

Grade 5 EFL Learners' Critical Design of Multimodal Texts: The Problematic of Smooth Transitioning between Mainstream Literacy and Critical Literacy Instruction

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Abstract

This case study examined how an EFL grade 5 teacher enabled her learners in a public school in Mount Lebanon to read with and against the text. Using a critical literacy model as the analysis tool, the authors interpreted how instruction designed in accordance with Ibrahim's (2022) CALT model may help learners transition smoothly among accessing texts, deconstructing texts and reconstructing them in more equitable ways. To this end, the authors analyzed the design of a CALT lesson around a text titled "At the Supermarket". They also examined the factors that may affect the learners' imagining of more equitable trade through an advertisement they designed at the end of the lesson. The Lesson and the 8 advertisements designed by four girls and four boys, which constituted the data in this report, were taken from a larger, one-year study in which the teacher implemented critical literacy in a grade 5 class. In the present report, our goal was to explore whether the interconnectedness among the different reading modes or families of practices may be pedagogically realized through CALT and whether the CALT-based lesson around a text titled "At the Supermarket" may enable young learners to smoothly navigate among decoding and understanding texts, deconstructing these texts and reconstructing them critically. The analysis revealed that the eight students brought their creativity and their language resources to design their ads, but only a few constructed the supermarket as a place for fair trade, as demonstrated by the following groupings of the learners' work: Alternative representation ads, reproduction of the neoliberal marketing ads, and reproduction of the school genre ads. The data indicated that the learners' enactment of the design/re-design task may be affected by the interaction of the different facets of their en-

gagement, by the type of texts and experiences they have built on, and by their desires.

Keywords

Critical Designs of Multimodal Texts, The Problematic of Smooth Transitioning among the Four Reading Resources, Inclusivity and Flexibility of a Critical Literacy Model (CALT), Elementary Learners' Critical Design of an Advertisement

1. Introduction

The various orientations to critical literacy are grounded in the social nature of literate practices (Abednia & Crooks, 2019; Ibrahim, 2022; Luke, 2025). The ultimate goal of such approaches is "...to work towards social justice, whether that be taking on oppressive social structures or, what is more likely on a daily basis, working in small ways to make changes in local contexts that may lead to broader action" (Jones, 2013: p. 200). This implies, among other things, positioning learners as powerful agents capable of challenging the authority of the texts they read at school and elsewhere by deconstructing and reconstructing their contents and their underlying messages that normalize every dimension of our life conditions (Comber, 2015; Ibrahim, 2022; Luke, 2025; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019). However, if the adopted critical literacy models do not provide tools for a systematic balance between developing the mainstream literacy skills learners need to understand texts on one hand and their critical dispositions required for questioning these texts on the other, teachers will experience "great tension between supporting early, even more advanced, readers with texts they could negotiate with some fluency while wanting them to develop families of practices for questioning and challenging (these) texts..." as Jones (2013: p. 219) observed in a four-year ethnographic study. Jones, who employed the four resources model (Freebody & Luke, 1990, Luke & Freebody, 1999; Luke, 2018), articulates this problem as follows:

As a critically focused literacy teacher-researcher, to begin this re-positioning process that centrally engages issues of identity and power, I made a strategic pedagogical decision that called into question the sufficiency of the Four Resources Model in considering reading instruction. The Four Resources Model offers practitioners and theorists a strong conceptual framework for the reading practices necessary in today's society, but it does not take into consideration issues of identity, power and any sense of entitlement felt by readers (particularly traditionally marginalized readers) to position themselves as potential text analysts before they can begin challenging and questioning mainstream texts that consistently position their working-class lives as non-existent. (p. 197)

We concur with Jones, and we further add that while accounting for most reading practices learners need, the four resources model, like some other ones, describes each family of practices separately. By so doing, it does not provide teachers tools to move students from one family to the other in a smooth manner. We claim that such provisions are crucial to facilitate teachers' work to engage learners, both young and old, in critical reading and writing. In this article, we explore how this may happen by using Ibrahim's (2022) CALT model, which is hypothesized to assist teachers in designing instruction that addresses the learners' language needs, their mainstream literacy skills, and their critical dispositions smoothly (Ibrahim, 2022). In our inquiry reported in the present article, we ask:

- Did a grade 5 teacher enable her EFL learners, through a lesson designed based on CALT, to understand a text about shopping and to critique it, i.e., read with and against the text in the words of Janks (2014), navigating the different families of literacy practices smoothly?
- Did the design/redesign task, implemented at the end of the CALT-based lesson about shopping, realize its goal of empowering grade 5 students to imagine more equitable trade?

2. Theoretical Framing of the Study

The importance of critical literacy has been eloquently discussed by some scholars (e.g., Comber, 2015; Ibrahim, 2022; Luke, 2012, 2025; Shor, 2009; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019). Two groups of meaning are associated with the term "critical": "Critical thinking" and "critical literacy". Critical thinking refers to a rationalistic, so-called "objective" reasoning about texts, discourses, and problems, and usually aims at helping learners attain a detailed comprehension of the discursive claims, messages, etc. And to sharpen their individual problem-solving skills; however, critical literacy education, which we embrace, intends to help students, through different literacy practices, not only to become competent literate individuals, but also to employ their competencies in order to understand and transform the social order which governs our lives; this takes place through immersing learners in problematizing the normalized socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures and practices, in reading the word and the world, in examining whether or not the dominant discourses serve the common good at a global scale, and if not, the reasons for the unjust discursive practices, in exploring whether or not our material conditions are equitable, and if not, what makes them so, and in imagining the world differently in ways that make equity, peace, cooperation, and working for the common good prevail everywhere (Abednia & Crooks, 2019; Comber, 2015; Freire, 1972, 2001; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Ibrahim, 2015a, 2015b, 2017, 2022; Ibrahim & Fadlallah, 2024; Jones, 2013; Luke, 2025; Norton & Morgan, 2012; Shor, 2009; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019). Few instructional models have been advanced to realize these rather abstract, theoretical goals, including Green's (1988) 3D model, Ibrahim's (2022) CALT model, Jank's (2010) interdependent model, and four resources model of Freebody and Luke (1990); Luke and Freebody (1999).

An overarching theme of (critical literacy) practices is "...the construction of subjects who are able to feel entitled to position themselves to engage in deconstructive and reconstructive practices, something that connects directly to issues of identity and power" (Jones, 2013: p. 200). However, because texts enjoy a long-held normalcy, they position the ideal reader as the one who accepts what is on offer (Janks, 2018; Jones, 2013; Luke, 2025; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019). Language textbooks in particular offer narratives that, among other normalized ideas and behaviors, depict the values of capitalism as taken for granted, which makes it hard for readers, both younger and older, to question these narratives and to reimagine them differently (Ibrahim, 2017, 2022). We argue that these difficulties may be successfully handled through planned and gradual work, framed in a model facilitative of the learners' navigation among accessing texts, i.e., developing the decoding, semantic, and syntactic abilities needed for reading fluency; meaning making; critical analysis; and designing/redesigning texts.

The notion of "design/redesign" (Luke, 2012, 2025; New London Group, 1996) has been adopted by Janks (2019) in her four-dimensional model: Access, power, design and redesign. Vasquez, Janks, and Comber (2019) argue that the processes of design and redesign constitute acts of transformation. In designing texts, we "choose what meanings to make and by doing so we act on the world" (Janks, 2014: p.8). Vasquez, Janks, and Comber (2019) argue that this process of design facilitates the learners' act of redesign, while we agree with this argument, we claim that this interconnection between design and redesign does not suffice for a smooth engagement in the complex, nonlinear acts of learning how to read, how to make meaning from the texts we read, how to critique these texts, and how to consider more just and inclusive textual practices. We postulate that language learners, both younger and older, need an instructional framework that enables them to smoothly move back and forth among these modes of engaging texts and allows them to simultaneously enact two or more of these roles. We further stipulate that Ibrahim's (2022) CALT model represents one of these frameworks.

The CALT model consists of five nonlinear phases, including access, meaning construction, direct instruction, problematization/critical exploration, and alternative possibilities and representation. Thus, the model incorporates all literacy practices, not only of reading, but also of writing, speaking, listening and viewing. It actually may be used to shape education at all levels, starting from the smallest instructional unit, i.e., the lesson to the broader curricular and policy levels (Ibrahim, 2022). The principles of CALT, particularly its nonlinearity and its specification of how to address the various goals of mainstream literacy and critical literacy systematically at all levels, establish coherent links among its different phases. This allows for the smooth transitioning among what Freebody and Luke (1990) and Luke and Freebody (1999) describe as "four reading resources".

CALT explained and illustrated

In an article submitted for publication, Ibrahim and Fadlallah provide an illustrative lesson to show how CALT moves learners among its different phases

smoothly. We present the lesson below, and we explain how it realizes this transitioning, providing support from other lessons.

“Jackie’s Gold”: A CALT-based lesson

Instructional objective: Students will be able to analyze reasons and consequences of marginalizing some groups in a text.

Tasks and phases

1) Access. A vocabulary game based on the teacher’s estimation of what is difficult for the students.

2) Access continued. Silent reading and documenting in a table the names of the different characters in the text as well as the number of times and the occasions on which each character was mentioned.

3) Problematization/critical exploration and alternative representation. Group work to discuss reasons for the unbalanced textual representation of the different players described in the text. The teacher note-taking of the groups’ work as they share it in class and guiding them to explore their ideas deeper through the following guiding questions:

- Is this difference fair? Why?
- What would the other two characters feel when they read this text?
- What should the writer do in order to represent all the characters differently?

4) Problematization continued. The students wrote a 250-word piece, analyzing the overrepresentation of Jackie compared to the other two characters. They tackled the following questions in their essays:

- How does this difference affect the reader?
- How does it affect sports players who do not win the gold medal and those who lose the game altogether?
- How does the text influence the thinking of people about winning and losing?

The lesson exemplifies the roles of some phases in CALT and shows how not all of them should be employed in every lesson, in accordance with the non-model’s linearity and its adaptation to the instructional goals and to the needs of a particular learner group. The lesson also demonstrates how the access phase includes pedagogic and/or authentic tasks that enable learners to understand the target texts through involving them in decoding and learning the meanings of new words, familiarizing them with other linguistic items like grammar, and/or introducing them to unfamiliar background information so that their comprehension and/or interests are not blocked (Ibrahim, 2022). The meaning-construction phase, which is not used in “Jackie’s Gold”, immerses the learners in the social uses of texts in the form of transactional, academic, and aesthetic tasks that do not intend to make them deconstruct and reconstruct texts. In fact, the meaning construction phase may provide access to the text if deemed possible and responsive to the students’ needs, another evidence on the nonlinearity of CALT. “For instance, students may transform “Jackie’s Gold” into a multimedia document with their own comments on the text. This helps learners construct meaning through a holistic reading, listening or viewing” (Ibrahim, Fadlallah, submitted for

publication).

More importantly, both the access and the meaning construction phases may invite learners to develop their “sense of entitlement” for critiquing and redesigning the text (Jones, 2013) when the lesson addresses these goals. “Jackie’s Gold” illustrates how the instructional objective, derived from the problematization phase in CALT (i.e., analyze reasons and consequences of marginalizing some groups in a text), guides the smooth transitioning of the students among the different literacy resources. For instance, documenting the number of times and occasions the characters are mentioned in the text, after they had been acquainted with the new vocabulary it includes, not only made the learners skim and scan for a purpose, but also prepared them for exploring reasons for the different textual representations of the characters in the group work task that followed. The teacher built on this work to help the learners deepen their interpretations through a guided discussion. This discussion constituted the springboard for the final writing task that realizes the objective. This transitioning would have been different had the objective been the presentation of equitable alternatives through a task that, for instance, asks students to write proposals for programs that promote sports as activities for cooperation and fun and to discourage aggressive competition and material reward.

How to empower the learners with a sense of agency in CALT’s access phase, (i.e., early on during instruction), is shown by Ibrahim and Fadlallah (2024) through an interesting exemplary lesson around a text titled “Water for the Emir’s Palace”. The text narrates how Emir Bashir, a governor of Mount Lebanon in the 1980s, handled the challenge of bringing water to a new palace he wanted to build in Beit Eddine, an unpopulated area in his sovereignty. He sought the help of a possibly mythical figure known as “Hasan the fool of Shanai”. Hasan proposed that every man living in the area dig part of an aqueduct from AL Safa spring to Beit Eddine without any compensation. In this way, Emir Bashir could build a magnificent palace adorned with precious objects, which is presented by the text as a great success. The objective in the lesson in Ibrahim and Fadlallah’s work was to enable students to rewrite the story from a critical perspective so that it represents the oppressed and the marginalized more equitably. Guiding the lesson design by this objective, selected from the alternative possibilities and representation phase in CALT which incorporates the notion of design/redesign, facilitated the generation of tasks that transition students from one literacy resource to the other with ease, as CALT advances.

The first task in the lesson required students to read the text at home and replace some marked words and phrases with ones that portray the situation from their own perspectives. This task, also the report in the meaning construction phase suggested about sports before, invites the learners to feel entitled for reconstructing and deconstructing the text, simultaneously enabling them to access the reading and comprehend it. The other tasks in the lesson build on this initial engagement to further prepare the students for the redesign task that realizes the

lesson objective. Janks (2014) advances an enlightening explanation of the need to link the design and the redesign processes in order “...to contribute to creating a world where power is not used to disempower others, where difference is seen as a resource, and where everyone has access to social goods and opportunity” (p. 8). According to her, the deconstruction of texts and practices is sterile unless we can see how to reconstruct them so as to improve the way we live and relate to one another. Because not even a redesigned text is neutral, we have to think of reconstruction as an ongoing process of transformation. (p. 8). Indeed, to help learners take up these recursive and reflexive practices, we posit that language tasks should be designed so that they, early on in the instructional process, empower them with the agency needed “to deconstruct and reconstruct texts, textual practices and social relations where such practices take place”, as Jones (2013: p. 199) asserts, while equipping them with the needed resources to become competent language users. This balance demands an instructional framework that clearly specifies how this interconnectedness may be enacted.

Actually, CALT establishes the interconnectedness needed for a smooth transitioning among its five phases: access, meaning construction, direct instruction, the problematization and critical exploration and the alternative possibilities and representation. The latter two phases aim to empower students to exercise their agency over texts, to examine the narratives they read, hear and/or watch against their experiences, to uncover the textual hidden assumptions, to interpret the root causes of the various sociopolitical and socioeconomic hardships which many groups experience, to analyze the interestedness of the dominant discourses, and to design/redesign texts so that they both portray their realities and offer their own imaginings of how life can be better, more just, and peaceful (Ibrahim, 2022). For instance, task 3 in “Water for the Emir’s Palace” requires students to assume different roles (the Emir, his wife Sit Shams, and Sit Shams’s relatives) and to negotiate the wife’s objections to the Emir’s project. While task 4 revisits the vocabulary introduced in the previous ones, learners engage in a guided discussion in task 5 to problematize the Emir’s claims as well as the textual propositions about the other groups in the text. Ibrahim and Fadlallah (2024) argue that the progression of these tasks would facilitate the learners’ reconstruction of the text they have to do in task 6, not only through helping them develop the dispositions to examine the narrative from different perspectives, but also by the provision of the linguistic tools they need.

In addition, “The direct instruction phase in CALT supports students in developing the target sub-skills and in acquiring the needed linguistic resources. This aims to make students attend consciously to (these components) in the context of authentic literacy tasks”, capitalizing on TBLT principles (Ibrahim, 2022: p. 39). For example, students in “Water for the Emir’s Palace” lesson received instruction on how to choose alternatives to the words they were asked to replace before performing the task and were provided feedback on their choices. While direct instruction in this task addressed the vocabulary needs of the learners pre- and post-

task, other issues like grammar, mainstream skills like scanning, summarizing, idea development in writing, and critical literacy skills like uncovering the hidden assumptions of a text may be the targets in this phase. Again, the provision of direct instruction through short explanation, modeling, practice and feedback depends on the weight given to these skills and subskills in a particular lesson in relation to the program (Ibrahim, 2022).

Only a few studies have explored how instruction mobilizes their different resources smoothly to enact one of their critical roles besides Jones (2013) article. In her article, Jones found that, among other things, asking young children to re-write the text without helping them feel entitled to question the narratives they encounter at school did not lead to a critical redesign of these narratives. Indeed, Ibrahim, one of the authors of this study, has observed this difficulty to make the needed disconnect with authoritative texts among university students without their early positioning as agents with the right to question the text and to reconstruct it. Ibrahim (2022) has examined the impact of CALT-based instruction that ensures such early positioning in a one-year case study. The study explored how this prolonged engagement by a grade 11 teacher and her students in a Lebanese public school affected the participants' development of their critical dispositions, their language skills, and their various identifications. The research indicated that the teacher was greatly influenced by her pedagogical routines, which caused challenges in the transitioning required by CALT. The author stipulated that this implies the need for focused training in CALT. Additionally, while a few participants exercised their agency in reconsidering texts and issues critically early on during instruction, many others developed this capacity gradually. Based on these results, Ibrahim and Fadlallah in an article submitted for publication, conducted a study on how three grade 6 instructors, who had received a one-week training in CALT and implemented instruction based on this model for a semester, could use the first two tasks in "Jackie's Gold" lesson detailed above to enable the learners to interact critically around marginalization and competition characterizing "Jackie's Gold", (i.e., to build on the aim of these two tasks to invite the students to develop a sense of entitlement for critique). The findings showed that two of the instructors could not capitalize on the lesson design to transition their students from reading with the text to reading against it (Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019). By so doing, they repressed some learners' critical views that had emerged early on during class discussion possibly as a result of how the lesson was shaped. They, however, experienced critical transformations in the middle of the lesson and started stimulating the students' critical reading of the text. The authors observed that the two teachers' pedagogical routines, CALT-training, and their recognition of the lesson intents interacted and brought about their varied practices. The third teacher, who happened to be the same participant in the present report, seemed more prone to pose critical questions from the beginning of instruction, moving smoothly from helping her students understand the text to engaging them in reading it critically. Accordingly we conclude from these reports

that while CALT can most likely help learners move smoothly among the different resources, the degree of realizing this depends on many factors, including the ability or willingness of instructors to adapt their pedagogies to fit CALT goals and, the various constraints that affect the faithful implementation of CALT, the place of a lesson in the program, etc. In this article, we use the CALT model to further examine these factors.

3. Research Methodology

This case study is a part of a one-year research during which one teacher, Nada, implemented CALT-based instruction in a grade 5 class in a Lebanese public school, using the school-mandated textbook. The school is located in a small village in Mount Lebanon, where the teacher, who had participated in a workshop for training in CALT before she embarked on implementing the intervention, also used to live. The class consisted of 15 students, 10 boys and 5 girls. Data during the whole research was collected through class observations, student artifacts, teacher lesson plans, interviews, and focus groups. However, in the present report, the literacy event we analyze is a design/redesign task students did at the end of a lesson around a text titled “At the supermarket”. The report focuses on how 8 students in Nada’s class, 4 boys and 4 girls, designed an advertisement to materialize the objective of reconstructing the supermarket as a place for fair trade, as suggested in the alternative possibilities and representation phase of CALT. The 8 participants were selected to represent the various language levels of the learners, the different embodiments of their artifacts, and the gender composition of the class. The article also analyzes how the lesson, of which the ad is a part, was designed to make the students move smoothly among the different literacy practices they need, i.e., practice their reading subskills, make meaning from the text, deconstruct the values embedded in the text, and reconstruct these values so that they embody fairness.

4. Data Analysis

Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint (2006) suggest three approaches to analyze data from critical literacy classrooms: Grounded theory, critical literacy frameworks or models, and critical discourse analysis. Since our purpose was to explore how teachers using Ibrahim’s (2022) CALT model may engage young learners in the various reading practices (linguistic, ideational, and critical) smoothly, we utilized this model to analyze how one lesson in the CALT-based intervention, through the coherent connections it establishes among its different parts, may have facilitated the learners’ smooth transition among their roles as code breakers, as meaning makers, as critics of the values the text endorses, and as producers of different sets of values that may promote the common good. The following elements in CALT constituted the units of analysis: how the tasks under a certain CALT phase in the lesson prepare the learners to achieve the instructional objective; how each task is connected to the next one; how the lesson applies the nonlinearity of the

model; how the lesson is designed in accordance with its position in the program of intervention (i.e., whether it is the first, second, etc.); and whether tasks in the various phases are balanced.

We additionally wanted to explore whether the teacher could make her students transition smoothly among the different phases of the model while implementing the various tasks so that they design their ads well equipped with the needed critical dispositions and the language resources. Thus, we asked her to record all the interactions during the lesson, using her phone. Unfortunately, however, she could not do that in this specific lesson due to logistical reasons, as she said. So, we interpreted the advertisements which the 8 students selected for this report designed at the end of the lesson, employing the alternative possibilities and representation phase in CALT, particularly its incorporation of the design/redesign notion. These ads aimed to engage these learners in imagining a supermarket that sells its products for fair and reasonable prices. Thus, we looked into whether the learners presented fair marketing in their designs. To that end, we examined each ad in detail for what words, phrases or sentences it included and for the various elements in its semiotic design. We grouped these elements under different categories. After re-examining these categories several times, we ended up with the following three ones: Alternative representation, Reproduction of neoliberal marketing, and Reproduction of the typical school genre. The first group encompassed the ads that used language or symbols to indicate fair trade. The second group included the ads that mimicked typical advertising practices with no indication of calling for fair marketing. The third category was formed to cover those designs that capitalized on one or more school genres. The two artifacts in this group, however, differed in attending to alternative marketing. We decided to group them together because they provided an important lens on the strength of the school discourse and on how this discourse may be appropriated by some students and totally adopted by others.

5. Findings and Analysis

Could Nada's use of CALT-based instruction enable her grade 5 EFL learners to understand a text about shopping and to critique it, i.e., read with and against the text (Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019), while navigating the different families of literacy practices smoothly?

The analysis presented in this section of the first lesson that Nada implemented in her grade 5 class, titled "At the Supermarket", responds to the question. The text the students read describes a visit that two friends and the mother of one of them pay to a supermarket. The Arabic names of the two friends, Samar and Maya, show how the text propagates consumerism with a local touch. Excited by the bright lights and wide aisles, the visitors enjoy exploring the colorful fruit and vegetable section and the smell of fresh bread from the bakery. During shopping, Samar observes how the store is organized and how the cashier works efficiently. The text ends by emphasizing the characters' realization that a visit to the super-

market is more than just shopping—it's an interesting and lively experience they looked forward to repeating. The lesson around this text is presented below, followed by its analysis.

At the Supermarket.

Instructional objective: Students will be able to redesign the marketing values promoted by the text by designing an ad that propagates fair trade.

Task 1. Students are asked to read parts of the text silently in order to explain it to their peers. In groups, each student explains his/her part to their group mates. The teacher helps students during preparation.

Task 2. Students skim and scan the text individually and make a list of the shopping items it mentions. Besides each item, they include the price that they think it deserves. Some students share their prices with the class, and the teacher selects the most expensive and the cheapest lists. Students then explain the reasons for their prices. They discuss how the prices may be reasonable so that everyone can buy what they want.

Task 3. The teacher takes notes of some language issues that arise in the discussion and works on correcting them with the students.

Task 4. Students design an advertisement for a supermarket that sells different items for reasonable prices.

As illustrated in this first lesson in the intervention, carried out in 3 sessions each lasting for 50 minutes, the tasks intended to gradually enable students to critique the important neoliberal phenomenon of free trade and to reconstruct it in more just ways, using the text as springboard to achieve this goal. To that end, the first task, in which students explained their assigned parts to their peers, provided them access to the textual meanings, during which they practiced their roles as code breakers and as meaning makers. Thus, access here captured the pedagogical realization of these two roles, which, in this particular lesson, happened to be performed simultaneously. By immersing the learners in reading as a social activity (Leki, 2001), i.e., reading to tell their peers something they do not know, the task might realize several goals: code breaking, negotiation of meaning, unconscious language processing, cooperative learning, etc. This social purpose would submerge learners in reading as a unitary process and enable them to construct meaning from the text as a coherent unit, in contrast to the disconnected reading demanded by typical comprehension questions (Ibrahim, 2022). Additionally, the teacher's assistance during this task intended to help learners in whatever language or meaning-making challenges they may face, i.e., pronunciation, difficult vocabulary, complex structures, etc.

The second task focused the students' attention on what the characters in the text were buying. This search for details was grounded in the learners' construction of the meanings embodied in the text as a whole. During this search, the learners were experimenting with the real-life use of strategies like skimming and scanning, unlike the purposeless, artificial ways included in their textbook. By asking students to give the prices they estimate for these objects, the task would acti-

vate their similar shopping experiences and/or conjectures of such experiences and would pave the way for exploring reasons for their estimations. This was thought to help the learners see that the monetary values of what we buy are often randomly allotted and that those in the position of assigning the prices may be serving their interests in gaining as much money as possible. By involving them not only in examining reasons for the prices they decided on their lists, but also in reconsidering the possibility of having more reasonable ones, the students were being prepared for the advertisement task which engaged them in reconstructing how the market is depicted in the text. In this sense, the advertisement constituted a response format in which grade 5 students designed a new text to redesign the one they read in creative ways.

The third task addressed the skill and language needs of the students. It aimed to instruct the learners in the language needs that would have arisen in their genuine responses during the discussion of their pricing. It thus capitalized on TBLT principles, while departing from this approach in addressing the critical dispositions of the learners as an inherent part of CALT, not as an add-on. Thus, the lesson gradually prepared students to take up critical literacy practices, providing purposeful instruction to help them move among the different families of reading practices and the scaffolding they need in any of these practices, as the CALT model suggests.

Did the CALT-based lesson about shopping implemented in the study enable grade 5 students to imagine more equitable trade?

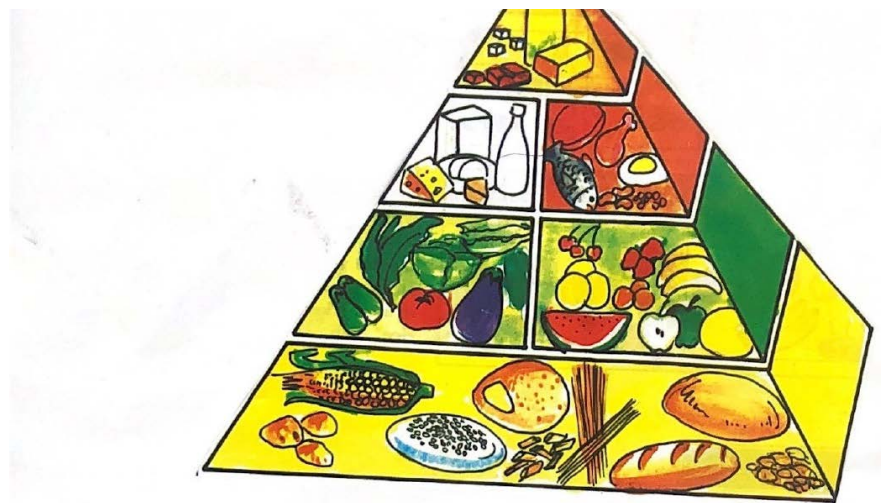
As stated before, the advertisement task encompassed the acts of design and redesign and aimed to help the learners reconstruct shopping at the supermarket in more just ways. All the learners brought their creativity and their language resources to design their ads, but only a few constructed the supermarket as a place for fair trade. In our interpretation, we have grouped the ads under three categories: Alternative representation, Reproduction of neoliberal marketing, and Reproduction of the typical school genre.

5.1. Alternative Representation

Three participants included in the present report designed their artifacts to present alternatives to the dominant marketing discourses and practices. Each of them emphasized a different dimension of alternative marketing, but all three shared the idea of low prices, not as seasonal practice, but as a feature of permanent trade grounded in a vision of equity, as the following artifacts show (**Figures 1-3**).

Obviously, Ramzi, Noura, and Majid attempted to promote fair trade in varied ways although they shared some features like their colorful and bright designs and the inclusion of different items in their ads. Though not clear about their intents, Majid and Noura hinted at the fair prices they offer at their stores through either the structuring of their language or through their semiosis. For instance, Majid's expressions like "buy three and get one free" seemed to be a permanent offer, be-

ing followed by a deal specific for the next day. Noura also appeared to imply fair trade by including the dollar sign, a symbol for a well-known network of stores that sells various items for low prices. Although intertexting with this network represents a continuation of the dominant marketing practices, the semiotic resources Noura utilized, the dollar sign, the fresh-looking vegetables, the absence of unhealthy products, etc., made her ad seem closer to the promotion of fair trade. Ramzi's ad marked a drastic shift from the typical neoliberal marketing discourse in many ways. The expression "always low prices", accompanied by a food pyramid with a text about selling "healthy, fresh, pesticide-free products," embodies this shift. While Majid and Noura's ads are saturated with typical commercial appeals, Ramzi has surpassed such appeals, highlighting ethical and health-related concerns. Although this drastic shift sets Ramzi apart from his two other classmates in this group and certainly from the remaining students in the class, Noura and Majid show signs of transformative designs in their work. Thus, the three ads in this category illustrate how tasks in the alternative phase of CALT, like the advertisement, when linked coherently to the other phases in the model, may immerse learners in redesigning the texts they encounter, "At the Supermarket" in this case, by designing a new genre, the ad, to recontextualize marketing practices in a discourse that better serves humanity. However, most other participants did not do so, as the next two sections illustrate.



In Ramiz Supermarket usually sell fresh food. Our
 produce suppliers with the aim of providing healthy, fresh,
 pesticide-free products. They are always low prices.

Figure 1. Ramzi.



Figure 2. Noura.

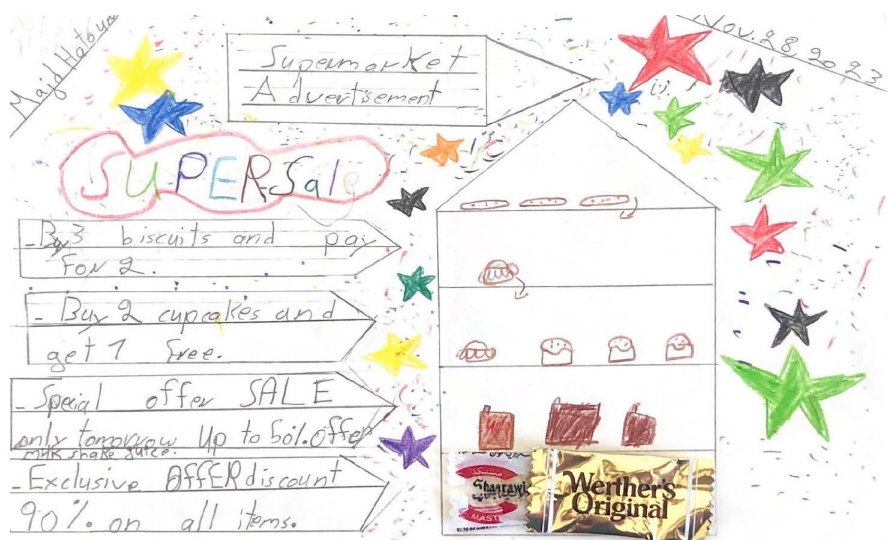


Figure 3. Majid.

5.2. Reproduction of Neoliberal Marketing

The participants in this group constructed their artifacts by mimicking the styles and language of the typical ad. These artifacts epitomize the neoliberal discourses that entice text consumers into buying anything at any offered price. This is exemplified in the drawings below: (Figures 4-6)

The labels given to these artifacts, such as “Super Shop and Super Sale” signify an imitation of the dominant advertising style, with little, if any, indications of alternative marketing. By mimicking the advertising discursive practices, the students have created urgency and desire in the users of their texts. Their repetitive focus on saving money and time might indicate an awareness of how marketing appeals to the emotions of the customers, particularly when associated with socio-religious occasions like Christmas and the New Year. In this sense, the participants in this group may have experienced how the neoliberal values of competi-

tion and profit are associated with people’s social and religious identities through semiotic symbolizations like Christmas trees, balloons, holiday expressions, etc. This is signaled most in Salwa’s expression, “Every Christmas and everyone is good”, accompanied by “best prices” and “best supermarket ever,” written in big letters on the opposite sides of her ad which presents different colorful objects. Karam has added to the use of these resources numbers that show the discount on each item he portrays in his ad.

These creative designs may have made the participants aware of how different discursive practices are employed to serve the interests of particular groups at the expense of others, although they do not seem to resist and reconstruct these discourses. For instance, the large discounts Karam utilizes indicate his consciousness of the gain that market owners usually make, but he has not reflected a reconsideration of this gain. This consciousness may have also been experienced by Ramzi, Majid, and Noura, but these participants have capitalized on their experiences to reconstruct the commercial values in order to promote the common good. This may have set them apart from most other participants.

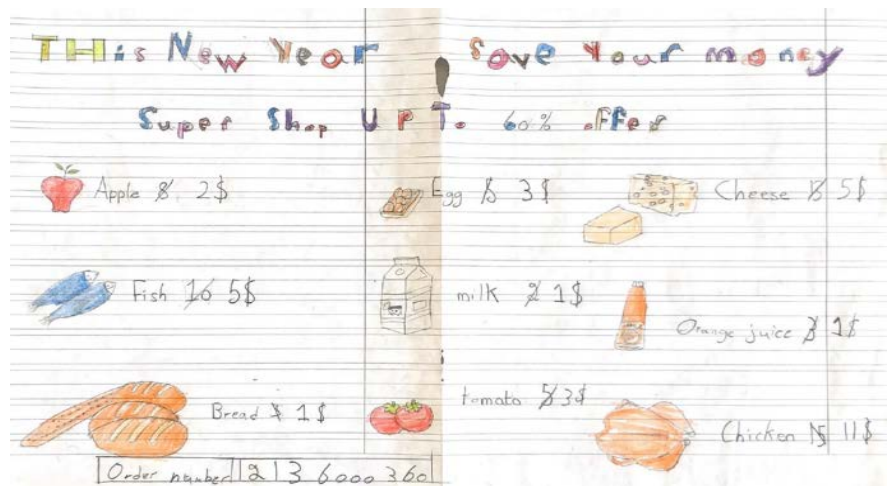


Figure 4. Karam.

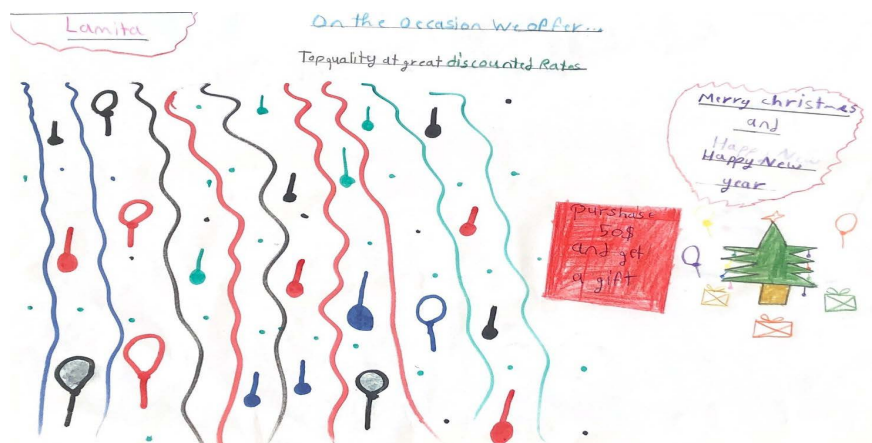


Figure 5. Laurice.

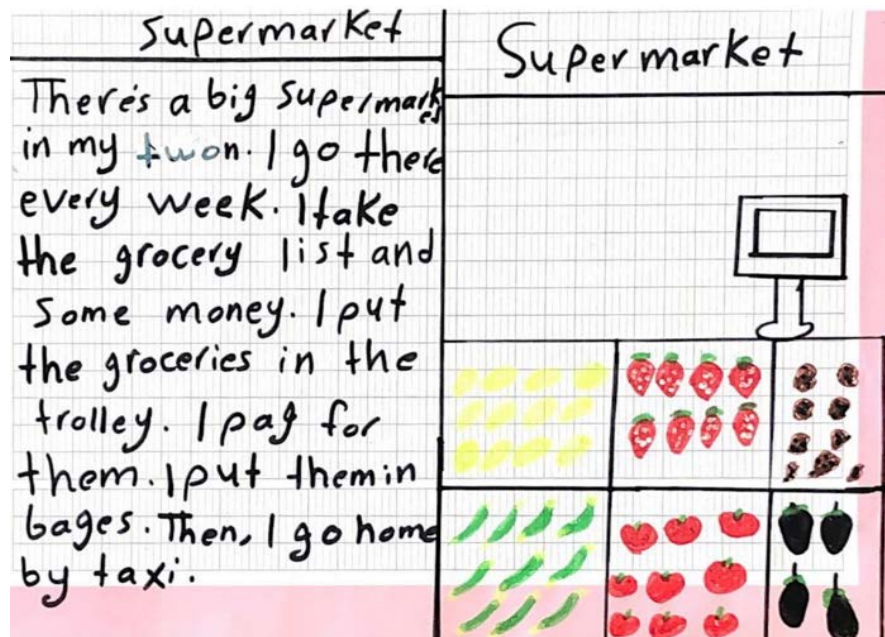


Figure 8. Leila.

The two participants' use of the school genre structure: Definition and explanation in Majid's case and listing of steps done when shopping in Leila's ad, may indicate how the power of school pedagogical discourses, that are in many instances ingenuine, may negatively impact some students' literacy practices. The inappropriate use of the school-essay structure by both learners in this category to design a text that permeates our daily lives with its non-typical, creative appeals may reflect the unequal power relationships in which schooling positions the learners vis-à-vis the authority of the teacher and the school discourses and practices. However, Majid's focus on low prices in his artifact, in contrast not only to Leila, but also to Karam, Salwa, and Laurice, signals the co-occurrence of succumbing to the power of typical school pedagogy and of resisting/transforming social practices outside the school institution. This implies that succumbence and resistance are not dichotomous and that they may be enacted simultaneously. Besides, combining two incompatible genres in one text by Leila and Majid: The school-essay structure and the advertising semiosis, may have caused varied designs.

6. Discussion

All the participants in the study have designed their ads with considerable creativity. Many of them have built on the ad genre dominant in their social milieu, combined with their shopping and text construction experiences, which establishes intertextual connections with one or more out-of-school texts. Additionally, the participants have portrayed the supermarket as a comfortable, familiar, predictable, and ordered environment, which shows that it is a place they enjoy or they wish to enjoy. However, they have differed in two significant ways. First,

while some students present fair alternatives to current marketing, as illustrated in the work of four participants in this report, others do not. Second, a few participants have employed the school-essay genre in describing the images they drew. Yet others have utilized appropriate language styles alongside their visuals to appeal to their audience.

Has CALT-based instruction taken into account the variations and commonalities among the participants in realizing the objective of the advertisement task? Indeed, Ibrahim's CALT model postulates that student responses to various CALT tasks may share some characteristics while exhibiting important differences, and it advances pedagogical strategies to build on these variations and commonalities so that instruction achieves its goals. It does that through its 5 phases which facilitate the design of coherent instruction. These phases account for the interaction among the complex dimensions of critical literacy, including the various engagement levels that take place simultaneously, the power of the texts to be reconstructed and the ones to be capitalized on in comparison to the students' power, students' willingness to deviate from typical school instruction, and the emphasis they place on critiquing the strong normalcy of the social patterns which they enjoy. So how may these factors have affected the learners in this study, and how does CALT attend to them?

The ad, like many other CALT tasks used in the intervention, has engaged the learners at several levels (intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, academic, ethical, and critical). This multidimensionality of social literacy practices (Ibrahim, 2022; Luke, 2025) indicates the complex, recursive, and reflexive nature of engaging in such practices like designing an advertisement; this makes the learners' performance in these acts elusive of any typification (Ibrahim, 2022; Jones, 2013 Wall-dén, 2024). This may have caused the learners to differ in what to attend to in performing their tasks and what styles and semiotic resources to employ.

Different engagement levels, i.e., cognitive, social, behavioral, and affective, have been researched separately in applied linguistics, but the interrelationship among them has received little attention by researchers (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Philp and Duchesne explain: "Engagement refers to a state of heightened attention and involvement, in which participation is reflected not only in the cognitive dimension, but in social, behavioral, and affective dimensions as well. Increasingly, researchers acknowledge the need to take account of the interdependence of these different facets of human experience" (p. 3). In fact, CALT accounts for the interdependence among these and other facets of engagement through the type of tasks it advocates, through its gradual transitioning of learners among the linguistic, the ideational, and the critical practices, and through its nonlinearity. We argue that the learners' heightened attention, stimulated by the ad, may be directed to some engagement levels more than others, and the characteristics of CALT allow for reorienting the learners to attend more to what may be insufficiently tackled or missing in their performance. For instance, the direct instruction phase in the model provides teachers with the adaptability of using it during or post-task per-

formance to guide the learners in refocusing their attention on, for example, presenting alternative advertising practices in their artifacts.

Moreover, building on existing texts or intertextuality in designing the ads may have interacted dialectically with the learners' heightened attention on specific dimensions more than on others of the task. This differential interaction between the learners' intertextual practices and their interest in specific task aspects may have led to differing foci in the outcomes. For instance, Ramzi's attention to alternative marketing required in the task may have interacted reciprocally with his previous engagement with food pyramids used in his school textbook, and this may have led to the design of an ad for healthy food with fair prices. This reciprocity between intertextuality and the focus of the participant on "buy because it's good for you" may reflect a developing critical perspective and valuing moral and ecological aspects, besides reasonable profit, as well as the emergence of the "ethics of design" (Janks, 2014), i.e., social engagement (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). This has been accomplished by using the tools of the free market for sales that synthesize reasonable profit, high-quality, ecology-friendly products, and health.

The adaptation of texts like the pyramid to fit a transformative task characterizing Ramzi's work was not taken up by the other participants. While all the learners designed their ads in creative ways, which Brown (2022) also found in his research, the reconstruction group subscribed to the dominant advertising discourses during their intertextual practices. Such neoliberal capitalist discourses, which permeate the public sphere as socio-culturally normalized capitalist tools (Luke, 2025; Luke, Luke, & Graham, 2007) and which is also propagated through foreign language textbooks (Ibrahim, 2022; Morgan & Vandrick, 2009), may have exerted their power on the learners while they were focusing on the creative aspects of their work more than on the transformative ones. In this case, students, who possess much less power than the capitalist discourse, may have not attended sufficiently to the critical dimension of their task. Similar dynamics appear to have occurred with one student in the school-genre group, Leila, but this time, the school narrative style may have taken over her involvement; Leila has used the school "process essay" genre to narrate her routines, during which she made intertextual connections with the class reading "At the Supermarket". This intertextuality may have helped Leila comprehend the assigned text by transferring its information to the ad, which Ibrahim (2022) advances as a tool for meaning construction. However, the authority that such school-mandated readings have on learners (Jones, 2013; Luke, 2025; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019; Walldén, 2024), alongside the power of the prevalent marketing discursive resources may have synergistically exerted their influence on the participant, which led her to produce a typical non-transformative design. This, however, does not seem to affect Camil, who has also employed the school narrative style in the same way.

Camil's imagining of a supermarket that offers low prices symbolizes the differential interplay among the various components of engagement, with consequential effects. Thus, while both Camil and Leila could not adapt the school genre

to fit their new task through a process termed “adaptive transfer” (Depalma & Ringer, 2014), Camil could attend to the critical component in his design while Leila could not. Ibrahim (2022) explains the two participants’ use of the school essay structure inappropriately by the rigid focus of school instruction on such structures, advancing the notion of “resistive transfer” to describe instances when students engage in such irrelevant uses of what they learn at school. Ibrahim stipulates that CALT tackles this issue by focusing on authentic tasks in several phases. For instance, the ad task aims to make learners use the characteristics of this genre in their work, and when they do not, the direct instruction phase orients teachers to help them do that.

Additionally, the design/redesign process has involved the participants in competing emotions. The task has demanded them to construct what they enjoy and to present an alternative to it, i.e., critiquing what is pleasurable (Jones, 2013), which requires a thoughtful balance between presenting the supermarket as an interesting place and changing the normal practices of this place. While some participants may have struck this balance by attending to the various aspects of their task, the other learners may have been enticed by the fun element characteristic of advertising; this may have led to non-transformative text construction. Some participants may have been taken over by their use of bright colors, Christmas trees, gifts, and festive decorations, a possible expression of warmth and belonging. The ads that include “Every Christmas and Everyone is Good”, “On the Occasion We Offer”, and “Happy New Year” appear to have been taken over by the marketing discourse that covers up commercial interests through appealing to the emotions of the audience. The learners may have focused on this fun element in the powerful marketing discourse not because they cannot resist it, but because it is pleasing. Foucault (1980: p. 119) explains that power does not only repress, it also “...traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse”. This implies that some participants in the present research have not reached the stage where they are willing to disconnect from the pleasure induced by the marketing ad and by their excitement at showing their knowledge of marketing semiotic practices, and it may need time to strike a balance between what they enjoy at the moment and imagining this object differently without the fear to lose their pleasure.

Together with the participants’ intents to highlight their creativity, engaging emotionally with their designs may have interacted with the life conditions and experiences of the learners. As Jones (2013) argues, working with students on examining the power of texts in promoting certain values and reconstructing these values in more just ways requires a pedagogy that positions them as agents entitled to interrogate the normalized ways of living. It also demands knowledge about the learners’ lives and about their communities, as Jones further stresses. Some learners may not have the luxury of regular shopping at the supermarket and may have a desire to be like the characters in the text. However, in many contexts, it is difficult to gain firsthand knowledge about the learners and their communities.

Thus, classroom dialogues, or talk around texts (Luke, 2025), that stimulate learners to relate their own experiences in relation to the theme of a specific text may help teachers gain an understanding of the students' conditions. Such dialogues facilitate the positioning of the learners as powerful agents, entitled to examine whether both their own experiences and the texts they read are equitable. CALT, like all other critical literacy models, is context sensitive. It does not dictate what teachers should or should not do, but it rather constitutes a framework for the teachers to navigate their pedagogical resources flexibly. This means that teachers should make informed decisions about how and when to engage students in reflective dialogues, when to leave space for fun and desire, and when to stress deconstruction and reconstruction (Ibrahim, 2022).

Additionally, how the participants have structured their designs and where they have placed the different elements of their ads may symbolize the degree of emphasis they give to each element (Janks, 2018). Walldén (2024) argues that "...different information values... can be ascribed to text elements placed on the left and right in multimodal texts (p.68). The author cites (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006: pp. 180-181) who state: "The elements placed on the left are presumed to be already known to the reader as part of their culture—a familiar and agreed-upon point of departure of the message" (Walldén, 2024: p. 68). The learners in the present research may have intentionally placed their various semiotic representations in certain ways, possibly ascribing different degrees of importance to each element in accordance with where this element is placed in their work. However, the learners have done this by allocating their objects to different places in their ads, not only on the right and left sides. For instance, Camil's division of his ad into two parts, bottom and top, giving both parts one title, may purport to ascribe more value to the text in the bottom because it includes the details of the prices he offers. The upper part is lively, but a simple drawing may intend to minimize its importance in comparison to the fair prices listed at the bottom of the ad. This balance between the two parts through what seems to be intentional employment of the various semiotic resources positions the drawing on the upper side as a complementary, but crucial part in the design. However, Leila's listing of her shopping steps, placed on the left of her ad, with the drawing located on the right side, seems to give both parts equal importance by labelling each of them "Supermarket". Because Leila has not designed an ad that reconstructs marketing practices and because she may have wanted to show her understanding of the text, she juxtaposed and titled the two parts in this way.

The learners' selective location of the elements of their multimodal texts (Brown, 2022) may be best exemplified in Ramzi's pyramid. While the student has emphasized fair and high-quality marketing, symbolized by both his print and the organization of his pyramid, the inclusion of sweets and other pleasurable but unhealthy items at the top shows how critique and pleasure may sit side by side. Possibly, Ramzi's design may convey the message that high-quality markets may also sell such products because it is okay to enjoy them in moderation. Back to

Foucault's theorization about power, discourse, and knowledge: Students like Ramzi may enjoy the power of the marketing discourse because it entails various types of knowledge and it induces pleasure and may meanwhile resist this discourse, appropriating it to a transformative view of trade.

7. Final Thoughts

Why have the participants in the present report varied in realizing the goal of deconstructing and reconstructing marketing, although they have been instructed based on a coherent CALT lesson?

It is important to remember that "At the Supermarket" was the first lesson in the intervention and that the teacher was new to critical literacy in general and to the CALT model in particular. The students' performance has presented critical moments on which the teacher could have capitalized (Pennycook, 2004; Wahlström & Schmidt, 2024). However, teachers who have not brought their critical dispositions to the level of consciousness would not be able to identify these moments. "In order to diffuse, critical language pedagogy needs to be understood by teachers and seen as feasible. We need roadmaps and guides by which to gradually transition away from our ingrained, automatized teaching practice. We need the ground, the context, for reflection and the gradual change of ideas or of practices" (Abednia & Crooks, 2019: p. 246). Indeed, capturing the critical moments that arise during classroom work constitutes one of the most nuanced aspects of critical literacy, and these may start to be capitalized on by teachers after experimenting with CALT-based instruction that mobilizes the learners' different literacy resources variably to address a range of objectives (Ibrahim, 2022). The teacher in the present study has exhibited strong resistance to the phase that allows for the students' revision and accommodation of their work, that is, direct instruction. Many factors may cause this resistance. These may include time pressure, the contextualized nature of direct instruction advanced by CALT, to which the public-school teachers in Lebanon are not used, the teacher's willingness to invest in this phase, given the hard economic conditions of the country at the time, etc. As important, the nonlinearity of CALT stipulates that critical literacy objectives should be incorporated in mainstream literacy programs and should be addressed over time (Ibrahim, 2022). Nada has revealed a good understanding of CALT both during training and during the implementation of instruction. Thus, she may have willingly not returned to the students' ads in order to help her learners design transformative artifacts. Indeed, in many instances during instruction, Nada has modified the lesson plans to account for the learners' needs.

Additionally, future research may address the various subtleties of critical literacy, not only when teaching younger learners, but also when older students are involved. Research may seek data to study the recursiveness and reflexivity of the teachers, two critical components of critical language instruction. It may also tackle how transitioning among the different CALT phases may be staged variably at different instructional points and with different learner groups.

We would like to end with Jones (2013: pp. 220-221) following observation:

That is not how it is. But how anything “is” is always contextually and culturally specific and begging to be questioned, challenged, and reconstructed. This is why critical literacy is never done or covered but is always in the making by the teachers, researchers, students, and families who attempt to walk the walk of what can sometimes be alienating language of educational theories constructed outside the murky waters of moment-to-moment teaching and learning in classrooms.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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