

Social Practices in Family: Build Children's Enaction and Agency

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Abstract— This study reveals the social practices in an Indonesian family who has lived in three countries - Indonesia, Australia and The United States. Three languages are spoken inside and outside the family circles. They are Indonesian Language or Bahasa Indonesia, English and Javanese (one of the local languages in Java Island). The purpose of this research is to investigate and describe how the social practice is structured in the family and how the social space with its own rule raises the children's agency and enaction within the family's social practices. The research findings show that the social practices which provide space for children promote children's agency to express their thoughts and bridge their curiosity, inquiry and meaning making.

Keywords:- Literacy, Agency, and Social Practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

In social practices, people involve in and use multiple literacies in diverse contexts. The social and cultural contexts where people interact or socialize have domains which situate them to use the literacy. The diverse contexts then cause the transcontextual, transferring of reading and writing, knowledge, sense of self, and expectation between contexts, to happen which then influence the formation or co-constructing of identity. People's identities of seeing other people (interpersonal) and seeing themselves (intrapersonal) as the influences of mutual interactions and diverse literacy contexts become dynamic and keep evolving which also impact on the language they use.

Through languages, orally or written form, people can understand, analyze and view individual, groups, community or people's repertoires, what message, behavior, practices or cultural norms, and even sometimes the mental activities they are trying to convey. Similarly, through multicultural approaches, we can understand why people perform their languages in particular or unique ways. Cultural tools or artifacts can tell people's identity, like persons who bring novels to anywhere they go can be assumed as literate. Therefore, Whittaker (2008: 29) states that along with the tools, people are created with the imagination beyond our immediate context, and capacity to mediate the tools "to hold the world in "sign".

Understanding tools and signs function as a baseline to understand how people structure, add to, extend or alter their repertoires. People view the tools and reach the meaning of

signs, manipulate or mediate the signs and tools through social interactions with others, within themselves (through mental activity) or switch from the past, present and future because they are endowed with language and perception, attention, imagination and capacity to manipulate and mediate the tools and signs. Vygotsky (1967: 54) believed that "both tool and sign use are mutually linked and yet separate in the child's cultural development, rests on the mediating function that characterizes each of them and the use of signs to the category of mediated activity, for the essence of sign use consists in man's affecting behavior through signs."

Like adults, children also experience multiple literacies in diverse context. It cannot be denied that their multiple literacies involve imagination and plays. As imagination, creativities, social interactions and plays are part of children's life, children as the agents need to have their own space, time, and resources to experience multiliteracies practices in authentic goals with love, respect, warmth and openness as the foundations to provide them chances to move and create or make things, express their thinking, and bridge their deep understanding of literacy, practices, language, and their perspectives towards their own and other communities inside and outside their circles. As learning is a transformation, children need to experience enactment and constructions of multicultures, transculturalism or transculturation, to build their strong identities and agency. Strategies to enhance children's learning need to be viewed and explored from children's lens. Adults need to understand children by addressing and attending children's actions, movements, speech or literacy and interests and discuss in depth children's modalities and creativities from children's views.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literacy as a set of social practices within different domains of life patterned by social institutions and power relationship are inferred from events, thus historically situated with some are visible and influential than others, as well as mediated by written texts and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices. Meanwhile multiliteracies can be defined as "an expansive view of literacy that includes the use and appropriation of different languages, technologies, and modes of communication and exchange, particularly given changing demographics within rural communities and advancements in technologies" (Morita-Mullaney, Li & Ren, 2019: 35).

Nowadays, the term multiliteracies inevitably becomes part of social practices, which aims as Orellana (2016: 131) emphasizes, to “give every one chance and pay attention on what children and adults want to achieve, like safe, responsible, respectful, understanding, friendly, supportive and kind.” From this, teachers, schools, adults as well as family should design strategies to provide multiliteracies in the classroom settings or outside the school hours (family setting) to match, fit and accelerate the children’s learning and explorations which then equip them with the skills that are demanded by the world. Comprehending multiliteracies in diverse social practices benefits children and family in building strong connectivity and understanding one’s perspectives, behaviors and thoughts that give paths for children and family to understand the reasons behind one’s current and future behaviors.

Social practices which are influenced by historical, social and cultural contexts (Rogoff, 2003 as cited in Guiterez & Rogoff, 2003, p.21; Rogoff, 2003, p. 51) where people interact or socialize have different domains and situate people how to use literacy practices and their repertoires. Children’s involvement in diverse social practices and contexts, including in emergent bilingual, becomes their modality that they bring to schools and homes and other diverse environments. These practices as emphasized by Comber (Comber in Dyson et al., 2016, p. 127) promote children to exercise “agency in using the completion of task as an occasion for experimenting with and developing social relations”. Social practices in diverse contexts and across cultures foster transcultural dispositions (Orellana, 2014, p. 91). The concepts that children learn and modify from the multiliteracies they attend can give them a path of what to do not or not to do when they get involved in social practices. This informs how the interactions and socialization in social practices promote the actors to learn values, norms, attitude, etc. from other persons which then engender or stimulate them to internalize which work best for them after they filter those norms or values.

Rogoff (2003, p. 51) states that culture is not an entity that influences individuals, but people contribute to the creation of cultural processes and vice versa, the diverse contexts where people and cultures are mutually constituted engender the transcontextual (Bartlett, 2007, p. 53; Orellana, 2014, p. 81) to happen which then transform the formation or co-constructing of identity. Consequently, people’s identities of seeing other people (interpersonal) and seeing themselves (intrapersonal) are the influences of and influence mutual interactions in diverse literacy contexts (Bartlett, 2007, p. 54). These practices function as mediational tools for children to understand the world, other people and themselves through interactions within diverse social practices which then advocate them to experience meaningful experiences and meaning making through “enaction, recognition and configuration” (Gee in Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000, p. 191).

In bilingual setting, as emphasized by Rogoff (2003, p. 51) and Orellana (2014, p. 91), social practices across nations or different countries will bring transculturation which

promote openness and enaction within individual’s social practices. Furthermore, the speakers bring their cultural tools or artifacts in their social practices, as Vygotsky’s notion of semiotic mediation in literacy enable the speakers to mediate “subjectivity and agency” (Moll, 2014, p. 31), as well as relational agency (Edward, 2005, as cited in Moll, 2014, p. 84). However, different literacies in different domains of life also have their own rules, either structured or unstructured, have explicit norms or agreed and shared ways, whilst others are normed by the social conventions and attitudes (Moll, 2014, p. 11 & 12). Furthermore, as Orellana (2014) emphasizes that “analyzing kids’ everyday life experiences, in the stories their families share and in the love that give their lives meaning is important” (p. 74), giving spaces for children to enact and expand their multiliteracies. These then build children’s confidence and increase their literacy and multiliteracies’ learning opportunities.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted through observation on the social practice in a post graduate student’s family. The observation took place in a student’ housing area of a university in the Midwestern United States. The family, The Harto (pseudonym) is from Indonesia, and belongs to Javanese, an ethnic group native to the Indonesian island of Java. The Harto has three children: the oldest, Linda (pseudonym) and the second one, Susan (pseudonym) were the 9th and 8th graders of secondary school and the youngest, Katy (pseudonym) was the 1st grader of elementary school.

Multilingualism is one of this family features. They speak English, Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian’s national language) and two types of Javanese language (a local language in Central and East Java Island in Indonesia). In this observation, the author became an outsider. The interaction and conversation were observed when the family was having dinner together at their home.

IV. FINDINGS

The conversation on the dining table began with the father led the prayer in English, according to Catholic way, before the family started their dinner. They talked about food first. When they were about to eat the food, the father played jokes. Here the joke functions as the mediating tool that gives children a warmth and joyful moment. These moments are critical because when everyone is ready to have dinner, they are sharing their stories without hesitance. Then the second daughter talked about her experiences with snow on the day before when she was trying to cross the snow. Everybody laughed.

In this social practice, again, voluntary actions happened as the children shared their stories without hesitance. The children became the critical design agency and had more power to bring the topics in the dining time, like when Susan talked about the impacts of watching too much TV on children in responding and criticizing her youngest sister habit, or when they shared their own or friend’s stories. Susan represented an enactive when she brought the idea of the

impacts of too much watching TV on children. Consequently, the father told the youngest daughter to listen and concern the idea brought by Susan. This obviously shows how the dinner time, having dinner together and food function as mediating tools for the family to initiate and construct the conversation ideas.

To stimulate the children to share their stories, the father only addressed the first stimuli, asking a question, “What did you do today?” The parents listened to the children attentively, and it gave the children more spaces to create their spontaneous responses to the topics they were talking about.

As emphasized by Rogoff (2003, p. 51) and Orellana (2014, p. 91), and experienced by Mr. dan Mrs. Harto, who have lived across diverse literacies and cultures in Indonesia, Australia and the U.S, the social rules they have been through reinforce this family into the transculturation which then encourage openness and enaction within their children’s social practices. Mr. and Mrs. Harto’s repertoires and habitus influenced how they interacted with and see their children, and structured ‘rooms and space’ or ownership for their children, thus encouraging their children to tell what they were willing to share to all family members in dinner time. Whereas in Javanese culture, an ethnic in Indonesia where the Harto’s family belongs to, the power to act and select the focus of speech or talks enact from parents or older people. Furthermore, the language distinct styles or registers used by the speakers in Javanese culture depend on the social context, like the relationship among the speakers, ages, and social status. An acceptance of the repertoires of their children who broke the norms of Javanese culture like having laughter at dinner table, or interrupting while other speaking, or children domination the conversation and parents as the listeners, which are strictly forbidden in Javanese culture, became habitus in The Harto’s family and were accepted.

Furthermore, the topics in their conversation were peripheral and situated, moving from one child’s topic to another, like from what the family had done, what they would do when flying to Indonesia, about the assignment that the child got from school, their friend’s stories and etc. The vertical dimension also represented movement in time between the past, the present and the future. For instance, after the children talked about what she did when she did not go to school, then the family talked about what they were going to do on the plane when going back to their home country, Indonesia, in the coming May.

The father responded, “... We are going home in the middle of the May, so we can still make it if you want to.”
 “Ha... really, but ...” the youngest daughter, said Katy.
 “Why?” said the oldest daughter, Linda.
 “I don’t know,” said Katty. “After I wake up ... I just stay up in the plane!”
 “What...” said Susan, looking at Katy, “Are you having like, are you invite a school ...”. “
 “No! In the plane when we leave,” said Katy.
 “You can sleep, Dude!” said the father.
 “I won’t,” said Katy. “You have to!” answered Linda.

Katy was trying to say something, but Linda interrupted, saying, “Seven hours, what will you? You sit down”
 The father added, “Eat, sleep, eat, sleep, watching movies.”
 Linda then continued, “I’ll sleep. Susan will sleep. Dad sleep. Mom definitely can sleep.”

The mother added, “We sleep, all the day, and you are crying.”

Linda pretended crying so everyone laughed and Katy did, too.

“I must be the last one who sleep,” said Katy.

The mother said “You don’t want to ...”, and Katy interrupted, “Mommy, I think daddy who will the first one who sleep,” while pointing at his dad.

The author also found that in this family’s social practices, storytelling and drama became their habitus. It is obvious when the children acted out the play without feeling shy or burdened, like when Linda was telling ‘the candy war’, - the fighting between one of her friends with her brother- she pretended to be Jane and Erick.

Linda said to her father, “Dad, you know how so lazy Erick is, right? Then one time Jane wanted to eat and she found a candy.”

Linda then pretended to be Jane, “Hi, Erick, I want to eat it. Is it okay?”

Then Linda pretended to be Erick, “No, I was leaving it for Mom.”

Then Linda pretended to be Jane and said, “No, I work so hard for the house. You don’t know how I do this. I deserve it. I deserve this!”

She then pretended to be Erick and said, “No, I leave it for mom! You find something!”

After that Linda became herself. “Then they were wrestling. They were pulling under the candy. She did not know how long it was. And Erick finally gave up for the candy.”

Then Linda pretended to be Erick again and said, “You know what, here is the candy.”

Next, Linda became herself, “And there was no candy anymore. It was like a crumple of chocolate. And Erick was just happy. He called that as a candy war.”

Listening to Linda’s story, interestingly, the parents did not do intervention to what happened in the stories, like judging whether that was good or bad; however, the father brought the ideas behind the shared stories to the children to think and concern about. When Linda talked about her friend who fought with her brother because of a candy, in responding to this, the father then asked how the youngest daughter treated her sisters, without judging the mediating tools in the story, Jane and Erick.

“Did you do the same thing to your sisters?” The father asked Katy.

“Yes,” said Susan, “Katy ate five meatballs!”

The mother said, “Only meatballs?”

“Aha!” said Susan.

“I ate a lot of noodle!” replied Kathy.

“Very?” said Susan and Linda together. “Ha...ha....”

Drama also mediates the meaning making, like when Linda pretended to be her youngest sister, Katy, who was crying on the plane when they were going back to Indonesia a few month later. The family as the audience, accepted the drama as a mediating tool in their interaction and conversation as everyone listened to Linda and no one stopped or interrupted Linda when she was acting out as Emilia, Erick or Kathy.

The next cultural tool or artifact this family uses is when Linda shared to her family about the negative impacts of watching TV on kids’ brain development based on the information she read on the Internet. While listening to Linda’s explanation, through his facial expression and gestures, Mr. Harto encouraged Linda to talk the text so that their youngest daughter who liked to watch TV would reduce her watching habit.

“Okay, so I have to write an essay about television violence. And I searched on it, it said that the child, *e..e*, the child if, who, what is it, who watches tv, they often have like, what is it, they can have like, brain damage development, or something like that,” said Susan.

While Susan was talking, the father pointed his finger on the top of Katy’s head, while looking at Susan. Katy did not know that his father was pointing at her.

“See, listen!” said the father while looking at Katy. “Katy plays a lot of Minecraft, which involve a lot of violence there.” The father said, “Hmm!”, looking again at Katy. Susan then added, “and it said it’s not good because...”. Then Linda interrupted, “It can impact your personality. You know ...”

Furthermore, Moll (2014, p. 11 & 12) stated that different literacies in different domains of life provide explicit norms or agreed and shared ways, whilst others are normed by the social conventions and attitudes. In all the observed social practices, when each of the three girls attended to other speaker’s speech while expressing warm expression and attentively looking at the interlocutor’s face, it is clearly seen then that every speaker, whatever their ages or sociocultural backgrounds, had understood the boundaries and the divisions of labour in the social practices. This also implied that the subjects in this social practice had important and equal roles and contribute to the talks.

Furthermore, the events that they encountered or they had seen or observed gave them a learning space about the rules and norms that were needed to be undertaken, like after Linda had told the ‘candy war’, then the father talked to Katy.

“Did you do the same thing to your sisters?” The father asked Katy.

“Yes,” said Susan, “Katy ate five meatballs!”

The mother said, “Only meatballs?”

“Aha!” said Susan.

“I ate a lot of noodle!” replied Katy.

“Very?” said Susan and Linda together. “Ha...ha....”

Then Katy screamed, “Ya...y! I ate noodle! I did!” She pretended to be angry then not long after that, she smiled.

This part of conversation informs how the interactions and socialization in social practices promote the actors to learn values, norms, attitude, etc. from other personals which then stimulate them to internalize which work best for them after they filter those norms or values. Another example is when Linda was telling a story about Jane and Erick.

“You know Jane and Erick had a fight for a candy, sneakers, for sneakers. You see Jane like ... Erick is always so lazy, like having done his eating, he just leaves and goes out to play his tablet. And Jane has already washed up the dishes and said ‘Erick! Put it back.’ And Erick said, ‘No, it’s your job!’”

Here Linda gave her thoughts that what Erick has done, but like her father, she did not give her judgmental point. In addition to no judgmental evaluation on mediating tool, it was also obvious that the interaction or conversation had rules that everyone in the family had to obey, like giving chances to other to finish or share their stories, listening attentively when someone was talking.

Susan suddenly said, “It is the time for me to talk.”

The father responded. “Yeah, talk.”

In addition, negotiations either through verbal and nonverbal tools become parts of the social practices whether the boundaries are understood or not understood or unclear, like when the older and second older daughters of the Harto’s family accidentally talked at the same time. Through their verbal language and gestures, these two girls allowed each other to continue, finish or deliver their speech first.

Susan then added, “and it said it’s not good because...”.

Then Linda interrupted, “It can impact your personality. You know...”

And at the same time Susan said, “And also ...”

Then two girls looked at each other, and laughed.

“Then your turn,” said Linda.

“Wait,” said Susan

The negotiation also exists when Linda was about to answer, but Susan suddenly interrupted, “We talked, I have to write ...”

Susan stopped talking because Katy said, “I wait ...”

Then silence. Both the girls seemed to give each other a chance to finish their talking.

Orellana (2014) emphasizes ‘analyzing kids’ everyday life experiences, in the stories their families share and in the love that give their lives meaning is important’ (p. 74). Mr.

Harto and his wife gave a space for children to share their stories or talks. The dinner time was structured by Harto's family as a mediational tool to share the family members' experiences in their days, thus promoted the children to voluntary action as the following.

Then Susan said, "I have to write ..."

Katy at the same time said, "I ..."

Silence again. Both the girls kept silent.

Then Katy continued her talking, "I have bad news. You, too hooray. Because once we leave, Mike will have a field trip." (Mike is one of the children's name who lived near their neighborhood).

When voluntary actions happen, like when The Harto's family shared their stories without hesitance or any judgement, children will become critical design agency and have more power and courage to bring and give their thoughts about the topics they interest to discuss. Even though sometimes the practitioners in the community practices have equal power, in this social practice, it is obvious that the social cultural practice provided more space, authority and ownership for the children to enact and determine their talks or speech.

The concepts of spontaneous and scientific concepts (Vygotsky, 1987, 1934/1994, as cited in Moll, 2014, p. 34 & 35) which according to Vygotsky, are reciprocal, the social practices in the primary discourse which usually discuss every day concept often involve spontaneous and scientific concepts and conceptual fabric as the continuities of the secondary discourse. This happened when one of The Harto's family brought the idea of the negative impacts of watching too much in their dinner time as she was assigned by her teacher to write an essay based on the information she read on the Internet. Often then the primary discourse becomes invisible mediations because it is "less direct and embedded in sociocultural activities" (Moll, 2014, p. 35), such as through his facial expression and gestures, Mr. Harto encouraged her second daughter to share the negative impacts of watching TV that she had learned.

Multiliteracies also becomes one of the elements of the family's social practices which aims as Orellana (2016: 131) emphasizes, to "give every one chance and pay attention on what children and adults want to achieve, like safe, responsible, respectful, understanding, friendly, supportive and kind." This happened when Susan suddenly screamed and every one was looking at her. She accidentally bit her lower lip so that it was bleeding.

"What's wrong?" said Katy loudly.

Susan was crying.

"What's wrong, Sweetie?" said Katy again.

"Bleeding!" cried Susan. The mother gave her a paper tissue.

The father said, "*Hati-hati!*", meaning "Be careful!" Then the father continued, "*Huh! Sampe anu!*" meaning, "Oh my gosh, how can it so be like that!", referring not in good condition.

Then the mother spoke Bahasa Indonesia, "*Kenapa kamu selalu teriak-teriak setiap mau berbicara!*" In English it means "Why do you like to shout every time you want to speak!" said the mother, "Shouting like that!" The mother did not agree when Susan was screaming. She advised Susan to talk politely.

In social practices, when adults address and attend the kids' actions, movements, speech or literacy, interests, modalities and creativities from the children's views, or judging from the kids' lens, like when Mr. Harto and his wife created spaces for their children to share their experiences without interfering, these moments can enhance the children's learning. In fact, Mr. Harto and his wife gave their children 'ownership' by creating space for their children as the agent of the social practices in the authentic goals with love, respect, warmth and openness. Therefore, these function as the foundations for equipping the children with chances to advance, create or make things, express their thinking, and bridge their deep understanding of literacy, practices, language, and their perspectives towards their own and other communities. As learning is a transformation, it was obvious Mr. Harto and his wife supported their children to experience enactment and constructions of multiculturalism, transculturalism or tansculturation, to build their strong identities and agency.

V. CONCLUSION

The social practices which provide space for children to take an agency promote the importance of creating space for children to enact and react to what they have experienced from the literacy events. Furthermore, since the talks in the social practices happened between adults and children, the outcome of the social practices give more powerful impacts on children's thinking and literacy development as children, like the daughters' of Harto's family become the central speakers who selected the topics of the speech and the navigations of the talks in their primary discourse, meanwhile adults play roles as the audience who listen to the children's questions or structure the discourse to stimulate their children to express their thoughts and bridge their curiosity, inquiry and meaning making.

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