This collection of articles, wisely edited by Professor Pérez, serves as a complement to another book, published in 2004 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Whereas she was the sole author of Becoming biliterate, Pérez now co-authors one, out of the total of twelve articles in the volume.

It may sound like a cliché, but these lines, quoted from the very first page of the first article, call everyone’s attention to what many classrooms over the world are like and what many will be turning into in a not very far future.

In fact, Pérez (p. 3) includes a citation that reads as follows:

Samoan, Tongan, Hispanic students from Central America and Latin America; we have Russian children, and a lot from Fiji, Japan, of course, many from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Indonesia. Did I say Vietnamese? We have a lot of Vietnamese, and quite a few from the Philippines. And, we have people migrating from the east coast, from the south. We have all colors and languages and nations here.
For many teachers and scholars these lines may be an exaggeration of the issue, but research on monolithic societies, many of them in Europe, will be promptly changed by the diversity of immigration and the analysis of language and literacy in different sociocultural contexts.

The book is divided into three chapters that vary in the focus and extension of each one: the first chapter, "Theoretical perspectives on language and literacy," consists of three articles, all of them by the editor, providing the foundation and theoretical basis of what comes in Part II.

Part II presents six articles that report on language and literacy acquisition in contexts as varied as Native American, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, Chinese, African-American, or Mexican-American communities. It is, no doubt, a delightful corollary of ethnicities in American society and schools. The last chapter, Part III, closes with three final articles that deal with literacy development.

The remaining pages include a preface, a number of final pages on the professional biographical data of the authors as well as author and subject indexes. In the editor’s words, this second edition of the book has meant an update of research related to second-language literacy and the inclusion of new activities and suggested readings that will help the reader discuss, reflect and put into practice the findings and topics. This version is dedicated to the memory of one of the contributors, Dien thi To, who passed away while preparing the revision for this second edition. [-1-]

In a more detailed way, chapter 1 revises the notion of literacy and defends a sociocultural constructivist framework of literacy instead of an atomised view of literacy as the mastering of discrete skills. Diversity in the United States is the focus of the chapter as well as the different programs that have tried to offer some kind of response to the needs of that diverse student body. Chapter 2 presents a considerable review of specialized literature and research that back up the issue of multiple literacies and how home literacy interacts with school literacy tasks. The References extend up to 8 pages as an example of the considerable revision of research papers done by the author. Chapter 3 revises the questions of emergent writing and describes different writing systems (logographic, syllabary and alphabetic) and what the implications are in the classroom. It is obvious that the closer the similarity between the spoken language and the written language, the better to learn how to write.

Chapters 4 through 9 deal with the question of literacy in the diverse cultural communities in the US. The opening of this chapter is very informative as it breaks the stereotype of what American Indians and their language and culture are. The author mentions, at least 200 different Indian languages, some of them as different as Russian and Japanese. In these communities, the role that story-telling plays is paramount as well as the narrative content that draws from their culture. In any case, much is still to be done at schools to compensate for the relationship of domination and exclusion.

Chapter 5 deals with a population group traditionally labelled as Hispanic, but quite different from other Latinos such as Mexican or Central Americans: it is the Puerto Rican minority. Puerto Ricans form a diverse group: “They are a mixture of Indian, European and African...”
peoples; some are lighter and others darker. There are almost as many Puerto Rican living on the mainland as on the Island of Puerto Rico (p. 113). Unlike other Latino minorities, they are US citizens by birth. Puerto Rican students have traditionally shown low rates of literacy, high drop-out levels, and low scores in test results. Examples provided in this chapter show the way this situation may be considerably improved.

Chapter 6, on the Vietnamese communities, is an academic pleasure as many issues are addressed in the chapter: the history of Vietnamese arrivals in the US, the impact of those arrivals in schools, the description of Vietnamese language and culture, the data collected from research on the Vietnamese students’ learning process in the school, and a number of suggestions to those teachers who want to help Vietnamese students, which may be extended to teachers working with any other cultural group: (i) an attitude of openness and recognition of the many ways of learning, language and culture and its people; (ii) encouraging and rewarding attitude towards students’ progress; (iii) an attitude of going beyond conclusions, and (v) a willingness to be a lifelong learner.

Chapter 7 describes Chinese-American communities, with valuable pages on the Chinese language and its variations and with a clarifying report of the sociocultural context of literacy acquisition in inner-city schools. It confirms the values that are associated with Chinese students: value and respect for the teacher, good behaviour in general terms, good attitude towards schoolwork, attendance, completion of homework, etc. [-2-]

Chapter 8, which discusses literacy in African-American communities, produces a strong impact on anyone not fully familiar with the history of African-American people in the US: the detailed recollection of the approximate last three centuries does not make the reader feel indifferent. One of the final ideas issued by the author sets a clear objective for literacy instructors: help your students to understand how literacy is a political tool and teach them to read the world. Chapter 9 closes the discussion of literacy learning among different communities with an analysis of how Mexican-American students become literate, by means of a field study on a second-grade student in a bilingual classroom in a southern Texas town.

Chapters 10, 11 and 12, either co-authored or written by Pérez herself, make up Part III of the book. Chapter 10 deals with the decision-making process teachers face in literacy instruction. Even though there are official policies, national standards, and the like, it is the teacher’s ultimate decision that determines the type of literacy instruction carried out in the classroom. As the authors say, most people involved in multicultural education make decisions that make literacy a form of empowerment.

Chapter 11 analyses the interrelation and interaction between the school type of literacy instruction and the culture and literacy that students already bring with them from their home and community. Culture and literacy cannot be understood as exclusive terms that reject any connection with the world outside school. A key concept in this issue is culture classroom in a classroom that allow for respect, participation, integration and common use of space, time and resources. Chapter 12 closes with the question of authenticity and an approach to literacy assessment. Literacy instruction has to be guided towards authenticity in the sense that students are taught to read, write and think purposefully, being the ultimate goal the connection between living and learning; in a way that they become life-long learners. For literacy assessment, the use of portfolios is recommended in a similar way as it is being the recommendation in Europe [3].
To put an end, I would like to make a reflection on certain miscellaneous issues: (i) the activities that are suggested at the end of each chapter are not simply a trendy addition to the text, but a set of attainable tasks that may be helpful to broaden the knowledge already gained from the respective chapter; (ii) cultural misunderstandings, like the ones experienced by Puerto Rican students (p. 115) act against literacy development and hinder the recognition of diversity, and, in that sense, they should be avoided at all cost; and, last but not least, (iii) I would say that *academic pleasure* is the term that best describes the reading of many pages in this book.

**Notes**

[1] This book has also been reviewed in a previous issue of TESL-EJ. Please refer to Vol. 8 No. 1 (June, 2007) ej.org/ej29/r12.html

[2] Full citation of this book is the following:


[3] The Council of Europe website for the Portfolio is the following: [http://culture2.coe.int](http://culture2.coe.int)

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the Bulgarians are very friendly, welcoming, hospitable, in addition the forest belt is evolving...

Teaching culture: Perspectives in practice, pitch, in the first approximation, is solved by elastic-plastic cationite.

Multicultural education: Development, dimensions, and challenges, therefore, the insurance...