Literacy and Learning across Transnational Online Spaces

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ABSTRACT This article reviews the emerging research literature on literacy in transnational migrant contexts and extends research in this area through an-depth study of how two immigrant teenagers navigated online media across countries to participate in a domain of interest, which included online forum discussion of philosophy and websites related to global Japanese animation and manga (graphic novels). In particular, it examines how the transnational affiliation and frame of reference of the youth affect their literacy development and knowledge making in these interest-based communities. Data consisted of observations, interviews, screen recordings, and think-aloud demonstrations by the youth of how they participated in the online communities. The analyses examine how the youth participated in the specialist language of their domain of interest and, in the case of one of them, how multiple languages were used to gather diverse sources of information and media content distributed across Internet sites in his native and adopted countries. Implications are drawn for an understanding of literacy in transnational migrant contexts as involving knowledge making with people and textual artifacts in distributed networks that reach across national boundaries.

Sociocultural studies of literacy have illuminated the contextual nature of reading and writing, and the ways that literacy, as a social practice, is related to affiliation and participation in particular ways of interpreting and producing texts within a social group or community (e.g. Gee, 1996; Barton et al, 2000; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Street, 2005). More recently, literacy researchers have argued for understanding literacy practices within intersecting local and global contexts and in relation to new communication technologies that are part of these intersecting contexts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Brandt & Clinton, 2002, Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). An approach to examining literacy across social and geographical spaces is especially relevant to the practices of people of migrant backgrounds as they develop and maintain relationships that often spread across territorial boundaries.

This article builds on the emerging research literature on literacy in transnational contexts to examine how immigrant adolescents’ transnational affiliation and frame of reference affect their literacy development and knowledge making in online communities across national borders. I focus on two teenagers of Chinese origin and the ways in which they navigated online media across countries to participate in a domain of interest, which included an online forum dedicated to the discussion of philosophy in one case and websites related to the global culture of Japanese animation (anime) and manga (graphic novels) in another case. In particular, I examine how the youths’ transnational online practices are related to the development and maintenance of native language literacy and the use of multiple languages and media resources to learn. Drawing on the concept of ‘affinity space’ (Gee, 2004, 2007) from studies of digital media and learning, I analyze how the youth participated in the specialist language of their domain of interest and, in the case of one of them, how multiple languages were used to gather diverse sources of information and media content distributed across multiple Internet sites in his native and adopted countries. This study proposes an understanding of literacy development in transnational contexts as the ability to
think and learn with other people and textual artifacts in distributed knowledge networks that reach across national boundaries.

**Theoretical Background**

**Transnationalism and Literacy**

In the last decade and a half, the development of a transnational perspective on migration has spurred the empirical study of various kinds of cross-border connections that are created in the process of migration, including the ways in which migrants incorporate everyday routines and activities that connect them to their country of origin even as they are actively engaged in their daily lives in the destination country (e.g. Kennedy & Roudometof, 2002; Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Vertovec, 2004; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). In the field of language and literacy studies, a growing number of researchers have proposed that the local literacy practices of migrant populations cannot be understood in isolation from their social networks and sense of belonging across geographical borders (Guerra, 1998; Saxena, 2000; Farr, 2006; Lam, 2006a; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007; Warriner, 2007; Yi, 2009). Studies in this research literature have explored how transnational social relationships and cultural affiliation affect the kinds of linguistic resources used for language maintenance among migrant groups and how the younger generations of these groups are using multiple languages and modes of communication to signify and negotiate their affiliations across countries.

A number of studies that investigated the effects of transnational relationships on language maintenance have examined the choice of language and script in the literacy practices of migrants, communicative interactions through physical movements across the host and home countries, and interactions in online contexts. Saxena’s (1994, 2000) research with Punjabi speakers in Britain found that the migrants’ cultural and religious roots and relations to the religio-political conflicts in India were influential factors in their choice of language (Punjabi, Hindi, or Urdu) and script (Gurmukhi, Devangari, or the Perso-Arabic script) for usage and teaching the next generation. Researchers such as Farr (2006), Guerra (1998) and Sanchez (2007) have documented how the close-knit relationships between Mexican immigrants in the United States and their families in Mexico and regular traveling across the border provided the communicative resources and motivation for the younger generations to maintain fluency in their native language.

The relationship of transnational communication to native language literacy is also increasingly mediated by new and different kinds of communicative media. For example, Lee’s (2006) case study of two Korean-American college-age siblings found that their social networking activities on Korea’s popular website, Cyworld.com, promoted their sociopsychological attachment to the Korean language and culture and provided them with a community of Korean speakers with whom to engage in interpersonal written exchanges. In a case study of a first-generation Chinese-American adolescent’s use of instant messaging in participating in multiple linguistic communities across countries, Lam (2009) shows how the youth adopted mixtures of Mandarin and the newly popularized written conventions of her native dialect, Shanghainese, to assert her affiliation with her hometown, Shanghai, and manage cross-border relationships with her peers in China.

Additionally, several recent studies have explored how youth migrants and children of immigrants use multiple languages in digital communication to signify their transnational affiliations and frame of reference. In Yi’s (2009) research of the online activities of a local community of Korean-American teenagers in Midwestern United States who had grown up partly in Korea and partly in the United States, she found that their instant messaging and web postings to each other within the local peer group contain copious mixing of English and Korean and frequent references to practices in both Korea and the United States, including references to school culture, music and other forms of popular culture in these two countries. Similar multilingual practices and representation of transnational experiences are described in McGinnis et al’s (2007) case portraits of two Bengali-American and Colombian-American youth and a Jewish-American youth with strong affiliation with Israel. These young people’s uses of online journals and social networking sites allow them to express their multilingual identities and transnational frame of reference that seldom get represented in their schooling experience. Lam & Rosario-Ramos’s (2009) interview study of
Internet use among 36 high-school age immigrant students also found a transnational frame of reference among many of these youth who access information and communication media in both the United States and their countries of origin. In discussing their media use, the youth described the different accounts on world events that they found in news across the United States and their countries of origin and the advantage of being exposed to a wider range of news and perspectives.

What the young people in these studies showed in their orientation to practices across countries has been termed ‘a dual frame of reference’ (Guarnizo, 1997, p. 311) or ‘bifocality’ (Vertovec, 2004, p. 974) by researchers of transnational migration. These researchers have proposed that transnational forms of communication and activities facilitate migrants’ continuous exposure to practices across countries and, hence, promote a cognitive orientation by which migrants compare their life experiences, events, and situations from the dual points of view of their native society and their adopted society. Such a cross-societal frame of reference is relevant for understanding the literacy development of young migrants as they access and compare media and information sources across countries for knowledge making.

In summary, the research literature reviewed above highlights the importance of understanding the literacy development of immigrant youth with regard to their affiliations across the host and home countries; in particular, it shows the impact of transnational relationships on native language maintenance, multilingual identities, and the development of a cross-societal frame of reference. In the present study, I seek to extend research on literacy in transnational contexts by examining immigrant adolescents’ participation in online communities that are centered on a shared interest or practice. While previous studies have mostly explored the literacy practices of transnational migrants in the informal social spheres of interpersonal communication and personal expressions, this study analyzes how two teenagers of Chinese origin navigate online media across countries to participate in a domain of interest, and how these online practices are related to language maintenance and development, transnational affiliation, and the use of multiple languages and media resources to learn. In the following, I draw on recent studies of digital media and literacy, particularly with regard to the concept of ‘affinity space’, to provide a conceptual framework for understanding literacy development and learning in networked online contexts.

Affinity Space, Specialist Language, and Distributed Knowledge

A range of researchers have pointed out how literacy in digital environments is embedded in distributed networks, which may be networks of hypertexts (texts linked to each other on the Web), but more importantly networks of relationships where one can access and develop textual resources within multiple communities (e.g. Luke, 2003; Jenkins, 2006; Gee, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). The role of social networks in the formation of online literacy practices among young people has been foregrounded in recent studies around the notion ‘affinity space’ (Gee, 2004, 2007) – a supportive social structure for people coalescing around a common interest, passion, or proclivity. These studies have explored youth practices in online affinity spaces devoted to web-page making (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Lam, 2006b), fan fiction and fan art (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar; 2003; Thomas, 2006; Black, 2008), video gaming (Gee, 2004; Squire, 2008; Steinkuehler, 2008), and online journaling (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005), among others. Such affinity spaces share the characteristics of a participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) where young people engage in peer-to-peer learning, creating and sharing media content, and collective support and problem solving.

Among the features that Gee (2004, 2007) identifies as characteristic of affinity spaces are two features of literacy and learning that are germane to this study: (1) the use of specialist varieties of language, and (2) the use of distributed and dispersed knowledge. Gee (2004) defines specialist varieties of language as ways of using language that are tied to the content and activities of specialist domains, whether the domain is an academic or professional field or an interest or hobby such as real-time strategy video games. Whereas vernacular varieties of language are acquired through informal everyday interaction, specialist language is usually acquired through participation in a domain of activity that involves particular uses of vocabulary, syntax, and discourse features to represent the content, ways of interaction, and other functions in the domain.
For example, Gee (2007) identifies a wide range of technical vocabulary, multisyllabic words, and complex syntax in the popular Yu-Gi-Oh children’s card game that far surpasses the language that many young children encounter in their school books. Black’s (2008) study of an online community of adolescent writers of fan fiction (stories written by fans using media narratives and pop culture icons as inspiration) reveals copious metalinguistic practices such as peer-to-peer editing and comments on plot, character development and issues of grammar among fellow fan fiction writers. In a survey of the literacy practices of a massively multiplayer online game, Steinkuehler (2007) shows a variety of interactive genres that are common in the game, including text and voice messaging, in-game letters, and strategy guides and other forms of reflection on the game both within the game site and beyond in various discussion forums.

Another feature that characterizes affinity spaces is that people are encouraged and enabled to connect what they know to the knowledge that exists in other people, artifacts, media, or tools in a particular site and sometimes across multiple sites. For example, the young fanfiction writers in Black’s (2008) study receive and contribute reader reviews to each other and utilize tools (spellcheckers, thesauruses) on Fanfiction.net and cross-linked resources on other fan sites to develop their writing skills and portfolio. The gamers in Steinkuehler’s (2007) research develop knowledge and skills for the game through interacting with other players and artifacts within the game site and in a sundry of beyond-game spaces such as blogs and discussion forums where fellow players engage in theorizing about their own game. When knowledge is distributed across multiple actors and artifacts on a site and dispersed across multiple related sites, it means that people have a range of resources to draw from in constructing their knowledge and participation in a practice. As Gee (2004, p. 86) observed, ‘When knowledge is dispersed in a space, the space does not set strict boundaries around the areas from which people will draw knowledge and skills’.

In this study, I examine how two young migrants’ transnational affiliation and frame of reference affect their literacy development and knowledge making in the distributed network of an affinity space. In particular, I examine the ways in which they utilized Internet media resources from their country of origin and across the home and host countries to develop literacy in a domain of interest. I analyze how the youth participated in the specialist language of their domain of interest through their native language and, in the case of one of them, how multiple languages were used to gather information and access the dispersed knowledge from online media across countries.

Method

Study Background

Data for this research are taken from a larger comparative case study of the digital literacy practices of immigrant youth of Chinese descent across transnational contexts. A case-study approach is adopted for this project with the aim to generate contextualized analysis of literacy use and learning (Erickson, 1986; Dyson & Genishi, 2005), especially given the paucity of research on immigrant adolescents’ practices with digital media. Qualitative case analyses developed from this project examine how the adolescents who are the focus of this study use the Internet to organize social relationships, use and produce information and media content across countries, and develop cross-cultural orientation in their language and literacy learning. The six youth who participated in this project were attending high school in a metropolitan Midwestern city at the time of the study.

Recruitment of the youth participants was carried out through a survey and screening interviews. A survey on transnational communication was administered to students at a comprehensive high school with a large immigrant population from Latin America and Asia. Close to 19% of the survey respondents were of Chinese origin, among whom 73% indicated that they used the Internet to communicate with people in China. Based on the survey responses, we invited 20 students of Chinese origin who indicated engagement in different forms of transnational communication to participate in one-time focus group interviews. From these interviews, we recruited case-study participants who showed both similar and diverse patterns of media use, and received formal consent for their participation in this research.

The key informants for the present study were Jun and Kevan (all names are pseudonyms), two male adolescents who emigrated to the United States with their families from the Guangdong
province of China during their middle childhood. I focused on Jun and Kevan for the present study because of their high level of involvement in a domain of interest on the Internet. While I also gathered data on their social activities carried out through instant messaging and social networking sites, in this article I focus on the data relevant to their participation in affinity or interest-based communities across countries. As an emigrant who moved to the United States from Hong Kong at the age of 16 and is now a university researcher, I have been personally involved in the Chinese-American community and have taught in high school with large numbers of youth of Chinese origin. My proficiency in Cantonese and Mandarin and familiarity with the local immigrant community have helped me to develop a degree of rapport with the study participants that is essential for exploring literacy practices in the personal domain of their social life. All of the interviews with Jun and Kevan were conducted in Cantonese, the native language shared among the youth and me, and included various amounts of code-switching to English depending on the situation.

Data Collection

The bulk of the data collection for this study took place between July and December 2007, although I continued to have contact with Jun and Kevan and conducted follow-up interviews until April 2008. Data consisted of observations of Jun’s and Kevan’s computer and Internet use in their homes; recording of their activities online and retrospective reflection, with them, on these activities; semi-structured interviews about their personal history and routines of Internet use; and selected observations of their activities in school and the local Chinese immigrant community. I visited Jun and Kevan at their homes to conduct observations of their online activities seven times between July and December 2007. For each home visit, which lasted approximately 1½ to two hours, screen recording was made of their online activities (using Spector Pro, Spector Soft, Vero Beach, FL), our conversations and interactions around the computer were recorded on videotape, and field notes were written to provide a narrative description of the observation.

After having identified that Jun was an active participant in a philosophy discussion board on a Hong Kong-based website and that Kevan frequently accessed online resources on anime and manga across the United States and Hong Kong in our initial home observations and interviews, we conducted several demonstration sessions in which the youth showed and explained how they participated and accessed media content in these websites. In the demonstration sessions, I incorporated the techniques of think-aloud protocols (Kucan & Beck, 1997; Afflerbach, 1999) by asking the youth to verbalize their thoughts and explain their choices as they navigated the online environments related to their interests. Think-aloud protocols have been used in literacy research to study the cognitive process of reading by asking readers to verbalize their thoughts at different points as they work their way through a document. Lewis & Fabos (2005) adopted think-aloud protocols in their study of instant messaging communication by asking the research participants to explain their communicative strategies while they were engaging in instant messaging exchanges on the screen. In the present study, I used think-aloud to document the process through which the youth participated and accessed resources in the online communities related to their interests.

For example, during several demonstration sessions, Jun went through the process of reading a list of topics on the philosophy discussion board and choosing the topics in which he was interested to read and respond in detail. After he finished reading each post on a particular topic, I would ask probing questions on the meaning of the post (what is it saying?) and what he thought about the post. After being asked these questions a few times, Jun began to provide spontaneous comments on the posts in regard to their meaning and his agreement or disagreement with them. In the case of Kevan, besides describing the different websites and types of content within each website that he used to gather information and resources on anime and manga, he also demonstrated what he would do when he wanted to learn about a new anime production. While he demonstrated the sequential process of looking up information about a particular anime across different websites, I asked probing questions on what he paid attention to when looking at a particular kind of online content and how the online material helped him to learn more about the anime production.
All interviews and conversations recorded during the home observations were transcribed verbatim. To keep this presentation as concise as possible, most interview data have been translated into English from their original Cantonese, except where the original verbatim transcription assists in providing evidence of the style of language used by the participant.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved using qualitative procedures of inductive and interpretive coding, cross-comparison of codes, and triangulation across data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Charmaz, 2006). Analysis was carried out on the data set of interview transcripts, screen recordings, audio-recording transcripts and field notes from the home observations. My theoretical perspective provided an interpretive frame for the development of codes as I related instances in the data to concepts such as transnational frame of reference, affinity space, specialist language, and distributed and dispersed knowledge. Using the method of constant comparison (Miles & Hubermann, 1994), I looked for key linkages among various pieces of data, signaled by the reoccurrence of the same codes, to examine patterns within and across data types. The patterns that were identified were placed in larger analytic categories that incorporated a number of related codes. These larger categories within and across data sources were then grouped conceptually to provide a basis for the themes presented in the findings.

For example, a theme developed from the analysis of the case of Jun is that, through his participation in a philosophy discussion forum, Jun was utilizing Internet media resources from his country of origin to develop literacy in a domain of interest and enact affiliation across border. This theme is supported by analytic categories that include ‘learning through reading others’ posts and writing one’s own’, ‘use of complex language and rhetorical moves in the posts’, and ‘writing in Cantonese to show alignment with local youth culture’. These analytic categories were developed from the triangulation of codes across the interview data (i.e. what the youth said about his participation in the philosophy forum) and analysis of the content of a series of discussion posts and his think-aloud responses to the posts (i.e. what the youth demonstrated in his participation in the forum). Similar cross-comparison of codes across interviews, online recording, and think-aloud verbalization was performed on the data set related to the case of Kevan.

Native Language Literacy and Learning in a Philosophy Forum

Sixteen-year-old Jun migrated with his mother to the United States when he was 12 years of age. The family lived in the vicinity of Chinatown where the mother was employed as a sales clerk in a small market. Jun had taken two years of classes in English as a second language until grade 9 and was beginning grade 11 at the time of the study. He was enrolled in Honors English and Advanced Placement Statistics and was generally in good academic standing in school.

Besides playing video games and communicating with friends online through instant messaging and Facebook (a social networking site), Jun would visit a popular discussion forum called Uwants (http://www5.uwants.com) hosted on a server in Hong Kong several times a week. The media and cultural industries in the metropolitan city of Hong Kong have been greatly influential in Guangdong province, where Jun spent his childhood, which explains in part his interest in the Internet media of Hong Kong. The discussion forum has over one million registered users and is organized into a large number of discussion boards on topics that are of interest to residents in Hong Kong. Jun noted that he visited the forum to keep up with trends in Chinese popular music and fashion, but among the discussion boards in which he participated, he was most interested in the one on philosophy. In his words, ‘Mostly I like to go to topics on philosophy, because I really like it. After I’ve read what other people say, I like to say something myself. In philosophy we usually talk about views on life, and how to live your life, so I’d learn about these things’. The discussion board, called 哲學人生 (Philosophy and Life), involves general discussion of personal values and philosophical issues in everyday life and society.

While Modern Written Chinese and written Cantonese are the main languages that are used on the discussion forum, English is also seen to a lesser degree on the site. Since the reversion of Hong Kong’s sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997, the official language policy promoted in
the city is biliteracy in Chinese and English and trilingualism in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English (Li, 2006). Of all the Chinese dialects, only the national language, Mandarin, has an established writing tradition which is officially codified as Modern Written Chinese and recognized as the standard written language in present-day China. Hence, literacy in Chinese almost always refers to the ability to read and write Modern Written Chinese. Cantonese, which is spoken widely in the southern Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, and the two special administrative regions, Hong Kong and Macao, stands as a prestigious dialect with a highly developed written language that is prominent in the mass media of Hong Kong (Snow, 2004). The use of written Cantonese is especially pervasive among young people communicating online in Hong Kong (Lee, 2002, 2007). Jun, whose native dialect is Cantonese, enacted his affiliation with this youth culture of Hong Kong through his choice of written conventions in his postings, as will be discussed later in this section.

When I asked Jun to describe further what he ‘learned’ on the philosophy forum, he said:

You can learn many things ... inside there are some people, a topic, something that you discuss about. Or a person posts a question and asks you how you think about it. Then you can think about something so your brain won’t always be idle ... Also, when you reply somebody, it’s not only that person who will gain something, you yourself can learn something too. When you reply you’ll have to think, and when you think you’ll come to realize, oh that’s the way I think about it, I didn’t know before that’s how I would think about it ... Also, I can practice my Chinese. So as much as possible when I type and respond in Chinese, I will, even though I use Cantonese, I will type it in a more written style, so I can practice. Otherwise, I would forget how to use Chinese, and the structure of the Chinese language.

Here, Jun emphasized the process of thinking and learning through reading others’ posts and writing his own, and engaging in the interactive exchanges on the philosophy discussion board through the use of his native language. He noted his intention to use his participation in the forum as an opportunity to ‘practice’ the written usage and structures of Chinese even while he adopted Cantonese as the base dialect in his writing. In other words, according to Jun’s description, he was both practicing literacy in his native language and using his native language as an intellectual tool to engage in philosophical discussions on the Hong Kong forum. Jun further described the complex language and vocabulary that he encountered on the forum:

Some people ask really hard (profound) questions. When they type something to discuss with us, the words they use are also really difficult words. So you’d know how their standard is. And you learn from that. If someone uses a difficult word, you have to read it, and if you don’t understand you’d think about it. So you’d learn.

In the following, I use a topic on the forum that Jun read and responded to during one of his demonstrations to discuss the kinds of interactive exchanges and specialist language in which he participated.

The topic or question that initiated the discussion thread carries the title: 人控制命運？命運控制人？ (Do humans control fate/destiny? Or does fate/destiny control humans?) The Chinese term for ‘fate’ or ‘destiny’ that is used in this question has a neutral connotation and, hence, can be translated in either way. Henceforth, we will use ‘fate’ as the English equivalent for the term. The content of the initiating post reads as follows:

你們相信人控制命運or命運控制人
大家發表下意見！

(Do you believe ... that humans control their fate or fate controls humans? Share your opinion!)

This question is followed by a series of responses, the first of which is:

嘿，都說「命運」是一種修辯手法。
(Heh, I say ‘fate’ is a rhetorical device.)

By putting the term fate in quotation marks and noting that the term is a rhetorical device, thereby implying that it does not have ontological status, this respondent is questioning the a priori
understanding of fate that is taken for granted in the initiating post. This response sparked a suggestion from a third poster to approach the issue as a problem of ‘free will’:

(What if we switched to asking whether humans have ‘free will’? Is this still considered a rhetorical device?)

Here, the poster proposes a rephrasing of the question of whether humans can control their fate to a question of whether humans have free will and, by putting free will in quotation marks, also seeks an elaboration or explanation of the notion of rhetoric put forth by the previous poster.

Following this suggestion is a response from the second poster on what s/he means by fate being a matter of rhetoric:

(I say fate is a rhetorical device, because humans encounter two types of circumstances, one which they can manipulate and control, and the other in face of which they are helpless and powerless. Regarding the former, naturally it is part of their own self; regarding the latter, people often generalize it into a human-like characterization, as an holistic object controlled by an entity. Some call this entity god, others choose to name it fate. Why do people use personification? Because as humans, they can only comprehend what is related to the human self, and therefore they project their self-understanding onto the external world.)

This post contains an argument that fate is a rhetorical device, and the argument is based on several interrelated propositions. First, the poster provides a classification of matters into those that humans can ‘manipulate and control’ and those over which they are ‘helpless and powerless’, thereby extending and complexifying the meaning of ‘control’ in the original question. Second, the poster relates how humans understand the latter (what they cannot do anything about) to a rhetorical process of personification whereby these matters are ascribed the state of an entity such as God or fate. Third, the poster provides a reason why humans would use the process of personification to understand the world. After Jun had read this posting, I asked him what he thought the poster meant by saying that fate is a rhetorical device. Jun noted his understanding as follows:

(If [fate] is not a thing, it’s a term ... it means people call it like this, not that it exists from the beginning ... It is a rhetorical device, it’s personification, like, they express what they encounter in human form ... They turn it into an entity, an entity that becomes God or what they call fate. That is, they explain the things they can’t control as God or fate.)

Here, Jun shows an understanding of what a rhetorical device means in explaining that fate is something that humans construct through the use of language. He further relates this rhetorical process to personification and elaborates on the meaning of personification in his own words. The notion that fate is constructed by humans is picked up again later in the response that Jun wrote and posted to this topic.

The fifth poster on this thread responded to the idea of ‘free will’ suggested in the third posting and commented on it from a sociological point of view, citing Max Weber (prominent German sociologist) and Weber’s analysis of bureaucracy:

對一部分社會學家來說，沒有自由意志這回事。
詳見Max Weber有關科層制度的分析。
(To certain sociologists, there is no such thing as free will. For details see Max Weber’s analysis on bureaucracy. A person’s actions are constrained by a set of norms, which if they don’t follow will result in marginalization by others. For example: talking to oneself.)

Below is Jun’s reaction to this post and my follow-up question for him:

jun: 我記得他相信個人講的...因為他說一個個人講的行为...受到一個規範控制，就會因為你講一個規範控制住，先至會有你所講的講的。

問: 咁規範？

答: 例如法律囉。或者你身邊嘅人對你講嘅。

(jun: I think s/he believes what this person [Weber] says ... because s/he says a person’s actions are constrained by a set of norms, and because you’re constrained by these norms, you experience the things that you do.

eva: What are these norms?

jun: For example, laws. Or, things that people around you say to you.)

Here, Jun elaborated on the notion of norms upon my probing, remarking that norms include laws and the comments made by other people. He further noted in our conversation his agreement with the idea that our behaviors are restricted by certain rules, giving the example that there are things that people cannot say in particular places even though we are supposed to have freedom of speech in this country. This notion of people’s influence on each other also seems to appear in Jun’s later posting on this topic.

In the interactional exchanges discussed above, we see a series of rhetorical moves distributed across the postings, which include questioning an assumption embedded in the initiating topic, suggesting an alternative way of phrasing the issue (from control of fate to free will), providing an argument for a position, and citing scholarly work to support one’s idea. These rhetorical moves are linguistically constructed not only through the use of specialist vocabulary such as 修辞手法 (rhetorical device), 自由意志 (free will), 情人法 (personification), 實體 (entity), 人類自身 (human self), 社會學家 (sociologist), 规範 (norms), but also through the use of complex sentence structures (especially in the second poster’s argument on fate being a matter of rhetoric), the use of rhetorical question, and textual phrasing for citation of scholarly work (‘For details see Max Weber’s …’).

While these postings are all written in Modern Written Chinese, several subsequent postings include a large amount of Cantonese writing. An example is shown below:

(I know little of technical terminology
But =] I would still like to share my opinion
I think it’s actually bidirectional
What we call ‘fate’ ... from my perspective ... is illusory and unreal
When a person thinks for certain that something is ‘fate’ ... and allows this self-affirmed belief in so-called ‘fate’ run their life
then ... it is fate controlling human
When a person doesn’t believe in so-called ‘fate’ ... their world will be full of unknown contingencies
Walking on different paths ... seeing different things ... this so-called ‘fate’ will also change with...
the different contingencies
then ... it is humans controlling their own fate)

This posting manifests the use of Cantonese and an Internet style of writing that is especially common among the younger generations in Hong Kong. In this Internet style, the statements follow each other on separate lines rather than in a continuous prose; ellipsis is used to signal pauses and cadences in place of standard punctuation; and an emoticon (the smiley: =]) is adopted as a visual form of paralinguistic cue. Even though the use of Cantonese makes the posting sound more colloquial, there is copious use of formal terms and expressions, such as 專有名詞 (technical terminology), 雙向 (bidirectional), 係我角度出發 (from my perspective), 自我肯定 (self-affirmed), 變數 (contingencies), and inclusion of complex clausal structures in the utterances. After reading two other posts that were also written primarily in Cantonese, Jun posted the following response, written in Cantonese, to this thread:

(I basically disagree that fate controls humans, but I also disagree that humans control their fate ...

I think fate is a self-consolatory explanation that is generated by people in times of their own weakness. When a person encounters unfortunate happenings, s/he would tend to consider it as fate’s doing, and consequently would give up striving for what s/he wishes ...

Basically I only believe that humans control humans, and they only control themselves ...

I think saying that fate controls humans is an act of irresponsibility ... and as for humans controlling fate, it would be an act of hyperbole.)

In this response, Jun posits that the notion of fate is constructed by humans, echoing the previous poster who expounded on the idea of fate as rhetoric, and also brings in the moral dimension of human responsibility for their own actions. In addition, he reframes the issue as a matter of the control or influence that humans exert on one another and on themselves rather than a matter of humans and fate. This idea of people controlling each other also seems to build upon an earlier poster’s suggestion that people’s actions are constrained by norms and Jun’s interpretation of norms as laws and public opinions. Linguistically, Jun’s writing incorporates an Internet style with statements arranged on separate lines and ellipses being used to signal pauses and cadences mostly at the end of a sentence in place of a period. The posting also involves the use of complex sentence structures with coordinating and subordinating clauses, and formal vocabulary and expressions such as 基本上 (basically), 產生 (generate), 往往就會 (would tend to), 從而 (consequently), 則 (a formal connective expressing contrast), 通稱其事態行為 (act of hyperbole).

Moreover, through the use of Cantonese and an Internet style in his writing, Jun enacted his affiliation with the youth culture of Hong Kong. He expressed such an affiliation in one of our interviews:

Jun: I saw other people use Cantonese, and so I use Cantonese ... maybe they’d feel more comfortable when they see writing in Cantonese. I’d feel that way myself, ’cause I can tell, say this is a Taiwanese since s/he types in traditional Chinese characters, and also from the tone of voice, or this is a Mainlander ...

Eva: But Hong Kongers can also write in Chinese prose [formal written Chinese].

Jun: Yeah, but those who write in Chinese prose you know they are more advanced in age.

By suggesting a shared sense of comfort with Cantonese writing among himself and the young people in Hong Kong and distinguishing their common language from the script choices and writing styles of Taiwanese, Mainland Chinese, and the older generations in Hong Kong, Jun seemed consciously aware of how his use of written Cantonese aligns him with the youth culture of Hong Kong.

In summary, through his participation in the Uwants discussion forum, Jun was utilizing Internet media resources from his country of origin to maintain and extend literacy in his native
language. At the same time, Jun was using his native language as an intellectual tool to explore issues in philosophy and enact transnational affiliation with the youth culture of Hong Kong. The affinity space of the discussion forum provided an environment in which Jun was exposed to and adopted some complex linguistic and rhetorical patterns to engage in everyday philosophical discussion. While the distributed resources for learning in this case are mostly located within a particular Internet site, in the second case discussed here we see the use of media resources across countries and across languages (Chinese and English) in the development of another young man’s participation in a domain of interest.

**Multilingual Literacy and Learning across Online Communities**

Seventeen-year-old Kevan had lived in the United States with his parents since he was nine years of age. His parents were both employed in a textile factory in the Chinatown neighborhood where the family lived. Except for two years in elementary school when he received oral bilingual support in the classroom, Kevan had been taking regular grade-level classes and was enrolled in grade 11 at the time of this study.

Kevan noted that he had not received any formal literacy instruction in the Chinese language since coming to the United States and had maintained contact with written materials in Chinese mainly through the Internet. Similar to Jun, Kevan would visit websites such as Uwants several times a week to keep up with news and trends in popular culture in Hong Kong and China and obtain information and media resources on his major interest, namely anime and manga. Kevan had been an avid follower of anime and manga since he was a young child and had been using both Chinese and English in his reading and viewing practices. He began watching anime dubbed in Chinese when he was living in China and, since coming to the United States, had maintained a preference for anime videos with Chinese subtitles that he obtained online. However, he became an avid reader of manga only after he came to the United States and had mostly read manga titles in English translation. In addition, Kevan’s language choice in his participation in anime and manga was affected by the availability of English and Chinese translations of the particular anime and manga titles in which he was interested. He explained: ‘I only look for English subtitles [of anime] if I can’t find the Chinese subtitles … Now I read some [manga] in Chinese. It is because some do not have the English release, so I read the Chinese’. In short, for Kevan, the complementary use of two languages in his reading and viewing practices around anime and manga was influenced by his transnational experience of having lived in two countries, his linguistic history, and the desire to expand access to available resources.

Indeed, Kevan used both languages to navigate different websites across countries to access resources related to anime and manga. The two English language websites that he used most frequently were Anime Paper [3] and Gendou [4], both of which were organized and maintained by fans of anime and manga and had tens of thousands of registered users. Among the Chinese language Internet sites that Kevan visited regularly were two discussion forums based in Hong Kong, namely Uwants and Fail Forum (http://www.failforum.net). Like Uwants, Fail Forum had over one million registered users and was organized into a myriad number of discussion boards devoted to specific topics, including anime and manga. In looking for anime videos online, Kevan would visit the audiovisual section of Uwants to find subtitles in Chinese and the English fan site Gendou to search for subtitles in English. Gendou was also the site where Kevan would go to browse and download anime music videos, whereas Anime Paper served as a destination for obtaining fan-produced computer wallpapers and other kinds of fan artwork. In addition, Kevan regularly perused and sometimes participated in the discussion boards on all four websites related to various topics of anime and manga.

This ability to access the dispersed knowledge and resources in the global anime/manga fandom has a distinct advantage, in particular because of cultural differences across geographical regions, as some anime/manga titles are shown or featured more prominently in certain countries than others. As Kevan observed, ‘some animes are not shown in America, so you don’t know about those, and some are shown in China, so you get to know about those’. Such a transnational frame of reference in Kevan’s participation in the online communities of anime and manga had prompted him to use multiple languages to access a wider variety of geographically distinct types of
audiovisual resources, discussions, and fan productions. Kevan put it this way: ‘if you know several languages, the area that you can look up information is wider. If you only know one language, the information you can find would be limited and, yeah, the reality is like that.’ In the following, I discuss how Kevan participated in two sets of literacy genres in the anime/manga online communities across languages and geographical regions.

**Synopses and Reviews**

Two popular textual genres featured in many anime/manga websites are synopses and reviews of particular anime/manga productions. A synopsis provides a summary of the storyline of the production together with information about the artists and production staff and sometimes short descriptions of the central characters in the story. A review is an evaluative commentary on a production that provides a mix of descriptive information and personal comments on various aspects of the production. Synopses and reviews are either submitted to a website by fellow fans or provided by the site administrators for the purpose of sharing information and promoting new titles or productions that are of interest to the online community.

To learn about new anime releases, Kevan would search across websites in Chinese and English to look for synopses and reviews on the new releases. In a demonstration session, Kevan described looking up a synopsis of a new anime production on Fail Forum in Chinese and then going to the English website, Anime Paper, to find a review of the anime. Excerpts of the synopsis from Fail Forum and review from Anime Paper that Kevan chose for the demonstration are shown in Appendix A and B, respectively. Below is Kevan’s description of the process:

First, I’d go to this Chinese site ... I’d look at what the story is about ... For example I haven’t seen this one before. Here it has a brief overview of the story, just as when you read a book there might be an introduction. It would post some pictures, and tell you what the story is about ... I’d read all this. Usually it also tells you who does the voice-overs for the different characters. CV means voice-overs ... Then I’d go to Anime Paper to see if anyone’s talking about it ... Review is kind of like the summaries too, and gives you information on what the story is about. In reviews you also find some comments, personal comments, for example, whether a particular person thinks the anime is good or not, how the graphic quality is like, how well the voice-overs are done, and how the story development is like, whether it’s interesting or not, how it unfolds.

The Chinese synopsis of the anime *Seto No Hanayome* that Kevan described above includes a layered description of the plot, background information about the production, and short character descriptions. The synopsis is also accompanied by a number of graphic images of the anime. Appendix B shows an English review of another anime, *Code Geass*, on Anime Paper, which Kevan chose as an example to illustrate the type of reviews that he would look up on the website. The choice to use *Code Geass* as an example was due to the fact that he could not locate any review of *Seto No Hanayome* on Anime Paper. This review offers descriptive and evaluative comments on the plot, characters, graphics and animation, and entertainment quality of the anime from a first-person point of view. By providing varying amounts of descriptive and evaluative information, the two genres of synopsis and review play a complementary role in helping Kevan assess the quality of an anime. Moreover, navigating different websites across geographical regions not only allowed him to use both languages to participate in these two popular genres in the anime online community but also to capitalize on the particular resources offered across different types of Internet sites and cultural and geographical regions. For example, synopses were featured prominently on the Chinese site, Fail Forum, which was oriented toward information sharing and discussion, while reviews were more often found on the fan site, Anime Paper, which offered a venue for fans to share their personal tastes and opinions. The fact that these two websites were located in different cultural and geographical regions allowed Kevan to access informational resources across both an overlapping and distinct range of anime productions depending on the popularity and visibility of particular productions in the respective region. These differences in the nature of the websites and their geographical location in creating a dispersed network of knowledge or resources that Kevan utilized are seen again in relation to another set of textual genres, which I turn to below.
Forum Discussions

As mentioned earlier, Kevan regularly perused and sometimes participated in the discussion forums on the different English and Chinese websites related to various topics of anime and manga. In a demonstration session, he noted the differences between the types of discussion that took place on the English language fan sites and the Chinese discussion forums. With regard to the English sites, Kevan said:

English forums would usually discuss the whole series ... usually the discussions are more general ... people would talk about what they think about the anime, whether they liked it or not, or why they liked it ... such as whether they liked *Bleach* [an anime and manga series] or not ... They might ask, which character do you like? ... some people might say that a certain anime is really good, and other people might have the guts to say, 'I don’t like this anime'.

Here, Kevan observed that the discussions on the English sites tended to involve overall evaluation of an anime and the sharing among fans of their particular preferences and experiences with an anime.

To exemplify what he meant, he pointed to the topic on the anime series *Bleach* on the discussion board of Anime Paper. There were six discussion threads under this topic: one was an announcement from the website administrators, another contained links to other popular sites related to the anime, and four were questions about the anime. These questions included one that asked if ‘filler’ episodes (segments of the anime that do not appear in the manga on which the anime is based) were currently being aired; another asked about similarities between *Bleach* and other anime titles; and a third one was a query on some minor characters and their role in the anime. Prominent among the questions was the one entitled, ‘What do you think about Bleach? And if you don’t like it, why?’ which received 291 responses, far above other questions that had between 2 and 59 responses. The content of this question read: ‘Well i was just wondering how many of you like bleach. i mean it is my fav [favorite], but what are your views on it?’ By disclosing the personal motivation behind this question (‘i mean it is my fav’), this question serves to solicit the opinions of fellow fans to create a community of shared interest. The responses to the question included mostly positive but also some negative comments on the themes, plot, characters, action scenes, and the graphics and artistic quality of the anime as a whole. Below are two examples of the responses:

It is a good series and the plot is great. I love the idea of the whole ‘Soul Society’ thing and that death gods choose your fate ... I like the drawings, but they’re not exactly pretty, but suited for an action series. I like Byakuya’s hair! Its so unique and cool!

Overall I like all the characters and yes it is FUNNY! For pairings I like Ichigo and Rukia but NOT Ichigo and Orhime! Ishida and Orhime are a nice couple for me! Chad ... should stay alone ... He scares me a little bit with his quiet mood and unusually tall and muscular body. He’s strong and i don’t think he even works out ... He’s unnaturally strong? Its a good series, as I repeated again ... I LOVE IT! Not that far though ...

Yeah I definitely agree with sheydon. Even when the anime has already deviated from the manga’s story, they’re still worth watching since it spans numerous episodes like an arc. *Naruto*, on the other hand, only presents episodic incidents as the fillers with little added value other than the occasional extra character development.

I’ve stopped watching *Naruto* for sometime, but I’m still enjoying Bleach.

Both of these respondents described their experiences in the first person, with the first respondent stating her preference in regard to particular thematic elements in the plot, character design and the pairing of characters as couples in the story, and the second respondent commenting on the overall narrative aspects of plot and character development in comparison to the manga version, and contrasting *Bleach* with another anime, *Naruto*. The second respondent also echoed the comments of another poster and referred to the person by his first name. By describing their personal responses to particular animes in the forum discussion, these participants of Anime Paper were building a fan community based on the sharing of experience, evaluation, and preference. It was to this personal response genre of forum discussion that Kevan would turn to learn about the
interest level of an anime; as he remarked, 'I’d go to the English site if I don’t know which anime I should watch, to find out what the story is about and what people have to say about it'.

In contrast, Kevan would turn to the Chinese forums to look for another kind of discussion around anime and manga. He explained:

But for Chinese websites, the questions asked are usually about things that happened in the anime... plot, characters... People ask more questions in Chinese forums, or they’d discuss, for example, 'chapter 284 place for focused discussion' [thread on discussion board]. They’d concentrate their discussion on a certain episode or character... For Chinese sites, if you haven’t seen the anime before, if you go into the forum, you wouldn’t understand the discussions.

Here, Kevan emphasized that the discussions on the Chinese sites tended to focus on the content of the story within an episode or in regard to a character. As an example, he referred to a discussion thread on the Chinese website Uwants that invited exchanges about a specific chapter (284) of the manga version of *Bleach*. Among the 22 discussion threads that we recorded under the topic of *Bleach* on the anime/manga discussion board during this demonstration session, nine of them dealt with questions about a particular episode or chapter; character motives, statuses and relationships; or other specific elements of the anime/manga. The titles of the nine threads are shown below:

- 我的論壇 284話 [集中討論區]
- 中國的討論

*Ichigo’s real motive, mentality?*  
Chapter 284 Ichigo is possessed  
A question about Zanpakuto (supernatural swords)  
Question about Ichigo  
[Manga] chapter 284 [place for focused discussion]  
I’m at 187 and realize that Ichigo’s whole family is crazy =_=’ [emoticon]  
Aizen’s motive (let’s analyze)  
Just finished 283, I feel that Ichigo and Orihime ...

Other discussion threads involved postings of videos, graphic images, and quizzes about the anime/manga, and a few that asked about the age of fellow fans of *Bleach*, their favorite characters, and who they would vote as the most attractive character. Hence, while there were exchanges meant to foster community building among fans, there was also a large amount of discussion around specific content of the anime/manga. For example, in the thread entitled '[Manga] chapter 284 [place for focused discussion]' (see Appendix C), the poster made observations about particular action sequences in the chapter, raised questions about character motives, and offered description and explanation for the status of particular characters. Such content-based discussion was much more prominent on the Chinese discussion-oriented websites than the English fan sites in which Kevan participated. While a comprehensive analysis of these websites is beyond the scope of this article, what this case study serves to show is Kevan’s gravitation to English fan sites to participate in the discussion genre of personal responses and to Chinese forums for content-based discussion. The minimal presence of fan-organized websites in Hong Kong had made the discussion-oriented forums like Uwants and Fail Forum major venues for gathering and exchanging resources on anime/manga (Carol Man Wai Poon, personal communication).[6] The prominence of these Chinese online venues and their content-specific discussion might have led Kevan to designate these sites for fulfilling the purpose of exchange of ideas on story content and to turn to American fan sites that were plentiful in number for fan-based reviews and responses.
In summary, we see in Kevan’s case a cross-societal frame of reference in his participation in the online communities of anime and manga. This cross-societal frame of reference is manifested in the use of multiple languages and media content across countries to gather information and develop knowledge in his domain of interest. The use of media resources in Chinese was motivated by his transnational lived experiences and also the desire to access a wider variety of resources in his domain of interest. By mobilizing multiple languages in his literate repertoire, he was able to draw from the dispersed resources across websites and geographical locations to construct knowledge of and participate in the specialist genres of synopsis, review, and forum discussions in the domain of anime and manga.

Conclusion and Implications

This study extends research of literacy development in transnational contexts through an in-depth examination of how two teenagers of Chinese origin navigate online media across countries to participate in a domain of interest, and how these transnational online practices are related to the development and maintenance of native language literacy and the use of multiple languages and media resources to learn. For both of the youth in this study, their navigation of Internet media allowed them to access linguistic and textual resources from the websites based in their country of origin to maintain and develop literacy in their native language. At the same time, they were using their native language to explore and further their interests in the specialist domains of philosophical discussions and anime/manga. In other words, these young people were using their native language as an intellectual tool to construct knowledge in a domain of practice. Our analyses show that such knowledge construction is mediated through the use of specialist varieties of language, which involve complex linguistic structures and rhetorical moves in the discussion of philosophy and various textual and interactional genres in the online anime/manga fandom. For these youth, their use of their native language in these online environments went beyond everyday vernacular varieties of language to the varieties of language tied to knowledge development in a particular social practice.

In addition, in the case of Kevan, we see the deployment of both languages in his literate repertoire to gather information and construct knowledge through the literacy genres in his domain of interest. Our analysis shows that the various literacy genres and media resources that Kevan utilized in the global anime/manga fandom were distributed across a variety of Internet sites across geographical regions. Because of the global nature of the anime/manga fandom and industry and cultural differences across geographical regions, the use of multiple languages allowed the youth to access both an overlapping and distinct range of informational and media content across countries and, thereby, expanded the ways in which he participated in this popular culture. In a sense, Kevan’s cross-societal frame of reference and multilingual literate repertoire had influenced his knowledge making in his domain of interest.

For both youth in this study, their use of online media in their native country formed part of a broader transnational affiliation that included not only accessing communities and informational content that were relevant to their areas of interest but also keeping in touch with news and trends of the culture in Hong Kong and China through these same media. In fact, their ways of using language in itself showed the influences of their transnational affiliation and experience, as Jun enacted his alignment with the Hong Kong youth culture through writing in Cantonese and Kevan remained attached to both languages that he had used in his engagement with anime and manga across his native and adopted countries.

As discussed previously in this article, studies of young people’s participation in affinity spaces online have shown that, within these environments, young people delve into their areas of interest by connecting what they know to the knowledge that exists in other people, artifacts and tools in a particular online site and sometimes across multiple sites. Such interest-based engagements, whether in video gaming or fan fiction writing or other specialized activities, rely on the youth themselves pursuing a distributed set of knowledge networks through which they access and exchange resources, information and opinions on their subjects of interest. Increasingly, the online world has made these specialized knowledge networks and interest-based communities more widely available to youth (Ito et al, 2008). For young people like Jun and Kevan, their transnational
affiliation and frame of reference, as well as their knowledge of more than one language, allow them to participate in affinity spaces across languages and geographical regions. In these cases, the youths’ transnational connection with Chinese language online media enabled them to configure their participation in their domains of interest by drawing from sources of ideas and information across geographical boundaries.

The construction of distributed knowledge networks is not only relevant to youths’ affinity spaces online but represent new forms of work and learning in a globalized society (Gee 2004; Benkler, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Gee (2004, p. 99) argued that the advantages of learning in distributed knowledge networks derive from the ‘power of unfamiliarity’. The more communicational links that people develop with other individuals and institutions in different cultural and geographical positions, the more diverse sources of information, ideas, and points of view they are able to gather. Such an ability to draw from different sources of knowledge and vantage points is especially pertinent in a globalized and fast-changing world when people are often called upon to understand and adapt to changing world conditions. An important aspect of being literate in such a world, then, is the ability to think and learn with other people and textual artifacts within a distributed network that includes diverse knowledge sources.

As discussed earlier, studies of youth migrants’ literacy practices in transnational context have shown that their experiences and connections across countries allow them to take on multiple perspectives in representing their identities and comparing events and practices across their native and adopted countries (McGinnis et al., 2007; Sanchez, 2007; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Yi, 2009). The case analyses presented in this study show how such transnational connections are manifested in the learning and knowledge-making practices of the youth as they interact with other people and textual artifacts in distributed networks across national boundaries. The educational challenge becomes how we can see these young people in light of the cross-societal social and linguistic resources and perspectives that they bring to their learning.

In an essay entitled ‘Rethinking Education in the Global Era’, immigration and education scholar Suárez-Orozco (2005) provides a provocative portrait of a classroom where the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students were leveraged as resources for learning in a media-rich environment. The classroom was part of Tensta Gymnasium, an innovative high school outside of Stockholm, Sweden, where 80% of the students in the school were of immigrant and refugee origin. The students in the biology class that he observed all spoke some English in addition to their home languages and Swedish, and were involved in an Internet-based research project using multiple languages to look up information on websites and email peers locally and in other parts of the world. Suárez-Orozco (2005, p. 210) noted in his description:

The teacher in the class I observed worked to integrate the biology unit with materials from culture and geography relating to the origins of agriculture in Mesopotamia – the area of the world where many of the students originated ... A student from Chile, who was working closely with a classmate from the former Yugoslavia and a young woman from Iran, was excited to show me how she had found important data for their joint research project that they had not been able to find on Swedish-language sites. Where? On a Spanish-language website.

This classroom portrait, while not the subject of theoretical analysis in the essay, provides a scenario of students learning with their peers and textual artifacts within a distributed network that includes diverse knowledge sources accessed locally and transnationally with the support of media technologies. Here, the curriculum topic includes an international perspective that relates to the cultural origins of the students. The young people are encouraged to use multiple languages, including their home languages, as intellectual tools to gather information on the subject matter of their inquiry. In this environment, the transnational affiliations and linguistic diversity of the student body are recognized and utilized to empower students to contribute to collective knowledge making in the classroom learning community.

Detailed empirical research is necessary to study how pedagogical models that draw upon the transnational experiences and multilingual backgrounds of students can be designed in local settings with particular student demographics. While this study has provided a conceptual frame for examining how two youth engage in thinking and learning with textual resources in distributed networks across countries, further research with participants who come from a variety of national origins, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, and genders would allow us to understand the different
Literacy and Learning across Transnational Online Spaces

ways and extent to which young people navigate diverse sources of information and media content across national borders. In particular, comparative studies of youth migrants who originate from different countries and parts of a country with varying technological infrastructures would shed light on the constraints and opportunities of digitally-mediated social and information networking in different migratory contexts. Such research of the informal literacy practices of youth migrants could, in turn, help to inform educational designs that draw from diverse transnational experiences and perspectives to enrich knowledge making in the classroom.

Notes
[1] Indicated in parentheses is the correct form of what might be a typo in the previous character.
[2] Indicated in parentheses is the correct form of what might be a typo in the previous character.
[5] Italics are used to indicate words spoken in English by Kevan.
[6] Carol Man Wai Poon is a Monbukagakusho scholar and PhD candidate in the Graduate School of International Cultural Studies at Tohoku University, Japan. A native citizen of Hong Kong, she has done research on the anime and manga industry and fan culture in Hong Kong and Japan.

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Literacy and Learning across Transnational Online Spaces


**APPENDIX A**

Excerpt of anime synopsis in original Chinese language and English translation (from Fail Forum; [http://www.failforum.net](http://www.failforum.net)):

目前，《濑戸之花嫁》的漫画单行本已经发行至第12卷。

故事简介：男主角落入海，被美人鱼救。而美人鱼的爸爸是美人鱼世界的黑社会老大…男主角被迫要娶美人鱼…而产生的一系列可歌可泣的故事...

《濑戸之花嫁》连载于Square-Enix旗下漫画月刊《GANGAN WING》。此刊继《Heartful days》（心動的日子）后《濑戸之花嫁》搬上TV萤幕与大家见面。这次由木村大彦执笔的《濑戸之花嫁》雖然名字看之異常唯美，然，實則這是一部搞笑作品。

美人鱼的故事人人都知道，人們對美人魚世界的印象也總是神秘而又美好的。無數的美人魚穿梭在深幽的海底…直到人魚公主遇上了她的王子殿下。

等等！男主角永澄同学学會衝出正要结束的字幕，一切的景色全部倒转，故事还是要从頭講...

男主角永澄同学就讀於埼玉県的一所極普通的高中，暑假前往海邊渡假，所謂一失足成千古恨就是他遭遇的写照了。戯水時突然溺水，意識模糊之際為美麗的人魚小姐所救，本來一切還是可以很美好，但，有誰會料到美麗的人魚小姐不是公主而是人魚世界的黑社會老大的女兒。

人魚世界的定律：如果人魚的正體被人類看到，那只有化成泡沫消失。所以人魚小姐如果想要活下来，只有兩個方法：一是救了永澄，另一個方法就是把永澄變成「自己人」。Marry or Die, 永澄同学的人生喜劇就此喧闹地展开了。

Currently, Seto No Hanayome has released up to its twelfth paperback-sized volume.

Synopsis: The male protagonist falls into the ocean and is saved from drowning by a mermaid. With the mermaid’s father being the head of the mob in the merman world... the male
The protagonist was forced to marry the mermaid, and subsequent events unravel into a moving story...

Seto No Hanayome was first serialized in the monthly manga magazine ‘GANGAN WING’, published by Square-Enix. Following the anime adaptation of ‘Heartful Days,’ the magazine decided to bring Seto No Hanayome to its audience on the TV screen. Despite the aesthetically-pleasing title ‘Seto No Hanayome,’ written by Kimura Tahiko, the production is actually a comedic one. The story of the mermaid is familiar to all, and most people hold impressions of the merman world as both mystical and pleasant. Countless mermaids gliding across the ocean’s dark depths... until the mermaid princess meets her prince.

Hold on! The male protagonist Nagasumi Michishio, with tears in his eyes, bursts out from the ending credits; all scenes and actions reversed, the story must be retold from the beginning...

The male protagonist Nagasumi is enrolled in a mediocre high school in Saitama. He takes advantage of the summer to vacation on the waterfront. As the saying goes, a small misstep can bring you lifelong regret. While frolicking in the waters, Nagasumi suddenly finds himself drowning; as he slips into unconsciousness, he is saved by a beautiful mermaid. All would have been well, but who would have expected that the beautiful mermaid is not a princess, but rather, the daughter of merman world’s head mobster.

A principle of the merman world: If a merman is seen by humans, he/she must disappear forever into bubbles. For miss mermaid to retain her life, she has only two options: one is to kill Nagasumi; the other is to convert Nagasumi into ‘one of her own’. Marry or Die, the comedy of Nagasumi’s life unfolds in cacophony.

APPENDIX B

Excerpt of anime review (from Anime Paper; http://www.animepaper.net):

My first ever anime review will be none other than fall of 2006’s greatest hit, Code Geass – Lelouch of the Rebellion. This series is directed by Gorō Taniguchi and scripted by Ichirō Ōkouchi. To tell you the truth, I have never heard of neither of them. I wouldn’t call myself an anime veteran, thus it is no surprise that lack common knowledge towards these possibly famous director and scripter. However, that is not the point. The important fact is that they successfully collaborated in creating this animation extravaganza and possibly a masterpiece in animation history.

~Plot~

Now, let’s get this review started. The plot is the most essential aspect that determines the viewer’s attraction towards an anime. Thus a good anime must consist a terrific plot. Code Geass meets the expectation perfectly. Japan was invaded by the Holy Empire of Britannia, thus they lost their rights, respects, and dignity. After renaming the country ‘Area 11’ and its citizens ‘Elevens’, the country of Japan is ready for a rebellion. Sounds pretty cool doesn’t it? Well it only gets better. A prince of the Holy Empire of Britannia, stripped of his royal title, forced into exile in Japan, and never granted to ever return to the royal family. That prince is the protagonist of this fascinating animation. After renaming himself and his blind and wheelchair-bound sister, Lelouch Lamperouge sets out for revenge for his mother’s death that is possibly traced back to certain members of the royal family. Stated as it is, the plot already seemed spectacular. However, there are so much more. After an unexpected confrontation with his childhood friend, Lelouch’s [sic] life was changed forever. Each holding different beliefs, Leouch and Suzaku formed a rivalry between justice and vengeance. With the help of a mysteries [sic] woman named C.C, Lelouch was granted with the power of Geass; the ability to brainwash one’s mind through direct eye contact. However, the limitation restricts the power to be used only once to the same individual. If you think this is awesome, the action packed mecha scenes would make this anime a love in the first sight.
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~Character~
The characters are designed by the all famous female group CLAMP. However, as noted that most of the character designs by CLAMP are relatively similar, characters of Code Geass hold their own individual uniqueness. The male character designs are the stereotypical tall, skinny, ‘every girl’s dream’ look, thus all you fan girls out there would definitely have some new names to add to your ‘to marry’ list. Don’t feel bad fan boys, the female design are as equally terrific as the males. Taking C.C for example,

[Image of character]

As they say, picture speaks truer than words. The characterization of each character is also extremely unique. Each character seemed to be in their own struggle through life, thus it contribute to the magnificence of this animation. What makes these characters so interesting? Watch it to find out.

~Graphics and Animation~
The graphics and animation of this series is very nice. Mecha are designed by Kenji Teraoka and animation by Takahiro Kimura, Yuriko Chiba, Eiji Nakata, and Seiichi Nakatani. Like I said before, I have no idea who in the world these people are. However, they did a hell of a job creating this wonderful animated journey of a lifetime. The beautiful animation corresponded with its terrific plot, thus making Code Geass one of the most anticipated series of the year. As for music, the two opening theme ‘COLORS’ by FLOW and ‘Kaidoku Funou’ by Jinn are both excellent songs that corresponds perfectly with the anime. What more could I say? Watch the first episode and prepare to be amazed.

[Omitted paragraphs]

~Overall~
Overall, this anime is pure awesomeness and extraordinarily entertaining. Well does this anime have any negative sides? Apparently yes. The progression of the plot is very fast, thus leaving a lot of the questions unanswered. Luckily, the creators decided to make a second season, thus hopefully they would answer everything that they could not be resolved during the first season. What questions am I talking about? Watch the series to find out.

My Rating for this anime is 9/10

APPENDIX C
Forum discussion topic in original Chinese language and English translation (from Uwants http://www5.uwants.com):

[漫畫] 284話[集中討論區]
是說一開頭一謎就斬了小葛一刀...
而小葛的身世亦出了來...
但靜龍...
排Number 11...
為什麼會有小葛成為老大呢？
單憑那一眼的實力？
另外就係...
原來係會退化的...
我終於知道點解牙齒沒退化了...
因為係唔係啲鬼一隻虛...
另外一重點是...
原來小葛係亞丘卡斯...
或許可以看成Number 6下的都是亞丘卡斯...
那麼...
Wan Shun Eva Lam

[ Manga] Chapter 284 [Place for focused discussion]
at the beginning Ichigo wounded Grimmjow with his sword …
and Grimmjow’s identity was revealed …
but Shawlong …
being in rank number 11 …
why would he be willing to let Grimmjow be the leader?
just because of one glimpse of his power?
another thing is …
there is deterioration that goes with it (referring to deterioration of the power of a type of ghost/spirit called ‘hollows’) …
i finally know why Yammy doesn’t deteriorate …
because he keeps killing other hollows …
one other key point is …
Grimmjow is actually Adjucha (a certain class of hollows) …
maybe a way to look at it is that those who are under rank number 6 are all Adjucha …
then …
Aizen at most has only five top-ranking ones in his hands
another question is …
the Arrancar (a type of hollows) standing behind Shawlong …
is actually Yammy or Edorad …
it doesn’t make sense for it to be Yammy …
but it doesn’t look like Edorad either …
and further …
since Grimmjow said Ichigo is his first target …
then in other words …
the Arrancars who are more powerful than he …
or even Aizen may look down on him …
so in fact Grimmjow …
may not be that loyal …
and may possibly rebel …

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