Online Fan Practices and CALL

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Abstract

This article provides a narrative overview of research on online fan practices for language and literacy learning, use, and identity work. I begin with an introduction to online fan communities and common fan practices found in these online affinity spaces, the best known of which is fan fiction, fictional writing that reinterprets and remixes the events, characters, and settings found in popular media. I then look to other online fan practices that have been explored in language and literacy learning research such as fan-subbing and scanlation, amateur subtitling and translation of popular media carried out by individual or teams of fans. Finally, this article concludes by looking to research that has begun to explore the integration of fan practices found in the digital wilds into the language classroom as a way to illuminate how our growing understanding of online fan practices can motivate the design of computer-mediated tasks or the integration of social media into formal language teaching.

Introduction

This article provides a narrative overview of research on online fan practices for language and literacy learning, use, and identity work. Language and literacy learning are broadly applied so that the studies explored here include developing writers and language users who engage in fan practices in their first, second, additional, or multiple languages. Such a stance therefore embraces the understanding that computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is not exclusively a tool for the development of a second or foreign language, but also encompasses the development of langua-technoculture competence (Sauro &

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Chapelle, in press), or the technology-mediated language and cultural competence language users must develop in online spaces, among language users of all proficiencies and backgrounds.

To begin with, it is helpful to have an understanding of fans and the nature and growth of online fandoms. In online spaces, fans, defined as individuals "with a relatively deep positive emotional conviction about someone or something famous" (Duffet, 2013, p. 18) make use of digital tools and communication technologies to discuss, share, create, or otherwise respond to a public performance or figure including, for example, music and musicians, literature, sports and athletes, theater, television, and film and performers. Fans and fan practices naturally predate digitally networked society, as has been documented, for instance, in the fan behavior and dedication of enthusiastic and influential readers of literature in eighteenth-century Europe and members of fraternal baseball clubs in the mid-nineteenth-century United States (Cavicchi, 1998, pp. 4–5).

Digital information and communication technologies, however, have complexified and expanded opportunities for fan practices and the cohesion of fan affinity groups (Thorne, Sauro, & Smith, 2015). These national and international networks of fans, referred to here as online fandoms, have made use of networked technologies not only to engage with each other, but also to influence the artistic, legal, and political conversations around the media or individuals they are fans of. The *Harry Potter* fandom, in particular, which came of age with the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, provides numerous rich examples of how online fandom has been used to both talk back to dominant discourses and power structures in art, law, and politics, but also to forge spaces for learning and education, which have ramifications for understanding and examining learning (and language learning and use) in fan spaces. In the case of art, Tosenberger (2008) points to the fan pushback against the media backlash against *Harry Potter* author J. K. Rowling's pronouncement that a major character in the series was gay. While prominent voices in the media argued that such information was extratextual, many *Harry Potter* fans took to social media to challenge this position and argued that such a conclusion was based on a heteronormative reading of the text which ignored obvious clues. Another example of fans' collective response to power and politics centered on the protection of fanfiction. For many fans who wrote fan fiction which they shared online, the fear of hosting services profiting off their free labor and the threat of copyright owners overextending their copyright protection to demand the closure of fan websites led to the formation of the fan fiction archive, Archive of Our Own (Ao3). Ao3 was designed specifically to better protect fan works and was developed with the help and expertise of lawyers, webmasters, professors, librarians, and other professionals within

fandom, including several in the *Harry Potter* fandom (Coppa, 2013). Yet another segment of the *Harry Potter* fandom, those involved in Wizard Rock (Wrock), the writing and performance of songs about the *Harry Potter* series or from the perspective of its characters, has led to the foundation of an activist organization, The Harry Potter Alliance, which supports civic engagement, activism, and global literacy initiatives (Hinck, 2012).

However, beyond these large-scale examples, digital information and communication technologies also support more small-scale practices that individual fans engage in within these online affinity spaces, including those that can be creative, educational, critical, promotional, controversial, activist, adversarial, or profitable. Some of these fan practices are well known, having been brought to the greater public's attention through news stories and tabloids (e.g. articles which make regular reference to the antics of a portion of actor Benedict Cumberbatch's fanbase which calls itself the Cumberbitches), dramatization (e.g. depiction of the convention-going habits of the characters in the US television series *The Big Bang Theory*), financial success (e.g. the *Fifty Shades of Gray* franchise which emerged from *Twilight* fan fiction), and even research (the influential work of fan studies scholar Henry Jenkins). It is, however, the more small-scale fan practices that have been the focus of research on language and literacy learning, use, and identity work and which this review focuses on. In this next section, I introduce research which explores the relationship between being a fan and language, literacy, and identity development.

Fan Interest and Language, Literacy, and Identity Development

While most of the fan practices introduced in the prior section encompass creative or productive responses, a large number of fans explore their commitment to a book, movie, or performer through dedicated consumption. An excellent example of this is documented in Cavicchi's (1998) ethnography of Bruce Springsteen fans, most of whom expressed their fannishness through repeated listening to Springsteen's music or through regular attendance to his concerts. Work in applied linguistics has also examined the language learning, literacy development, and identity work of fans whose primary fan practice is the committed and enduring consumption of the media in the target language.

Examples of this can be found in particular among learners of Japanese as a foreign language whose interest in Japanese popular culture inspired their decision to study Japanese in order to better understand and enjoy the popular media they were fans of. Such was the case in Fukunaga's (2006) case study of three US university learners of Japanese who were fans of Japanese graphic novels and cartoons (*manga* and *anime*) and whose consumption of *manga* and *anime* included repeated listening or viewing as well as involvement in both offline (e.g. local *anime* clubs) and online (e.g. discussion boards) affinity

groups. Because the participants engaged in repeated viewing and reading of anime and manga in the original language (Japanese), they brought to their Japanese language learning a heightened awareness of Japanese vocabulary as well as culturally situated linguistic features such as the use of slang, markers of male versus female speech, and various levels of politeness used to index the relationship between speakers. Such linguistic knowledge was also accompanied by increased cultural knowledge, including daily practices, school life, or major social issues. As Fukunaga (2006) observed, fan consumption and learning Japanese became a circular process: fans drew upon their *manga-* and *anime*-informed linguistic and cultural knowledge in the Japanese classroom to develop their lexical and grammatical knowledge of Japanese which they then later used to better understand and continue to consume *manga* and *anime*. Similar trends were found among the participants in Williams's (2006) case study of ten *manga* and *anime* fans studying Japanese at a US university, several of whom also identified their fan practice as viewing of *anime* several hours per week. Like Fukunaga's participants, these students of Japanese also identified a circular relationship, this one between their consumption of *manga* and *anime* and their interest in and either direct or indirect knowledge of Japanese culture. Together, these studies illustrate how the fan practice of media consumption in the target language can be part of a productive cycle of language and culture learning. However, many fans do go beyond mere consumption and engage in discussion or creative and productive fan practices that lead to the development of a range of new skills and digital literacy practices. For instance, several of the participants in Williams's (2006) study were actively involved in the drawing of fanart and analysis and debate on discussion boards, while the focal participants of Lam's (2000, 2006) case studies, echoing the pre-Web 2.0 nature of Internet fandom around the turn of the century, undertook the development of HTML skills to produce fan websites.

In what is probably the earliest case study of a fan in applied linguistics, Lam (2000) introduced focal participant Almon, a teenage second language learner of English who had emigrated with his family from Hong Kong to the United States at the age of 12, five years prior. In school, he was frustrated at being classified as a low-achieving student who was still enrolled in ESL or remedial courses. By the end of his final year in high school, Almon had learned introductory web design and took it upon himself to build a fan page for the Japanese pop singer Ryoko Hirosue (Ryoko). Through this fanpage, a creative response to the media he enjoyed, Almon also developed an international network of fellow fans with whom he communicated in English, either via email or using a form of instant messaging, regarding Ryoko and issues of web design. Lam (2000) documented how, through this interaction in English (in response to interest generated by his fanpage in Ryoko's Internet-based

international fan community), Almon was able to develop not only increased written skills in English, but also a new identity in English that ran counter to the identity he had struggled with in formal educational contexts.

This type of identity renegotiation through fan site design, in other words, an increase in self- and linguistic confidence and social inclusion, was also experienced by Lee, who had emigrated with his family from Hong Kong to the United States, when he engaged in website development for an *anime* he was a fan of (Lam, 2006). Through the fan online network Lee became a part of and his willingness to help with other collaborative projects, he redefined himself and crafted a new identity as a technical expert, a more empowered and capable identity that he had not achieved in formal educational contexts.

Lam's research on Almon and Lee serves to bridge fan practices that focus on consumption and appreciation with fan practices described as transformative, in which fans transform that which they are fans of into new creations and media (Jenkins, 2006). In this next section, I explore perhaps the best known transformative fan practice, fan fiction, which has been the focus of the majority of research on fan practices within the field of applied linguistics.

Fan Fiction

Fan fiction (or fanfiction, the preferred spelling among fans) can be defined as "writing that continues, interrupts, reimagines, or just riffs on stories and characters other people have already written about" (Jamison, 2013 p. 17). Depending on the fandom, fan fiction can also include writing that explores imagined scenarios with popular figures such as musicians, athletes, and actors. From the perspective of language skill development, fan fiction offers a clear link between reading and writing (in the case of fan fiction based on popular texts) or listening and writing (in the case of fan fiction based on movies and television shows). At the same time, the international networks of online fandoms and the content of fan fiction, in which fan fiction writers can provide alternate readings to dominant interpretations of popular media, allow examination of the online fan fiction practices of youth and developing writers to explore issues of identity. Subsequently, research into online or computer-mediated fan fiction practices has focused on two main areas: feedback and writing development, and identity work and empowerment.

Feedback and Writing Development

Rebecca Black's case studies of English users and learners in Japanese *anime* and *manga* fandoms bridge the exploration of feedback in fan spaces with writing development. This includes, for instance, a case study (Black, 2005) of teenage English language learners who wrote fan fiction for the Japanese *anime Cardcaptor Sakura* and posted their stories to FanFiction.net (a fan

fiction archive founded in 1998). These language learners relied on Author's Notes, a message that fan fiction writers could include with a new update to a story on FanFiction.net, to disclose their learner identity and to guide and solicit the type of feedback they were open to receiving from more proficient English users who read their stories. These bids were successful in eliciting detailed feedback that included multi-paragraph excerpts from the learner's story which had been rewritten to model effective use of conjunctions and complex sentence structures that the writer could use when revising this and future texts. Such extensive modelling represents free and willingly provided feedback similar to that which a writing instructor may wish, yet struggle to provide in large classes with multiple drafts of writing assignments.

Among Black's case study participants was Nanako, a teenager who moved with her family from China to Canada when she was 11 and did not yet speak English (Black, 2006). During her first several years in Canada, Nanako discovered *anime*-based online fan fiction in English and became an avid fan fiction reader, engaging in extramural English, defined as "English-related activities that learners come in contact with or are engaged in outside the walls of the English classroom, generally on a voluntary basis" (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014, p. 4). After just two-and-a-half years in Canada, Nanako began writing and publishing her own fan fiction in English, through which she was able to develop not only confidence and motivation in language learning and writing in English, but was also able to forge a new international and multilingual identity.

Identity Work and Empowerment

Identity work and empowerment represents a major focus of research into the L2 and bilingual literacy practices of writers of online fan fiction. Black's case studies (2009; Thorne & Black, 2011) of L2 English writers who published their fan fiction to FanFiction.net looked in particular at how these adolescent ESL writers used the Author's Notes accompanying updates to their stories to index or highlight different aspects of their identity over time and in relation to the content of the fan fiction they were writing. In addition, although writing in English about Japanese-based source material, these fan fiction writers, all of whom originated from Asian countries, also drew upon their own cultural and linguistic knowledge in their story-telling to represent themselves not as learners of English, but rather as transcultural and multilingual writers who were themselves a source of linguistic and cultural expertise (Black, 2009). For instance, returning once again to Nanako, through both interviews and the analysis of her fan fiction and the accompanying Author's Notes, Black was able to observe an identity shift over time as Nanako became more proficient and confident in her English fan fiction writing (Thorne & Black, 2011). This could be seen in particular in her move from identifying herself in the

Author's Notes as an English language learner (ELL) and novice fan, to cultural expert and multilingual writer of Asian heritage while also moving from writing exclusively in English to later integrating both her first language, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese, a language she was also learning in school, into the fan fiction itself.

Moving beyond the notion of second language learner, other studies of identity work in and around fan fiction writing embrace the concept of multilingual or international user of English. This can be seen in the work of Leppänen and colleagues, who have looked in particular at the often-multilingual nature of new media practices among Finnish youth, including fan fiction writing. The choice of Finnish youth to publish fan fiction in both Finnish and English is sometimes done for communicative reasons. This was the case with case-study participant Afeni, who primarily wrote fan fiction in Finnish but, despite the greater difficulty in writing in English, also published online fan fiction in English in order to reach a greater audience of readers (Leppänen, Pitkänen-Huhta, Piirainen-Marsh, Nikula, & Peuronen, 2009).

However, in other cases, Finnish fan fiction writers drew upon English as a resource in their writing to index aspects of their identity (Leppänen, 2007) or as a way to interrogate and subvert social expectations and stereotypes of gender and sexuality in the media and in Finnish society (Leppänen, 2008). Through the exploration of the use of English in a specific genre of fan fiction, in which the writer inserts herself as a character in the story, Leppänen (2007) found that authors relied on code-switching for key functions in fan fiction based on a US television series (*The Invisible Man*) which was popular in Finland. Specifically, Finnish was used for the setting and description of events while American English was used for dialog between the author insert/Finnish character and the characters from the television show, who would obviously not be expected to speak Finnish. Through this bilingual storytelling, young Finnish fan fiction writers used English to signal a global and multilingual identity among a bilingual readership of Finnish/English-speaking fans. Among other young Finnish fan fiction writers, however, English was used to interrogate and subvert gender-identity assumptions in mainstream or cult English texts (e.g. Andrew Lloyd Weber's musical *Cats*, Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* fantasy trilogy, Rowling's *Harry Potter* series) and sexual expectations facing young women (Leppänen, 2008). For instance, by choosing to write self-insert fan fiction parody based on the musical *Cats*, one writer drew upon internationally well-known English language source material to exaggerate gender roles thereby subverting romantic tropes and gendered-identity assumptions common to male–female romance stories. In another case, a fan fiction writer subverted the hypersexualization of female characters through the writing of slash (male–male romance) fan fiction in English based on the

Harry Potter series. In this second example, by writing in her second language, English, the writer achieved an element of distance that enabled her to write on sexually risqué topics that reflected social issues related to sex, which may have been more difficult to write about in Finnish.

Research on online fan fiction writing practices among second language and bilingual writers provides insights into both autonomous language learning in the digital wilds, "informal language learning that takes places in digital spaces, communities, and networks that are independent of formal instructional contexts" (Sauro & Zourou, 2017, p. 186), as well as the empowerment that fan fiction can offer multilingual youth who use their second language as a resource for indexing a global and multilingual identity or for challenging social beliefs and norms, and to reach a wider international readership. Multilingualism is a key component of the next set of major fan practices that have been the subject of research in applied linguistics and which concern amateur translation of popular media.

Fansubbing and Scanlation

Fansubbing and scanlation encompass cooperative fan practices that merge technology, popular media, and second language learning and use. Fansubbing is the amateur subtitling of television shows, movies, and especially *anime* (Pérez-González, 2007), while scanlation, a portmanteau of scan and translation, is the translation and distribution of comics and graphic novels, in particular *manga* (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015). Although the quality of these amateur translations may vary widely from those of professional translations (see, for example, Inose, 2012), this particular practice allows fans the opportunity to develop target language skills such as genre-specific vocabulary and cultural and historical knowledge and awareness. In addition, the practice of interlingual subtitling (L2 à L1) places fans in a position of critiquing and offering creative solutions to professional subtitling practices that tend to emphasize linguistic content but not specific cultural content indexed by visual elements of a scene (van Tonder, 2015). It is through these sometimes-digital creative solutions for interpreting and conveying non-linguistic information that fans' intercultural knowledge is enhanced or can be used to support their linguistic development.

This use of intercultural knowledge can be seen in the case study of Shiro, a 26-year-old Spanish woman who was a member of a scanlation community comprised of 21 fans from five different Spanish-speaking countries who regularly translated *manga* from English into Spanish (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015). Interviews and analysis of her work and process documented a range of linguistic and digital resources that Shiro, despite having only high beginning-level proficiency in English (A2 on the CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), drew

upon in her translations. This included, for example, Shiro's understanding of various visual elements (e.g. the shape of a speech balloon or the level of detail in a panel) to convey the mood of a particular panel and the illocutionary force of what a character was saying, as well as the use of online dictionaries and translators when encountering English words and idioms she was unfamiliar with.

Shiro's ability to interpret such semiotic cues was undoubtedly enhanced by the intercultural norms and digital tools that were embedded in the scanlation community and which offered its members the opportunity for deepening intercultural competence and for receiving feedback and support on the translation process. For instance, members of this fan community regularly used Japanese honorifics and suffixes such as *san*, *sama*, *kun*, *chan,* etc. to denote status and familiarity among its members in the community Facebook and blog (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016). In addition, digital resources such as the chat function in Facebook were used by members who encountered translation difficulties and were in need of 24-hour support. Such practices are not unique to this fan community (see also Zhang & Cassany, 2016 for a description of the plurilingual and multimodal nature of a Spanish to Chinese fansubbing community) but illustrate ways in which the online affinity groups may serve as a supportive learning environment for second-language and intercultural learning and use.

Scanlation and fansubbing in particular are a rich area for exploration of language learning in the wild but also represent a source of inspiration for the development of technology-mediated fan-inspired language teaching activities or fandom tasks (see Sauro, 2014) and which I will return to shortly. However, in this next section, I look to several other fan practices and their potential for language and literacy development.

Debating, Moderating, Spoiling, and Other Fan Practices

In addition to the language-rich fan practices of fan fiction, scanlation, and funsubbing, fans engage in other fan practices that draw heavily on textual interpretation and digital literacy. This can be seen, for instance in Curwood's (2013) case study of 13-year-old Jack's advanced leadership and literacy skill development across fan spaces associated with the young adult dystopian trilogy, *The Hunger Games*. Jack's fan involvement included participating in discussion-board-based debates about *The Hunger Games,* which required not only character analysis skills, but also the ability to use textual citations, including page numbers, to support his claims, much like one might find in academic writing. Over time, Jack was promoted to the role of moderator in these forums, and later his participation expanded to include the creation and maintenance of a website and technical resources (blog posts, tutorials, podcasts) to support an alternate reality game based on the trilogy. As Curwood

(2013) observed, Jack's evolving fan practices meant that "[o]n any given day, [he] might have been managing his international staff of four, computer programming, marketing, writing, researching, and interacting with others in The Hunger Games fandom" (p. 424). Jack's increasing involvement in his international fan community necessitated the development of digital and communication skills, such as those that fall under the umbrella of 21st-century skills (e.g., information literacy, critical thinking, global citizenship) and which are seen as increasingly crucial in preparing young learners for the digitalized and networked needs of the 21st century (Suto, 2013).

Moving to research on yet another fan practice also reveals how critical and digital literacy skills can be developed by fans outside of organized fan sites and structured fan communities. This is illustrated in the case of Steevee, a 30-year-old second language speaker of English from Germany and fan of the British television series *Sherlock*, who participated in the fan practice of sharing spoilers during the filming of the third series of *Sherlock* in 2013. This fan practice of spoiling is "the purposeful discovery of crucial developments in the plot of a fictional story of a film or TV series before the relevant material has been broadcast or released" (Duffett, 2013, p. 168). In reporting on information and misinformation being shared by other fans online or at the actual filming sites in England and Wales, Steevee found it necessary to develop careful fact-checking skills as well as brevity and speed in posting Twitter updates in English to share with her international network of fellow fans interested in speculating (Sauro, 2016). In light of the ease of spreading unverified rumors and false information via fan networks on Twitter and Tumblr, Steevee's fact-checking skills were particularly crucial in helping fans who were trying to guess future filming locations in order to travel to the set to watch filming. Her finely developed critical information literacy skills have also proven useful for Steevee in her non-fandom online interaction, as indicated in her ability to better evaluate the veracity of information in news articles she encounters on Facebook.

The experiences of Jack and Steevee illustrate the development of digital and information literacy skills in the digital wilds that are increasingly emphasized in formal classroom contexts, which leads into the final area of research and future research directions to be covered in this review: the integration of online fan practice into formal classroom contexts to support language and literacy development.

Integrating Fan Practices into the Classroom

The practice of domesticating language-learning practices from the digital wilds for the formal classroom is a final strand that has begun to be explored in research. This emerging area faces both support and criticism from within educational communities and online fan communities.

Within the educational community and CALL communities, researchers and instructors have begun to identify specific fan practices or features of online communities that could serve as models for language and literacy teaching activities. An example of this can be seen in Curwood's (2013) case-study of 13-year-old Jack's involvement in online fan spaces for *The Hunger Games,* which includes annotations and featured recommendations for educators interested in implementing characteristics of online affinity spaces in their own literacy classes. Behrenwald's (2012) chapter in CALICO's edited volume on technology use across writing contexts identifies several common fan practices that could serve as models for ESL writing activities, including the use of beta readers (a proof-reader or critiquer who provides feedback before a piece of fan fiction is published) and opportunities for collaborative creative writing. She also identifies features of several popular texts that would lend themselves to fan fiction-type tasks that could be carried out in the ESL classroom, for example rewriting scenes from *The Hunger Games*, which is written using first person point of view of the main character, from the perspective of a secondary character. Similarly, Sauro (2014) provides descriptions of four specific fan practices and teaching ideas that could be used to support computer-mediated task-based language teaching across different proficiency levels. These include collaborative threaded word games, popular in fan community discussion forums, for simplified storytelling, ideal for lower proficiency learners, the creation of a fan wiki to document information about characters, plots, events, and objects in a story or movie, collaborative blog-based role-play fan fiction, and fansubbing using the resource of viki.com for advanced language learners. Looking to another fan practice found not only in fan fiction but also in fanart called bending or swapping, in which fans critique and write themselves into the source text by changing the ethnicity or race (racebending) or gender (genderbending or cisswapping) of the characters, Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016) encourage and provide guidelines for incorporating bending projects into classroom teaching as a way to help young people write themselves into mainstream texts that do not capture their realities or to explore perspectives and experiences different from their own.

Not all researchers are as equally positive about the domestication of fan practices for educational purposes, however. For instance, Lin (2015) warns against domesticating new literacy tools to motivate student learning because learners' agency in their own creativity is crucial. Such a position is also echoed by those in fandom who respond with suspicion and resistance to the use of fan practices, especially fan fiction, in an education context:

> [T]here are plenty of people within fandom who believe fan fiction has no place in the classroom at all: to remove a work from its "intended" context and divorce it from a largely unwritten set of rules is a violation for many fan writers (Minkel, 2015).

Minkel, who identifies as both a fan and journalist, documents a recent occurrence when a student-run course at the University of California Berkeley that required students to comment on online fan fiction led to a groundswell of outrage among fans when it became clear that fanworks were being critiqued and authors were being contacted directly by those whose lack of involvement in their particular fan space meant they did not understand common intertextual references and tropes or commonly upheld norms for interacting with fan fiction and fan writers. For language teachers and researchers intent on integrating fan practices into teaching contexts, it is therefore crucial to keep in mind the degree of involvement and interaction with fans and fan communities that different types of fan tasks entail.

Moving beyond guidelines and suggestions for the use of fan practices in language and literacy instruction, there are a few studies that have actually looked at the efficacy of bringing fan practices into the classroom. In a class of advanced learners of English who were training to be secondary school English teachers in Sweden, Sauro and Sundmark (2016) explored the efficacy of using collaborative blog-based fan fiction based on J. R. R. Tolkien's fantasy novel *The Hobbit* to bridge both language and literary learning. Specifically, they explore the sequencing of subtasks leading to the writing of a missing moment from *The Hobbit* that requires each student to write from the perspective of one character in their contribution to their group's story. In doing so, students must demonstrate literary competence, through the ability to incorporate aspects of plot, setting, and style to fit in with the larger story, and linguistic competence, through the ability to imitate the specific lexical and grammatical choices of their character in speech and thought. Of particular note, unlike the learning activities used by the Berkeley class mentioned by Minkel (2015), these fanfiction tasks did not ask students to go into fan spaces and engage with actual fans and fan works, but instead drew upon fan works as models and sources of inspiration for these classroom activities.

As this section indicates, the integration of fan practices into the classroom to support language and literacy development remains a potentially rich but contentious area that has only begun to be explored. However, future research in this area can draw upon the guidelines set out here, by both researchers and fans, to develop teaching activities that draw upon fan practices for inspiration while also respecting the culture and autonomy of the online fan communities serving as the source of inspiration.

Conclusion

In this review, I set out to provide an introduction to online fandom and fan practices, to review research on language and literacy learning and identity work in fan spaces and around fan practices, and to explore the intersection

of practices in the digital wilds with digital practices in the classroom. In particular, case studies of L2 learners involved in fan practices have focused especially on those involved with website design, fan fiction writing, scanlation, and fansubbing to reveal how L2 learners and users are able to develop writing skills, renegotiate new and more productive multilingual and international identities, and confront and challenge social issues and dominant discourses through fan engagement. Other case studies have explored the development of 21st-century skills by fans involved in discussion, moderation, web design, and spoiling, such as those related to information literacy, global citizenship, and critical thinking. The integration of actual fan practices into formal classroom contexts remains an emerging and underexplored area; researchers, fans, and fan-researchers have begun to assemble guidelines for initial considerations going forward:

1. When integrating the concept of fan/affinity spaces into the classroom, consider how to incorporate the key components such as "self-directed engagement, collaboration, and multiple paths toward participation" (Curwood, 2013, p. 413);
2. look to online fanfiction archives and fan sites for models of potential classroom tasks (Sauro, 2014) and feedback opportunities (Behrenwald, 2012);
3. encourage research and provide guidelines for pupils wishing to write from and explore the perspectives of other group when carrying out bending projects in the classroom (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016);
4. consider and respect the local culture and autonomy of fan communities when designing activities that require students to go into fan spaces (Minkel, 2015).

In sum, online fan practices and fan fiction represent an emerging area of research in CALL that invites researchers and practitioners to explore the complex intersection of real-world autonomous language and literacy practices with digital communication technologies.

About the Author

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