic Firstspace needs a shift from cultural fixity (Pennycook 2001) to cultural dynamics and social diversity, in order to create a heterocultural semiotic space for effective learning.

The locus of literacy learning practice within a heterocultural Firstspace of multiple material-semiotic resources forces the abandonment of culturally centric instruction and provides a rationale for collaborative learning based on multiple forms of knowledge and meaning-making resources (New London Group 2000). At the same time, this dramatic shift in the organisation of the pedagogic Firstspace suggests a need also to explore the forces that produce what the culture validates as knowledge (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997). Hence, a productive re-design of learning environments implies broader critical views of society as well as necessitating the cultivation of new ways of reading the world, both for mainstream and minority students (Kincheloe 1999). Such an understanding of contemporary society and making sense of self and the world will be different from culturally egocentric frameworks that are based on the values of either the mainstream *or* minority orthodoxies. Epistemological dominance and cultural hegemony in classrooms can be overcome only when any form of decontextualised and abstract knowledge is conceived as incomplete in itself and open to changes and transformations.

Indeed, a (re)design of pedagogic Firstspace - a social construction of rich and supportive environments for L2 literacy learning in the classrooms of difference - is inseparable from a (re)design of knowledge/meaning representations, i.e., of the pedagogic Secondspace.

### **7.2.2 The pedagogic Secondspace of literacy: Learning in the zone of proximal development.**

While the pedagogic Firstspace is concerned with issues of learning environments and their configurations, the pedagogic Secondspace is about the actual intellectual development of students. The Secondspace of the pedagogic is also tied to societal relations of production (Soja 1996) and, in particular, to the forms of social control over knowledge production and over semiotic means of knowing. Social design and representations of knowledge entail the 'place of logic' (Lefebvre 1991) - systems of meaning through which epistemological power flows in broader society as well as in locally-situated learning environments. The 'place of logic' or the intellectual Secondspace of literacy learning is nested therefore within the broader system of knowledge production and is tied to its discourses, texts, signs and images. They are both technologies of knowledge and meaning production and their representations. With regard to schooled literacy learning, technologies of knowledge and meaning production are synonymous

with how the intellectual space of classrooms is understood and managed through expert talk (scientific and teacher discourses), as well as through the ordinary discourse of students. The pedagogic Secondspace is the space of connotative meaning with respect to learning practices; it is a space of cognitive scaffolding, mapping and directions in a journey of becoming literate. What kind of cognitive scaffolds are constructed and what intellectual goals are aimed at being achieved with their help are a matter of how learning and literacy are imagined.

For instance, the traditional Secondspace of L2 learning is dominated by individualist and mentalist representations of cognition, enforcing images of learners as self-controlling, self-organising and information-processing machines. As Pennycook (2001: 144) comments:

[This representation of L2 learning] has contributed some useful insights into ways in which grammatical items are acquired, how a first language may affect a second language, or the relative roles of formal instruction and more natural acquisition, but it has had virtually nothing to say about learners as people, or contexts of learning, or the politics of language learning in general.

That is, mainstream representations of the Secondspace of L2 learning have been predominantly concerned with signifying, or mapping, the Other and Othering in language and literacy learning processes. Since such representations have emphasised the stereotypical, fixed, and essentialised cognitive parameters of the other, they have also left unexamined the production of mental space in pedagogic practices. The dominance of apolitical and asocial representations of the rational (and the irrational) only reinforces the duality between the social context and the mind. Hence, one thing should be made clear at this point: even though the pedagogic Secondspace is about human mentation and representations of knowledge, this should not be devoid of the social and the cultural, nor of power and difference issues.

Cultural-historical psychology provides just such a social perspective on the pedagogic Secondspace by embedding the mental in social practice and language. This perspective, born in a struggle against cognitivist reductionism, emphasises the social genesis of thinking, cognition and learning within systems of collaborative human practice (Engeström 1987; Vygotsky 1978). Learning is not a separate and independent activity but, rather, an integral aspect of active participation in social practice (Lave & Wenger 1991). Learning, treated in this way, implies that the pedagogic Secondspace is not entirely dependent on and limited to formal teaching, "construed as deliberate instruction according to a set of preformulated objectives" (Wells 2000: 56). The intellectual space of the pedagogic is also not entirely about the transmission of facts, the 'overcrowded curriculum'

and 'banking' accounts of knowledge (Gore 2001, Freire 1993). Rather, this is the space of social interaction concerned with setting high intellectual expectations for all students and their academic engagement; one that works through, and is driven by, conversation and socioculturally relevant classroom practice. It involves a collective exploring and enlarging of the sociocultural experiences of all students through dilemma-driven learning (Lave & Wenger 1991). In a word, a sociocultural view of the pedagogic Secondspace treats knowledge and knowing as socially constructed, experiential (i.e., connected to students' prior, real-life experience and understanding), problem-based and dialogical.

To understand the pedagogic Secondspace of L2 and literacy learning more fully means, then, to embed individuals' cognition within the social practice of learning. Vygotsky (1978) provides in this respect a useful pedagogic model which emphasises the role of the social other in learning-leading-development. According to this model, language and literacy learning is never a solo activity but assumes the presence of an expert or a more experienced and capable person who can assist newcomers within a collaborative mode of learning. This social role in educational settings is usually played by a teacher or more capable peers who provide helpful semiotic tools as the media for meaning-making. In this social model, the pedagogic Secondspace can be viewed as the ZPD - that is, both social and mental, interpersonal and intrapersonal (Vygotsky 1978). The social nature of the zone is due to its emergence within a socially mediated activity in which "children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky 1978: 88). The intellectual nature of the zone, as it was understood by Vygotsky (1978, 1987), lies in solving pedagogic tasks that will push students to perform 'above themselves'. These 'being ahead of yourself' activities occur only in those classroom events in which social learning leads intrapersonal development.

This model of the pedagogic zone, or Secondspace, implies a particular performance-oriented teaching practice. For instance, when the L2 learner is faced with the intellectually and linguistically challenging task of reading a text, the teacher mediates meaning-making by positioning herself between the reader and the text. She provides the L2 learner with support as they collectively build intercultural and interlinguistic bridges of understanding and competence through social interaction. During this process the teacher does not simply pass a textual meaning on to the L2 reader. Rather, she creates and uses cognitive scaffolds that are germane both to the learning context and to the world beyond the classroom. Scaffolding reading activity must be personalised in connection with the L2 learner's prior knowledge, understanding and sociocultural experience. At the same time, the text must be challenging enough to create *rich learning tasks* which can be performed first collectively and later independently (Luke 1999; Vygotsky 1978). By drawing on this principle of learning-leading-development, Fred Newmann and associates

(1996) have found that when socioculturally diverse students are encouraged to perform tasks that are both intellectually challenging and relevant to social life, their overall achievement and their understanding of important sociocultural issues expand. Hence, the pedagogic zone, or Secondspace, from a sociocultural perspective is concerned with intellectually challenging literacy tasks, in which *relevance* to social practices is crucial (Gore 2001).

Similarly, Vygotsky (1978: 117-118) argues that "teaching should be organized in such a way that reading and writing are necessary for something ... that writing should be meaningful ... that writing should be taught naturally .. and that the natural methods of teaching reading and writing involve appropriate operations on the child's environment". These considerations have influenced sociocultural approaches to literacy education, particularly in their focus on the content of mediating resources (representations of knowledge) which allow students to perform 'above themselves'. As Gal'perin (1989) observes, it is unfortunate that existing traditional methods and types of instruction often fail to provide students with a multiplicity of mediating resources for effective learning in classrooms. As a result, literacy learning is often reduced solely to the development of abstract cognitive skills (e.g. skills of prediction, information-sorting, inference-making, decoding and text structure strategies), rather than the development of practical reason and skills needed in social practices with print. In contrast, Vygotskian approaches focus on the importance of making connections between mediating resources and social practices. In fact, it is argued by sociocultural researchers that 'natural' literate and textual practices occur as an orchestration of many resources relevant to participation in social practices (Scribner & Cole 1981).

Sociocultural psychologists emphasise the importance of making intertextual and interdiscursive connections for the intellectual development of students. Wertsch (1998), for example, observes that in a curricular unit in history, in which students engage in some form of dialogical inquiry, a 'natural' way of learning, reading and writing as actions, and written texts as artefacts, are used in conjunction with other mediating resources and other genres and cultural practices. Therefore, it is essential within the pedagogic Secondspace of literacy learning to recognise that the intellectual growth of learners is not due simply to the acquisition of literacy as formal modes of thought and skills (Olson 1977), but rather to their engagement "with texts of all kinds in ways that exploit the symbolic representation of meaning as a means of empowering intrapersonal mental activity" (Chang-Wells & Wells 1993: 61). That is, a multiplicity of mediating resources and their intertextual, socially relevant connections constitute an inseparable part of the sociocultural model of literacy pedagogy - teaching for learning in the rich zones of intellectual development.

One issue that arises in the field of L2 literacy education is how to make a diversity of semiotic means and classroom polyphony productive. Gal'perin's scholarship can be helpful in this regard, as a starting point, in understanding how instructional resources can be reorganised to incorporate the heterogeneous cultural practices of students in a classroom learning activity. According to Gal'perin (1989), pedagogy should recognise that resources, while mediating learning and interaction within the zone, are always cultural artefacts and tools. It is the character and quality of those cultural tools that directly governs the particular features and quality of the intellectual activity of the learner. Cultural tools of different quality will also shape intellectual development differently. Gal'perin was the first Vygotskian scholar to single out and describe the major distinctive features of cultural resources with regard to instruction. Productive tools for learning-leading-development were categorised by Gal'perin according to their genesis and significance in cultural practices. To reorganise the pedagogic Secondspace as a space of sociocultural and cognitive pluralism, then, means moving from solely domesticating representations of cultural knowledge - hegemonic cultural resources, practices, social roles and relationships - and toward intellectually empowering tools that integrate multiple cultural resources, voices and ways with words. This shift from the monocultural to multicultural and pluralistic resources is needed for the intellectual development of learners pertinent to their participation in the multicultural and multiliterate life of contemporary society.

In this view, the task of the teacher is again to ensure that making sense in the literate and textual activities of the classroom is based on intertextuality and intercontextuality (Putney et al. 2000). This becomes critically important because intertextuality and interdiscursivity lie at the heart of any social interaction (Fairclough 1992, 2000), including dialogical learning in the classrooms. When students have an opportunity to dialogue their own and other cultural experiences, when sociocultural heteroglossia becomes an inseparable part of classroom activity, a new transitional, less rigidly structured Secondspace is created. Teaching/learning in this space draws both on larger and more transcendent texts and discourses as well as on locally situated forms of knowledges and textual practices (Luke & Gore 1992). Because of human diversity and the complex nature of interaction, the intertextual organisation of classroom learning is never simply a reproduction of knowledge. Rather, it is a space in which the 'sociocultural forum' works as a transformative, dynamic and productive force in learning. It helps teachers define what counts as valued knowledge in the classroom and provides students with a real possibility to critically construct, contest and transform meaning (Gutiérrez, Rymes & Larson 1995).

The dynamics of meaning-making in co-participation and dialogical learning depend on the construction of environments in which students are able to build upon the culturally-

shaped knowledge and value systems they bring to school. Vygotsky's analysis of everyday and scientific concepts provides a foundation for examining how students make links between these at school and what kinds of intellectual transformations may occur. By drawing on Vygotsky's recognition that everyday and scientific concepts are interdependent, Gal'perin and his co-workers have designed a reciprocal teaching strategy that is of psychological and educational interest, because it can be considered an example of effective teaching in the ZPD. Their main idea is that pedagogy often neglects the social situatedness of concept formation and therefore everyday concepts are not taken into consideration while teaching scientific concepts. Gal'perin and his colleagues have clarified the distinctive features of change and transformation in thinking, attitude and motivation, depending on whether emphasis is placed on the relational (everyday concepts) or the epistemological dimensions (scientific concepts). However, they have argued for building on conceptual tools relevant to the non-school environment in teaching scientific concepts in a systematic fashion. By using multiple resources for meaning-making and thus connecting 'life forms' with generalised conceptual knowledge, students come to appropriate a cognitive repertoire or a "tool kit of concepts and ideas and theories that permit one to get to higher ground mentally" (Bruner 1986: 73). Relations between situated and generalised concepts, according to Gal'perin, are not exclusive but reciprocal, leading to the qualitative social and intellectual outcomes of a learning activity.

Similarly, Ramirez and Wertsch (1997) observe how spontaneous and generalised concepts reciprocate in the collaborative, dialogical events of literacy learning. In their study, illiterate adults have blended their personal experiences (spontaneous concepts) with what is for them a new communication technology (literacy). This has led to the formation of abstract concepts which have "widened [their] cultural horizon" and helped them become more critically oriented in a broader context of social life (ibid.: 156). Consider an example from this study that illustrates this reciprocal conceptual development (i.e., from a particular concept to an abstract one and back to a particular but now modified concept).

#### *Types of discourse utterances*

#### *Conceptual development*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. My husband doesn't help me at home.                       | Utterances 1 and 2. The use of contextualised signs to express a particular (spontaneous) concept. |
| 2. My husband doesn't even help me to clear away the plates. |  |
| 3. The man should help with the housework.                   | Utterances 3 and 4. The signs are decontextualised to express a general (abstract) concept.        |
| 4. Men should share the household chores.                    |  |

5. Men should help with the housework. Although this is not my case. My husband doesn't help me at all. Utterances 5 and 6. Combination of both type of concepts (general and particular). Ascending from the abstract to the concrete.

6. The man should share the household chores with the woman. Although my husband doesn't help me with anything. He doesn't help to clear the plates away.

The development of concepts in this literacy learning event has occurred in the form of an expansive learning cycle; the initial everyday experience has been transformed into a complex concept and a new form of practice (Engeström 1999). As such, the formation of an abstract concept has been based on the fundamental feature, a Vygotskian germ cell, that captures an essential component within a family relationship between a husband and a wife: sharing and helping in household activities. At the same time, ascending from this abstract concept to the concrete one is a new (critical) form of reflection on particular family relations. Hence, we can say that effective literacy learning takes place within the zone which draws on the everyday cultural practices of students in developing their conscious awareness of scientific, abstract and critical concepts. It is important that a diversity of semiotic resources, in which effective cultural practices are embodied, is used as a social and intellectual resource for literacy learning in schools.

Vygotsky's and Gal'perin's view that students gradually come to understand abstract concepts by drawing on everyday cultural concepts has a number of implications for teaching second language and literacy in the ZPD. According to Luis Moll, whose sociocultural approach to literacy instruction has made him a strong advocate for minority and bilingual students, to uncover the secret of becoming literate means investigating and tapping into the 'hidden' home and community resources of minority students. He argues that to involve students as thoughtful learners in socially meaningful and relevant tasks, teachers should abandon standard, drill-based approaches with the minority and poor (Moll 1992, 2000; Moll & Dworin 1996). Instead, the concept of knowledge funds and concept networks can provide an additional basis for the innovative practices in L2 pedagogy that are already being established in many educational settings and contexts. Creating instructional practices that help teachers and students exceed the curriculum; stretching the limits of textual and literate activities; expanding knowledge beyond traditional lesson requirements; and building on multiple funds of knowledge and resources - all this, according to Moll, proves to be rewarding for bilingual and minority students (as well as their teachers). They achieve authentic literacy by taking full advantage of their first language mastery and of community resources for meaning-making. In this way, L2 learners surpass the limits set by their restricted knowledge of the second language. They



become active learners, using and applying literacy as a tool for communication and for thinking.

This perspective on teaching/learning in the pedagogic Secondspace - the rich zones of intellectual development - is radically different from traditional enculturative and assimilative interpretations. The pedagogic Secondspace can not be limited in educational settings to unproblematic assistance and often authoritarian visions of knowledge, language and literacy acquisition. But rather, as Moll (2000: 262) argues, this should be interpreted "more broadly, in terms of how human beings use social processes and cultural resources of all kinds in helping [students] to construct their future."

Teaching and learning literacy in the collective ZPD, then, means working with the *multiple* funds of knowledge which can afford productive learning, meaning-making and hence high quality intellectual and social outcomes needed for life in multicultural conditions. In terms of the sociocultural approach to teaching/learning in the ZPD, it is essential to create favourable conditions for the negotiation and renegotiation of meaning by students (Bruner 1990: 123). Such an engagement in critical meaning-making is essential to enable the learner to see how knowledge is assembled and to articulate new meanings. However, at the same time, the production of new meanings on the basis of diverse semiotic resources and funds of knowledge is not a "relativist picnic" (Bruner 1986: 158). Rather, this is a pedagogic technology of literacy education for remaking the Wor(l)d (Green 1997). It should foster practices of re-presenting and re-mediation, contributing to the development of responsible members within a 'community of inquiry' and a multicultural society at large (Wells 2000). These considerations lead us to Thirdspace - a space concerned with the 'recognition of difference' - within the critical pedagogic practice of literacy learning (Gore 2001).

### **7.2.3 The pedagogic Thirdspace of literacy: Recognising difference in classrooms**

The concept of Thirdspace has been used by many scholars in an attempt to overcome different forms of reductionism which usually begin with "the lure of binarism, the compacting of meaning into a closed either/or position between two terms, concepts, or elements" (Soja 1996: 60). Binarism is important, of course, for the recognition of the contradictory nature of social life (e.g. individual-social, centre-margin, self-other, native-foreign, local-global, etc.). But no less important is how we understand the interaction between those binaries. Thirdspace, in this regard, introduces a critical choice between the either/or option; it speaks and critiques through its 'Thirling-as-Othering' (Soja 1996).

Thirling, in the critical tradition, is understood not as an additive combination of opposites but, rather, as their deconstruction and reconstruction. It is through these strategies of cultural-political life that Thirdspace - a radical space of living 'in-between' - is open to additional otherness and new sociocultural identities. Stated differently, Thirdspace is a critical-political strategy of disrupting any totalising closure. At the same time, this is a productive space of real-life practices, in which their material-semiotic patterns (Firstspace) are transformed and the production of knowledge (Secondspace) is expanded through a new politics of difference and identity: the politics of living with and recognising difference. Thirdspace includes both First- and Secondspace, and transforms all spaces simultaneously. This transformative impetus emanates from its radical openness to otherness and an explicit political agenda of creating non-exclusory communities of difference.

The implications of 'Thirling' for literacy pedagogy of L2 students are important in the sense that this strategy gives us a possibility to explore a new location from which marginalised identities can articulate a sense of the world (hooks 1990). Conservative and liberal frameworks of literacy education have failed to recognise this Thirdspace because they operate within an essentialising binarism and hence with 'purified' and often racist concepts of learners' cultural identity. To overcome such a binarism and its blindness to the very process of cultural dynamics, Thirling is a useful political alternative (Papastergiadis 2000). It can be particularly helpful for understanding the dynamic re-combination of cultural identity coming from many points of re-construction and resistance to the traditional multicultural politics of convenient Othering. While traditional models of multiculturalism see the Self and the Other as fixed identities with a clear boundary, a Thirdspace model recognises the re-construction of identity, emanating from the actual processes of oscillation between binary positions, in intercultural communication, negotiation and contestation.

Identity re-construction proceeds through the meaning couplings of different ethnic, cultural and social-typological characteristics such as gender, age, traditional cultural identities, mental states, social roles, etc. (Lemke 1995). This process, according to Luke and Luke (1999), occurs both in situated practices of everyday life and in relation to the broader cultural politics of a state. It results in affirmations of blended (hybridised) and malleable identities. What one *is* and what one *is not* becomes an ambivalent point of the dialogue, in which the Other enters the inner world of the Self and in which their fixed opposition is adulterated (Hall 1991a). There is no natural or original identity born in some kind of vacuum. Any identity is a network of differences and is a result of permanent hybridisation and nomadism (Deleuze & Guattari 1986). Identity can not therefore be

conceived of as single or fixed or belonging to one person alone. It is always constituted in relation to the Other (cf. the Derridian concept of the 'constitutive outside').

Mouffe (1994) takes this point further to formulate a relational principle in the formation of new forms of collectivity. Given the important role of difference in the constitution of identity, Mouffe argues for rethinking the very principles of consensus. Where the traditional politics of multiculturalism build consensus and collective identity by excluding difference, a genuine form of multiculturalism presupposes a radical commitment to the politics of difference. A critical multiculturalism, as Mouffe (1994: 108) says, aims "to create an 'us' in a context of diversity and conflict". This collective activity rests on the need "to transform antagonism into agonism"; i.e., it requires a shift from antagonistic struggles and exclusion to agonistic struggles in the process of inclusion and identification (ibid.). Hence, the crucial question for multicultural communities is how to establish such a pluralistic democracy in which "the 'other' is no longer seen as an enemy to be destroyed, but as a 'counterpart' who could be in our place in the future" (ibid.). These two interdependent processes of identity re-construction - individual and collective - are central for grasping the dynamic flow of difference in a Thirdspace of agonistic struggles for a new public consensus and new models of sociocultural pedagogy.

For this reason, I would define the pedagogic Thirdspace as a space of literacy learning in which difference is respected, but at the same time as a movement, involving the re-construction and hybridisation of learners' identity which is generated in a community of difference. This perspective recognises that a classroom community of difference establishes a porous boundary and new sets of possibilities in meaning-making. Within such a space it is necessary to hold a number of differences together, to arrange them in multidirectional and fluid orders, and, most importantly, not to render the identity of one as the negative of the other. The main critical aim of a Thirdspace literacy pedagogy is then to *rupture* the prevailing cultural codes and discourses that have already determined the trajectory of multicultural classroom communities in terms of neutralising the Other, by means of either assimilation or, worse, abjection. At the same time, critical examination of the dominant cultural literacy involves not a total upheaval but, rather, a radical shift in emphasis to those aspects of the Self and the Other that have been essentialised, over-integrated and oversystematised (Hall 1991b).

In arguing against essentialised views of identity, meaning and knowledge, a Thirdspace pedagogy articulates literacy learning as an are(n)a of negotiation and representation of new expanded knowledge and identity. This model argues for a shift from the modes of neutralising difference in meaning-making to new modes of difference inclusion - the modes of pedagogic practice in which differences coexist and teaching does not rely

exclusively on shared knowledge or fixed meanings. A Thirdspace pedagogy aims to decentre the singularity of unexamined knowledge and to dismantle the skewed binarism in relation to the Other by "making sure that the perspectives brought to class are not those of just the dominant social group (often White, middle-class, and male) but that other perspectives are included and legitimated" (Gore 2001: 128). To recognise difference in classroom communities is to "ensure that students of all social backgrounds represented in classes are actively participating in the learning activities" (ibid.). Consequently, the pedagogic Thirdspace requires a number of strategies to promote the recognition of difference and productive literacy learning in multicultural classrooms.

Firstly, a Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy advocates a political strategy of 'reassembling' educational knowledge to bring about the active involvement of minority students in literacy learning. This activity is simultaneously critical and productive. Students are encouraged to examine constructions of knowledge and relations of power in textual representations. At the same time, a critical Thirdspace position dismisses the polarisation between a single centre of power that produces dominant meaning, and local disempowerment or a passive audience. In other words, a critical inquiry in textual representations is not about the unpacking of simplified dichotomies between a universalised oppressor and the oppressed, leading to the formulation of a counter-hegemonic recipe for action. Rather, the pedagogic Thirdspace presupposes multiple axes of knowledge and difference production, and hence a multisitedness of power and resistance.

In Foucauldian terms, power emanates from multiple epistemological locations and circulates through cultural spaces of meaning-making; it is both oppressive and enabling. In education, as in other socio-historical practices, power has a 'productive quality', filling classroom discourses and texts with authoritative perils of domination and subjection but also with possibilities for community, resistance, and emancipatory change (Popkewitz & Brennan 1998; Soja 1996). A Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy therefore places emphasis not so much on actors who exercise power (i.e., on sovereign power) but on the systems of knowledge which produce differential privileges in all domains of public life. Students' engagement in the critical reading of texts then should be connected to the context of the class, the lives of the students, and those systems of ideas that affect their identities, desires and dispositions.

A disordering of dominant knowledge is carried out with the aim of transforming social relations in multicultural classrooms. The development of a Thirdspace perspective in this process is crucial because, as Hall (1996) has argued, social transformation in the context of multiculturalism should not be mapped in terms of either an absolutist oppositionality

(where one position demolishes the other) or a neat succession (a stage-like change). Rather, a pedagogy of Thirdspace sees transformation as occurring in an interaction of rival ideas and meanings, leading to the more open-minded, more self-critical production of new meanings. The ways in which systems of meaning operate in a multicultural classroom can thus be productively reassessed only when diversity is recognised in anti-essentialist terms. The transformation of meaning starts from a particular location of identity, or a speaking position, but then moves to an anti-essentialist strategy of Thirding that makes translation across cultural differences possible. Because 'Thirding' for minority students is a life choice which ensures the survival of the marginalised and the disadvantaged, nurtures resistance, and provides openings for border-crossing, a Thirdspace literacy pedagogy encourages the recognition of diversity as a resource for constructing communities of difference that enrich both individual learners and the collective activity of literacy learning.

Secondly, to learn literacy in a classroom community of difference is to live, as Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989: 84) states, "fearlessly with and within difference(s)". This agenda raises not only the classical issue for teachers of being aware of multiple identities and 'voices' in classrooms, but, more importantly, it addresses the question of how to make diversity and difference productive. Kincheloe, Slattery and Steinberg (2000) argue, in this regard, for a model of empowering, postformal, critical and innovative pedagogy that values and includes all the knowledges and cultural practices of learners. A Thirdspace pedagogy, too, sees difference as a productive force in meaning-making. It stresses the importance of diverse mediational means for literacy learning in collective ZPDs (Gutiérrez 2000). A productive force of diversity emanates from this possibility of relational understandings of textual meanings. A classroom community of difference contains heterogeneous systems of knowledge funds and voices that allow for students' engagement in rich transactions with texts (Moll 1990, 2000). Hence, living with and within difference(s) provides more opportunities to know what meaning is made from (Smagorinsky 2001).

However, literacy learning within a community of difference is not free from conflicts and uncertainties. On the contrary, conflict and ambiguity are the driving force of learning in Thirdspace. Both Vygotsky (1962, 1987) and Leont'ev (1978) emphasise that the conflictual nature of a learning activity lies in the tension between representational societal meaning and personal sense (see also Wertsch 2000a, b). This tension plays a central role in a person's developing consciousness and her changing personhood (identity). Whereas societal meanings are produced historically and discursively to connect people with the reality of the cultural world, personal sense connects this reality with the inner world, i.e., with the cultural-historical experiences of a particular person in lived space. Thus, meaning captures more abstract social representations of the world and is incorporated into the

meaning systems of cultural activities. Sense captures personal and motivational aspects of an activity, but it can be expressed only through shared systems of meaning. In this contradictory process of meaning-making, "if the individual is forced ... to make a choice, then that choice is not between meanings but between colliding social positions that are expressed and recognised through these meanings" (Leont'ev 1978: 64). Conflicts between social positions and positionings in a classroom community of difference are the source of semiotic relativity and arbitrariness of meaning. But the tension between these can be unravelled partially and strategically in pragmatic negotiation (Laclau 1996) on both the interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (private) levels of decision- and meaning-making.

This conflictual characteristic of Thirdspace learning in the context of multicultural classroom community provides the foundation for an inquiry into the interaction of socioculturally diverse forms of thinking and doing in dialogical literacy events. Difference presupposes an increasingly dynamic view of meaning negotiation as a generative force stemming from various degrees of defining power, and divergent lines of knowing and signifying. When difference is not suppressed, then meaning negotiation becomes an *are(n)a* of rich learning, in which consciousness is formed "alongside other consciousness" (Bakhtin 1984: 32). The pedagogic Thirdspace provides a unique opportunity for productive learning and the cooperation of differences. Here difference can be united but *not merged* in a collective form of dialogical inquiry into textual representations. A Thirdspace dialogical inquiry triggers the active exchange of perspectives and worldviews in reading and composing, and contributes to the active engagement of students in a textual practice that "goes beyond the context of pedagogical structuring" and into the field of broader sociocultural practices (Lave & Wenger 1991: 49). Learning literacy through and with difference implies that, by drawing on other semiotic resources, practices and experiences within the ideocultures - local cultures - of the classroom (Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen 2000), representational meanings become increasingly negotiated and renegotiated to produce new intellectual and social outcomes.

Thirdly, this view of literacy learning in interaction and through the coexistence of diverse epistemologies and discourses requires a specific model of Thirdspace teaching. In this model a teacher's social role is to skilfully navigate and to coordinate alternative and competing discourses in the classroom in order to transform the conflict between differences into "the rich zones of collaboration and learning" (Gutiérrez & Stone 2000: 157). This task is difficult and challenging because it requires a recognition of Thirdspace - new hybrid meanings which arise from the 'sociology of consciousness' (Bakhtin 1984) and from the dialogical tension between contradictory discourses. One of the features of teaching literacy in Thirdspace lies precisely in the public deliberation of this tension by drawing on and analysing the conflicting discourses. However, discourse analysis should

not be limited to authoritative, albeit critical, one-way teaching (Gore 1993). The teacher, too, has to learn with and from students how to empathically and intrinsically accept difference, whether they are students in school classrooms or illiterate adults (Roberts 2000). This implies a 'bottom up' perspective on the critical empowerment of students (and teachers), in which everyone takes responsibility for understanding and for critically reflecting on his or her own actions, desires and perspectives that might be similar to and different from others (Kincheloe, Slattery & Steinberg 2000). Both learning and teaching literacy in Thirdspace, then, are linked to "learning to participate in a complex community of difference - that is, to members' increasing deliberateness or consciousness about words, textual worlds, and their consequences" (Dyson 2000: 129). All this requires a complex re-mediation of classroom practice (of its First- and Secondspace), in order to build up, collectively, a new 'bottom up' common sense for productive learning.

A Thirdspace common sense is constructed by drawing on the different and yet to some extent similar experiences of teachers and students in the world (e.g. experiences of marginalisation, suffering, oppression, and inequality on the multiple axes of identity construction). Similarities in difference can open up a self-grounding, albeit contingent, basis for collective meaning and transformative action. This process, however, is not simply an 'anything goes' approach; pedagogical authority even in non-authoritarian practices of learning is both unavoidable and politically necessary (Luke 1998). How to use this authority turns out to be a major pedagogical challenge, as it requires an actual transcending of the socially constructed borders and often blending of the teacher's and students' world views (Gutiérrez et al. 1995). Construction of a bottom-up common sense, then, can be better understood as a Bakhtinian concept of dialogicality, in which differences coexist. This fosters actions of re-presenting and disrupting taken-for-granted and universalised assumptions. At the same time, the dialogical approach to common sense recovers not only differences but also meeting points to collectively create democratic classroom relations in striving to remove severe inequalities.

In sum, the pedagogical Thirdspace is important for the construction of new forms of collaborative literacy learning, those that recognise difference and build on cultural and cognitive pluralism. The productive power of cultural-semiotic differences within a community of learners opens up an important aspect of literacy and language learning. This is concerned with the development of the ability to navigate multiple discourses and to use them strategically in meaning negotiation. Such literacy learning activity does not involve overwriting existing knowledges and identities with the language of dominant culture (New London Group 2000). Rather, it instantiates literate and textual practices that may transform social relationships within multicultural classroom communities and create possibilities for a social future. It is in this sense, I believe, that Engeström (1987: 174)

defines the concept of learning/teaching in the ZPD as "the distance between everyday actions of individuals and the historically new form of social activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in ... everyday action". This new form of social activity within a polyphonic classroom context involves a radical mutation that - while maintaining multiple references to rival knowledges and discourses (e.g. dominant and subjugated knowledges and discourses) - entirely transforms the logic of their articulation. This intentional disordering and reassembling of knowledges and identities is a first necessary step en route to understanding the literacy learning Thirdspace of minority students.

### 7.3 Conclusion

The concept of Thirdspace pedagogy is an attempt to articulate a framework for the literacy education of minority students which transcends the dualism implied in both conservative and liberal approaches to this issue. Thirdspace is a way out of such dualism (Bhabha 1994; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996, 2000). Critical of essentialist positions of identity and cultural literacy, it enables other positions and literacies to emerge. As a lived space, Thirdspace is a mode of articulation of new identities and meanings, blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture, identity and cultural literacy. Despite the exposure of Thirdspace to contradictions and ambiguities, it provides a spatial politics of difference that is inclusive rather than exclusive or assimilative. Thirdspace is not about a resolution of contradictions between differences but is itself a way of living and learning with difference(s) and ambivalence in systems of cultural representations and practices of representing. 'Thirling' is construed as a political strategy of signification where power relations are dialogically reinscribed. Demonstrating that thirling is not the negation of identity but its quotidian and inevitable condition, we need to acknowledge that a hybrid identity is not a mere summation of differences where eclectic symbolic elements cohabitate. Rather, hybridity is the dialogical re-inscription of various codes and discourses in a spatio-temporal zone of signification. As such, conceptualising Thirdspace, beyond buoyant models of resistance and inauspicious patterns of domination, entails "new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (Bhabha 1994: 1).

While being aware of criticism of such a framework for neglecting to adequately conceptualise material and historic conditions (e.g. Parry 1995; Mitchell 1997), I apply Soja's (1996) understanding of the trialectics of space. This appears to be a helpful approach in formulating a Thirdspace literacy pedagogy, consisting of three interrelated domains. The pedagogic Firstspace is the domain of the material, historic and semiotic organisation of literacy learning practices in classrooms. This is a dimension of critical



analysis with regard to learning environments in which students become (dis)engaged. Learning environments must be supportive of minority students' literacy learning. This needs additional efforts in the ongoing process of (re)designing classroom practices and, increasingly, in creating those learning environments that draw on multiple cultural-semiotic resources. The pedagogic Secondspace relates to the quality of intellectual work and depth of learning. In this dimension the focus is placed on collaborative learning in the ZPD. This process must be relevant to students' everyday cultural practices and their future trajectories in societal life. Secondspace is the space in which schooled literacy and situated literacy practices are syncretised to deal with the complexities and problematics of the construction of social and cultural knowledges in multicultural conditions. Finally, the pedagogic Thirdspace is concerned with the issues of difference recognition and productive learning through/with difference. It encompasses the previous two spaces or dimensions of pedagogic practice. Conceptualising contemporary classrooms as communities of difference encourages students and teachers to participate in a dialogical-transformative mode of literacy teaching/learning. It is important that, in this mode of critical and productive literacy learning, the voices of all students are heard. This emphasis aligns with social work directed at creating rich learning environments (Firstspace) for engagement in intellectually challenging learning tasks (Secondspace).

A Thirdspace literacy pedagogy operates with(in) a new politics of difference recognition that avoids polarity (Bhabha 1994). It is centred on the production of new expanded knowledges and meanings predicated within inclusive communities of difference at school and in broader society. Hence, the Thirdspace project in education proposes the development of learning contexts which reflect sociocultural diversity in all previously mentioned dimensions (spaces) of pedagogic practices. This work is needed to build up new knowledges and meanings, bridging the divide not only between the cultural mainstream and the marginalised but also between other axes of power relations. A pedagogical project of re-designing classroom practices must recognise and provide for the sociocultural dynamic of those relations. A Thirdspace literacy pedagogy provides an understanding of social re-design as emanating from alternative, ambivalent sites, where there is ongoing (re)vision, negotiation, and renewal of practices, norms, values and identities inspired and enunciated through the production of bi/multicultural meaning and representation.

One last point must be made clear: the pedagogical move from traditional literacy pedagogy towards a critical Thirdspace stance is not easy. It involves the subversion of authoritarianism into multiple uses and users of authority; rigid cultural hegemony into critical multiculturalism; traditional understandings of literacy and empowerment into critical literacy for empowerment; negative competition into positive, mutually enriching

collaboration. It is also not easy, because transformation of the traditional practices of language and literacy learning is a political act. The choice and decision of how and where transformations should be made are constrained by the tension between the multifarious power centres embodied in teachers' and students' actions. The desire for change is in tension with the pressure for conformity to unequal relations of race, class and gender. Hence, challenging representations and practices that "name, marginalise, and define difference as the devalued Other" (Giroux 1988: 174) requires the (re)learning and externalisation of what has been previously internalised (Vygotsky 1978). In this regard, the concept of Thirdspace pedagogy can play a modest role in a broader attempt to subvert oppressive practices in ESL education. It endeavours to construct a new vision of literacy learning as the development of intercultural competence (Lo Bianco 1999), in classroom practices that utilise different perspectives and experiences. As a pedagogy of cultural and critical empowerment, it sees learning as a transformative practice in which meaning is rearticulated dialogically. The opportunity to jointly experience diversity through a genuine dialogicality of unmerged voices leads to Thirdspace, something that goes well beyond antagonistic binarisms of the dominant and the subjugated.