"We don't vaccinate foreigners": Promoting critical literacy through understanding disputed meanings in official documents

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Abstract

In this article, I note an observable social turn in languages arts curricula in Latin America. However, I argue that the effort to contextualize written language and bring everyday uses of writing into the classroom falls short of promoting a critical understanding of some key aspects of how literacies work. To do this, I analyze a recent incident relating to the validity of some official documents used to receive the Covid-19 vaccine in Mexico City. Using a New Literacy Studies framework, I argue that official documents operate in local and practical contexts where local employees have a fundamental role in their validation. I show how the legitimacy of documents is continuously ratified or challenged in the contexts of use. Their validity is subject to interpretation, power dynamics, and social and cultural context grounded in local practices. I conclude that this has important implications for teaching and learning about literacy in school.

Keywords: *Paperwork, Social Practice, New Literacy Studies, Covid, Mexico*

We can currently observe a social turn in the language arts curricula in Latin America. Although it is not uniformly present across the region, educators have placed language-in-context and its communicative use in the center of their study programs for more than a decade. While different national curricula vary in approach and conceptualization, there seems to be a consensus that language arts teaching should consider the semiotic and expressive resources present in written texts by examining their use. This proposal squarely locates learning in social interaction, and it theorizes meaning-making as situated practice tied to diverse social activities. As Virginia Zavala has noted, "writing is not just a linguistic product or a cognitive process, it is a situated, material, ideological social practice" (2011, p. 56, translation mine).

Each country in the region has selected different terminology and theoretical traditions. For example, Mexico uses the notion of *social practice,* Argentina uses *language practices*, and Ecuador emphasizes *communicative competence*. There is a strong tendency to recognize text genres, their structures, rhetorical conventions, and voice as essential considerations for promoting reading comprehension among students and teaching them to write appropriately organized texts (Sito & Moreno Mosquera, 2017). Colombia notes in its 2016-2017 curricular document for the language arts that "working with different types of texts is a central task for promoting reading [and writing] practices at school" (Medina & Obando, 2018, p. 55). Argentina proposes exploring explanatory, narrative, argumentative texts, literary genres (MEC, 2014).

Some language arts programs go beyond studying literary texts and include paperwork and documents from everyday life. In the current study program in Mexico for secondary language arts, for example, petitions, identification

documents, contracts, and legal agreements, job applications, newspapers, news broadcasts, and political cartoons, are included as examples of what the curriculum refers to as "social participation" (SEP, 2016, p. 70). Students are invited to analyze school rules, explore a variety of standardized forms, and examine written instructions. In theory, this could lead to a more socially oriented pedagogy. In practice, teachers could promote a critical stance and help students understand how different social actors use language in paperwork and what this means for learners.

While this social turn in language arts curricula is encouraging, this paper explores more deeply how official documents are legitimized and validated and questions some of our dearest assumptions about how writing works in everyday life. The purpose of this examination is to identify aspects of how documents are endorsed in face-to-face interactions and consider how this might be included in teaching and learning at school.

Trimbur (2020, para.555) defines paperwork as "a field of literate activity, a mundane world of files and documents, where clerks, sub-officials and mid-level managers fill out the forms that animate state and corporate bureaucracies, educational, legal, and medical systems, and voluntary associations, civic organizations and grassroots groups." It includes the tasks of filling in blanks, checking boxes, integrating files, verifying signatures, making copies, using the appropriate formats and materials (Gitelman, 2014), and "participating in the circulation and storage of documents in the bureaucratic maze ways of public agencies, private enterprises, and popular organizations" (Trimbur, 2020, para. 555). In the curriculum for learning to read and understand administrative and legal documents (see SEP, 2016, México), program designers treat these documents assuming they are transparent and neutral genres that express unproblematic

relationships with institutions, commercial enterprises, and citizens when in fact, their meanings can be in dispute (Kafka, 2020). A critical pedagogy oriented towards social practice would make identifying potential conflicts and solutions part of its literacy education agenda.

Theoretical orientations and methodological decisions

New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a theoretical framework posits literacies are situated complex activities that locate reading, writing, and other forms of representation within the context of broader social practices. Brian Street (1984) conceptualized the contextual and ideological nature of reading, writing, and other meaning-making practices and brought readers' and writers' purposes, competing discourses, and power relationships to the center of its analysis (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995). Street pointed out that written documents are not free-standing or autonomous. He posited what he called an ideological model of literacy and argued that reading and writing are dependent on their contexts of use. This paper extends this idea and shows how readers and writers fashion textual meanings and values when they bring them into play in practice.

Scholars working from an NLS framework argue that reading and writing are highly situated, historically construed, deeply embedded in activities, and part of social practices (Blommaert, 2008, Collins and Blot, 2003). Studies carried out from this perspective (Heath, 1983; Dyson, 2020, Ahearn 2004; Trimbur,2020; Reyesand Esteban-Guitart, 2013) puta high value on what people do with written texts in multiple and diverse social spaces and activities and what people think about reading and writing. Zavala (2011) calls attention to the simple observation that people read and write one way when they are in their communities or relate to those close to them. They write another way when they are in official formal

contexts or facing a person of authority. These different ways of writing are situated in complex social relationships and discourse practices (Kalman, 2009; McCaffrey, 2012; Mjaya, 2018).

Researchers studying literacy as a social practice tend to use socio-cultural theoretical orientations of literacy and articulate ethnographic methodologies with theories about language, social practice, meaning-making, multimodality, materiality, and social participation (Bloome et al, 2018). In his notion of practice, Reckwitz's (2002) is concerned with both human action in general (*praxis*) and with the relatively stable forms of doing things (*praktik*) that make up everyday life. From his point of view, *practice* potentially involves diverse, interconnected parts: knowledge and know-how, ways of using the body, thought, language, artifacts, experience, and feelings. Materiality becomes meaningful within its *context of use* (de Certeau, 1984). For this reason, I pay close attention to how participants construct and assign meaning to artifacts in each event by examining what people do with material objects, how they use them, and how they think (and talk) about them in the context of using written language.

Scholars have constructed a portrait of reading and writing as a rich part of ongoing social activities through exploring diverse literacy practices and emphasizing the importance of social relationships, material conditions, issues of power, and institutional arrangements as part of the mix (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995). Their work has illustrated time and again the situated use of reading and writing and explored in-depth the ideological dimensions of literacy. Researchers such as Basu et al. (2009), Gebre et al. (2009), Kalman (2009), Maddox (2007), Méndez-Arreola (2019), Wogan (2004), and many others have studied how people confront and resolve social demands for reading and writing.

They are interested in understanding how readers and writers fit their texts in diverse situations, the different ways collectives organize writing together, and the roles various actors play in ongoing social activities (Barton and Papen, 2010).

In what follows, I describe a recent conflict where literacy played a significant role in a local struggle regarding vaccination during the Covid19 pandemic. I retell this incident to illustrate how different participants in literacy events use documents in practice. At the same time, I illustrate how the documents that we socially construct as legitimizing and validating—official immigration papers—can also be used to disqualify. In the analysis, framed from a social practice point of view, everyday activity is the unit of analysis, "where the individual and society meet" (Werscht (1998) in Zavala (2011, 55).

Analyzing everyday activities is a way of exploring the actions involved in specific endeavors and understanding how participants construct contexts and social realities. Practice theory centers on how actors' relationships with each other shape their participation and how they resolve emerging situations in unfolding events. Examining our practical engagement with the world—through our activities, our relationships, our creation and use of artefacts, and our response to obstacles—is key to understanding the social world we have created (Lave, 2019). As Nicolini, (2012, 52) puts it: "if you want to understand the social, you have to go and look at what people do, what they talk about, and what they handle while talking".

Studying literacy as social action (Ahearn, 2001; Blommaert, 2008, Lillis, 2013) in situated practices and specific interactions keeps concrete, and material nature of reading and writing in focus and at the same time provides perspectives for explaining the social in terms of unfolding processes, social relations, and power.

De Certeau, (1984, 214) describes everyday activities in the gerund as "'ways of operating', 'doing', 'acting', 'making', ongoing actions that disclose how "agents enact their cultures in loosely regulated, improvised ways". When we move our attention from the individual to social practices that we can see how local actors use reading and writing in social contexts with specific purposes (Nicolini, 2012).

An essential part of the incident discussed here played out in social media, so I present and comment on several brief written texts published primarily on Twitter to explain how participants developed the clash, how they constructed it in their social media conversations, and how authorities resolved it. I am interested in pointing out how Tweeters talked about different official documents and used them to justify their position on the issue of whether Mexico should vaccinate foreigners or not. The participants weave both accurate and imprecise information into their messages and make statements that modify the relevance and legitimacy of various official documents, particularly the FM2 visa for foreign residents and a CURP identification number. FM2 refers to the visa given to legal foreign residents in Mexico, and CURP is the *Clave Única de Registro de Población* (Unique Population Registry Number), a document given to all citizens and foreigners living in the country.

Following the NLS and sociolinguistic tenets regarding the non-neutrality of texts, I discuss how local contexts and regulations intervene in the social construction of the legitimacy of certain official documents (Lillis, 2013). In the center of the discussion is the observation that actors can—and do—question socially recognized credentials and dispute their value.

The reporter Adriana Malvido posted a story on Facebook and Twitter about a longtime resident in Mexico that local street-level authorities would not vaccinate. This provoked a chain of 39responses where participants gave their opinions, asked questions, circulated information, and in some cases, insulted each other. Some of the responses had threaded posts of their own, totaling 292 tweets on this topic. For this paper, I selected15 Tweets where the writers on Twitter specifically mentioned official documents in some way and took positions on the validity of the original complaint.

To analyze these messages, I adapted Gee's (2005) proposal for examining oral language samples for written statements. Gee suggests dividing each participant's oral turns into phrases by putting each clause on a different line for analytical clarity. I did this by placing the social media texts phrase by phrase on a spreadsheet and separated each message from the next to keep the messages complete and identifiable. I based the fragmentation of longer texts on the presence of a verb and the coordinating conjunctions.

I then labeled the following four columns with the headings "speech act, topic, document, and meaning." Each of these headings is an abbreviation of different angles for making sense of these Tweets in the context of the local conflict. By determining the writers' intents (speech acts), their central concern (topic), the documents they listed, and their way of signifying them, I homed in on how the participants signified the legitimacy of official documents. Finally, because these messages were written in Spanish, I translated the ones I discuss in this text. The translations are my attempt to recreate the Tweets in English in a way that will make sense to readers but respecting the meaning of the original, and for this reason, they are not literal.

The legitimacy and value of official documents in theory and practice

In a highly literate society like ours, we consider official documents to be passports for participating in many aspects of public life, receiving social goods, and being eligible for public benefits such as vaccinations. Possessing documents such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, official transcripts, drivers' licenses, and professional credentials allow us to exist (at least in part) and be present in the social world as workers, as students, as professionals, as married couples. Official paperwork establishes the validity of multiple aspects of our lives, and a person's *papers* are the semiotic devices through which the state establishes our identities, memberships, and trajectories (Trimbur, 2020). Through their use and interpretation, social actors have the power to include or exclude people. Without documents and credentials, our efforts to go to school, get financing, procure housing, vote, and as in this case, get needed health care can be thwarted. Our papers give us visibility (Trimbur 2020; Blommaert, 2008).

Validity and legitimacy contribute to a generalized belief that our documents give us certain guarantees for participating in valued social and cultural activities. Others—officials, co-participants, and observers—will recognize our identities and intentions and accept our presence and participation. We expect that we will be "waved through" by showing our papers. This is due, at least in part, to the standardized material aspects that make them official: they are often printed on special paper with security features woven directly into their design, they have specific formats and colors, a particular distribution of information, folio numbers, stamps, validated signatures, and sometimes attachments that carry seals and perforations. The legitimacy of official documents is historically construed through standardization, controlled production, and continuous renewal. Formats are continuously updated by redesigning the layout, renewing the signatures, and

issuing new versions of documents such as birth certificates, licenses, identification cards, and travel documents.

In bureaucratic procedures, as citizens, we are asked to build a file or a dossier containing a variety of requirements—everything from our birth certificates, financial status, transcripts, vaccination records—depending on the document we are trying to acquire or the legal or administrative process we are trying to follow. So, both through historical design and situated interactions, our documents signal in many ways our ties and relationships to various institutions. In this sense, many see our papers as representations of who we are and vouch for us as professionals, as family members or kin, as students, workers, or organization members.

Although this view of official documents considers both the historical development of documents and the procedures that we follow to obtain them, it is still incomplete. Everytime we find ourselves showing our documents, we worry that something might not be correct, that we might hit a roadblock, that we will have to produce more documents, or engage in a new procedure. Simply put, we assume something might go wrong rather than expect that our process will be smooth sailing.

This common fear is straightforward to illustrate. Over the years, authorities in Mexico modified the official color of birth certificates. For example, in the early 1980s, they were blue, and sometime in the 1990s, authorities changed them to light orange. Even though these documents were identical except for the color—same size, same seals, same folios, same security features—bureaucrats would not accept the blue ones once the certificates were being printed on orange sheets, arguing that the birth certificate had to be "new." This held up countless procedures

and forced citizens to have their documents re-issued before continuing their legal process.

The absurdity of this requirement is obvious: the birth certificate could not be "new." It was simply a printed reproduction of the original birth certificate stored in official archives. For some, this was just a nuisance and a bump in the road. However, for others, because of geographic location, lack of mobility, and economic resources, this could become a significant obstacle. Because of social and economic inequalities, Timbur (2020), Kafka (2012), Gelman (2014), Blommaert (2008), and Hull (2012) note how differences in social position and access to legal practices produce disparities in access to social benefits, recognition, and rights. They also argue that the weight of authorized documents does not come only from the materiality of their official character but also through the situated use that continuously validates or revokes their legitimacy. Perhaps this is why Trimbur (2020) noted that paperwork often seems both powerful and useless, both the means and the obstacle to achieving social goals.

The local construction of document legitimacy

At the beginning of 2021, the Mexican government announced it would begin vaccinating everyone 60 years and older for the Covid19 virus. It was something many families had been waiting for, having sheltered in place under the *#quedateencasa* (#stayathome) mandate for nearly a year. Health

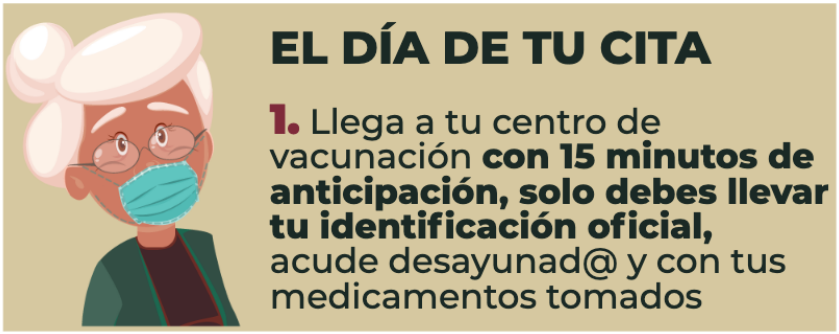

Figure 1. On the day of your appointment.Arrive at your vaccination center 15 minutes ahead of time, you only need to bring your official identification, have breakfast and take your medications beforehand.

authorities used radio, TV, the press, and digital sources to announce the vaccination campaign. The first step involved registering online in the city-wide database, and a health worker would later notify all older adults of the time and day that they would get vaccinated. Seniors and their children flooded the official website, where they were instructed to type in their CURP number. National procedure guidelines did not distinguish between Mexican citizens, foreign residents, or people living in Mexico with other legal visas.

The city government organized the distribution of vaccines by neighborhoods. At the beginning of the campaign, one of the first areas to be assigned vaccinations was Cuajimalpa, a district on the western end of Mexico City. The Health Department told residents to bring their official identification, have breakfast before arriving, and take all their medications on the day of their appointment. There was no mention of any other requirements, and no distinction was made regarding Mexican citizens or legal foreign residents.

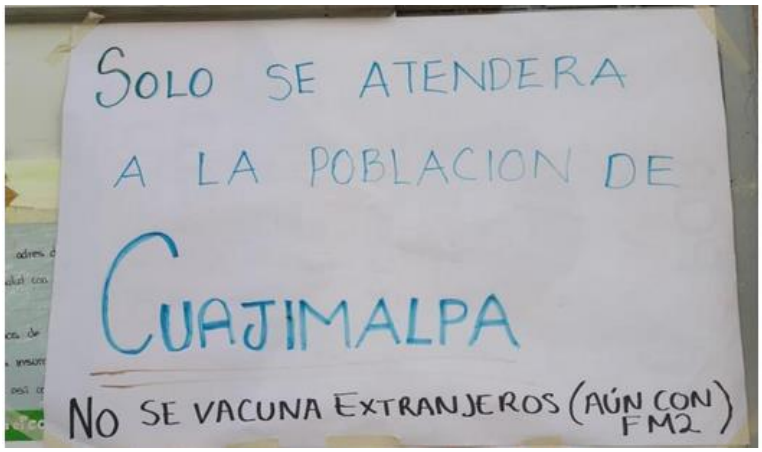

Figure 2. Only the inhabitants of Cuajimalpa will be attended to. Foreigners will not be vaccinated (even with an FM2) Chumel Torres [ChumelTorres] 23 febrero 2021. Mientras que en EEUU se vacunaron más mexicanos que en México…https://twitter.com/ChumelTorres/status/1364305240497876994

Starting February 15, 2021, hundreds of adults, 60 years and older, arrived at the various centers to get vaccinated. Despite the clear instructions—registering their CURP in the database and bringing their official identification documents, foreign nationals living in Mexico were turned away by local health workers and vaccinators. Commentators

on social media published the first posts narrating that local authorities were not vaccinating foreign residents on February 17. Twitter users with small followings sent these first anecdotes. Then, on February 20, a journalist with a following of more than 4000 people published the following story on Twitter (and a slightly longer version on Facebook):

Adriana Malvido @amalvido · Feb 20 Replying to @amalvido El 17 de febrero acudió con todos sus documentos al Centro de Salud T-III en Cuajimalpa. Hizo fila durante 2 horas. Alguien le indicó donde formarse, otra persona de chaleco rojo revisó sus papeles y le dijo que "no se vacuna a residentes". 9 140 539	"On February 17, [she] went to the Health Center T-III in Cuajimalpa with documents in hand. She stood in line for 2 hours. Someone told her where to line up; afterward, another person in a red vest looked at her papers and told her, "We do not vaccinate residents."

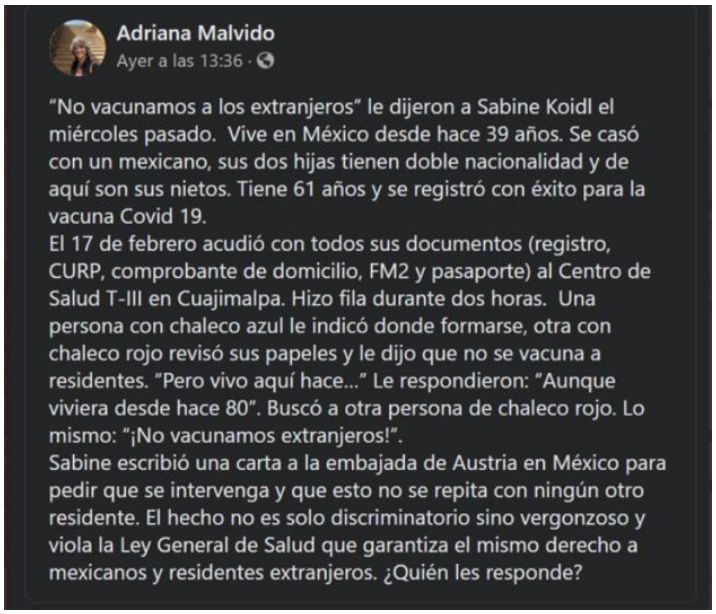

Figure 3.We don't vaccinate foreigners
We don't vaccinate foreigners", that is what they told Sabine Koidl last Wednesday. She has lived in Mexico for 39 years. She is married to a Mexican citizen; her two daughters have two nationalities, and her grandchildren are from here. She is 61 years old and registered successfully for the Covid 19 vaccine. On February 17th she went with all her documents (CURP, address certificate, FM2, and passport) to the Centro de Salud T-III in Cuajimalpa. She stood in line for 2 hours. A person with a blue vest told her where to wait, another with a red vest checked her documents, and told her that they do not vaccinate resident. "But I've been here living for…". She was told: "Even if you've lived here for 80". The same thing: "we don't vaccinate foreigners".
Sabine wrote a letter to the Austrian embassy in México to ask them to intervene, so that this doesn't happen to any other resident. This event is not only discriminatory, but also embarrassing, and it violates the General Health Law, which guarantees the same rights to Mexican citizens and to foreign residents. Who could give them an answer?
https://www.facebook.com/adriana.malvido.

Ms. Koidl followed the instructions published and circulated by local and national authorities. She presented a series of official, valid documents as instructed by https://vacunacion.cdmx.gob.mx/ to meet the requirements of age and place of residence. She carried five documents: her CURP, passport, FM-2 resident visa, proof of her current address, and a print-out of her registration in the vaccination system. Even though the requirements did not specify showing her passport, she knew that the FM2 card and passport go hand in hand as a foreigner living in Mexico. She waited in line, and when it was her turn, she was told, “We don’t vaccinate foreigners!”

Within no time, the news of her rejection grew on social media, hit newsrooms, and appeared in newspapers. The no-vaccination policy was questioned in public forums and severely rejected as xenophobic and illegal. Mexican citizens with foreign-born parents or relatives complained that local employees were turning them away even if they were longtime legal residents, officially recognized as immigrants *(inmigrados),* and holders of an FM2 visa. This document, by law, gives foreign nationals the same rights as Mexican citizens (except the right to vote, participate in political organizations, or work in bars or nightclubs). FM2 holders work, pay taxes, receive social services, and enjoy all the rights allotted by the Constitution. Others, however, reported cases where their foreign-born family members had received the vaccination without delay or hesitancy on the part of health workers.

	My mother is Argentinian, and she received excellent treatment; she has always had an FM2. I think the problem lies in the lack of training, and that has generated a chaotic situation; they do not have protocols, and then you hear all kinds of problems.

One of the noticeable consequences of disseminating this incident on social media was confusion about the validity of foreigners' Mexican credentials for getting vaccinated. Discrepancies and in conformities in social exchanges such as this one, are often sites for discovering people's knowledge and beliefs. There were questions about whether foreigners had or did not have a CURP. In some vaccination centers, local authorities were also requiring voter identification cards (INE).

	Foreigners do not have CURP, so I don´t believe they could register because it was a requirement. Anyhow they shouldn't have denied her the vaccine if she has lived in Mexico for a long time.

This tweet sparked several exchanges again about foreigners who do not have the right to vote in Mexico and, therefore, are not eligible for a voter's ID card. Foreigners also got into the conversations: one participant on Twitter wrote, "I have an FM2. Is this a valid identity document to get vaccinated?[ii]

	I have read some tweets that worry me related to the vaccination process. Why are national public servants not trained to know what an FM2 is? Do permanent residents not have a right to the vaccine even though they pay taxes?

One writer on social media argued, "foreigners do not have a CURP, so I do not **believe** that they could register because CURP is a requirement" (emphasis mine). This statement provoked a cascade of responses that clarified that foreign residents

do have a CURP. It also raised the moral and ethical issue among tweeters of whether it is appropriate to withhold a vaccination in a pandemic due to immigration status.

It was not clear if denying inoculations was an official instruction, a local decision, or a combination of both. On the same day, Eduardo Clark, General Director of the Digital Agency of Public Innovation (Director General de la Agencia Digital de Innovación Pública), tweeted that authorities had modified the local protocols and foreign residents would receive the vaccine after all. Although it does not explicitly stipulate it, this suggests that this was a decision on the part of the public servants present. On a national news program three days later, Clark apologized for any inconveniences in previous days and assured the public that employees at the vaccination sites had been notified of this modified instruction. (https://radioformulaqueretaro.com/extranjeros-en-cdmx-tambien-recibiran-vacuna-anti-covid/.").

In different contexts, we are asked to show our documents, and if they are valid, we *want* to assume that they will be accepted without question.Upon presenting them, the other parties learn something about us represented by our papers, and they come to know us in some way. This "show and know" function (Gitelman, 2014) validates and legitimizes many of our activities and intentions. However, this time, in the vaccination rollout, showing the documents did not go according to expectations. The official information circulated by federal and local authorities required proof of age and proof of residence. No other requirements were stipulated, and there was no mention of a citizenship or visa requirement. So, what went wrong?

In Ms. Koidl's case, the papers presented met all the requirements to be considered legitimate. However, even though they were official, printed on the correct paper, with the correct formats, carrying the proper seals and protections, they still had to go through an on-site inspection. This local revision of documents by street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010), employees who directly interact with citizens in public service, use "based on discretionary power and [are] often required to balance formal policy implementation demands with the priorities of the communities they serve" (Goffen & Lotta, 2021, p. 3). They also work from their own interpretations and ideological positions when making decisions or rulings.

On the ground, papers are subjected to the scrutiny and criteria of local agents. This is the point where authorities of different hierarchies enact or repeal the legitimacy of written documents. The “officialness” of documents only goes so far, and their usefulness can be disputed and disrupted, as in this case. The rejection of foreigners as authorized subjects to receive a lifesaving vaccine in the middle of a pandemic has more to do with how the employees perceived foreigners' presence in their country and who should get priority in a vaccine-scarce world than with the legitimacy of the documents. It also reflects the sense of urgency felt at large and reveals a lack of understanding of how public health measures deter the spread of a virus. The documents signaled the bearers' status as "other" in the local vaccination workers' eyes, a non-Mexican. This was the local decision makers' reason for denying the vaccinations, turning the public health measure into disputed territory and practice, provoking outrage in some social media users and agreement, among others. Local employees would not change their minds, and city-level authorities had to intervene to modify this decision.

This reveals another use of literacy we often ignore. We want to believe that "having our documents in order" is enough to assure following public administrative procedures. However, denying a service, social good, or our rights based on documentation or discretionary steps in a petitioning process is another widespread use of demanding written documentation as evidence of eligibility. Trimbur (2020) notes that paperwork is intimately involved in governing and being governed. Its record-keeping systems are instrumental in dividing citizens from foreigners and the worthy from the unworthy, and those who qualify for social goods from those who do not. The criteria for denying needed health care such as a vaccination is transferred to the paperwork, relieving local bureaucrats of their moral responsibility. Paperwork can be unstable: it can have errors, omissions, or intentional deceit, it "deflects human aims as much as it enacts them. It makes people wait, it stymies purposes, it misdirects intentions. It is filled with frustrations" (Trimbur, 2020, para. 590).

I recently noted elsewhere that "All over the world, people are lining up to get vaccinated. However, they are also searching in their files, organizing documents, filling out forms, registering information, keeping track of arms and syringes. This massive vaccination effort illustrates how entangled our activities are with literacy and how reading and writing is a situated practice"(Kalman, 2021, https://www.languageonthemove.com/keyboard-pen-paper-syringe-covid-19-vaccination-as-multiple-literacy-events/). Dominant versions of reading and writing underline how social legitimacy is achieved through official documentation. However, here we see that a text is only as binding as a reader recognizes it to be. Genre approaches to literacy education review the structure and style of written documents, but when we take a practice approach to reading and writing, we see how interpreting texts and circulating knowledge are collectively

organized and can change their meaning. In one context, validating a legal residence in a country can guarantee certain rights, the right to work, the right to get married, go to school, purchase a home, participate in cultural activities. In a highly charged context, such as the current pandemic, being a foreigner has an entirely different meaning and consequences. An immigration status that was supposed to guarantee the holders' rights became the basis for denying them. Tweeters, journalists, newscasters, and radio hosts did not just exchange information; they presented it to make their case, to argue their point of view. It should be noted that the participants on Twitter did not simply state the laws about FM2; they gave a series of reasons why foreigners should or should not be vaccinated:

- One tweeter stated that foreigners could not have a CURP, and since this was a requirement, they could not be vaccinated.
- One of the most accepted official identifications was the voter ID card (INE). Someone else argued that since foreigners do not have this card, they could not be vaccinated.
- At least two tweeters questioned foreigners' place of residence, even pointing to their Twitter profiles as "proof" that the residents were not entitled to be vaccinated.
- Others opined that if a person had lived "a long time" in Mexico, they should be vaccinated, disregarding the FM2 or other visas altogether.

In the official guidelines, the Secretary of Health noted that the only documents required would be an identification card (Secretaria de Salud, 2020, p. 12. https://coronavirus.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Info_personal_salud_VxCOVID_08Ene2021.pdf). No

mention was made of any other documentation, and no distinction was made between foreign nationals and Mexican citizens. Nonetheless, locally someone determined that no foreigners would be vaccinated, not even those who held the high FM2 status.

Back to school

This recent incident illustrates a dimension of reading and writing in the social world rarely considered in language arts programs and literacy education. It requires a critical stance towards documents—understanding what they represent, how they are socially constructed, and identifying their affordances—and an analytical sensitivity for understanding the limits of their assumed value. From this perspective, learning to recognize different documents or understanding what they are for is incomplete. Students also need to know how to negotiate the use of documents in the social world, learn how to identify their misuse, and defend their rights when questioned.

This proposal has implications for education at all levels. It means that learning about official documents, formal letters, and contracts should also include discussions about potential obstacles or drawbacks rather than working from an idealized notion of documentation. While the foreigners at the vaccination sites could not confront local workers, their situation generated a vital conversation in social media, public outcry, and opposition to the non-vaccination policy and provoked a reversal by authorities. This public debate was possible because there were critical voices that knew about the rights afforded to foreign residents, different types of visas, and public health policies concerning vaccinations during the pandemic. Questioning a local authority requires an understanding of documents and how literacy plays out in the social world.

We need sharp, alert, critical readers and writers who understand social and political problems and how they are expressed locally and globally (Ferreiro, 2004). One way to contribute to students' language development is to create learning contexts where they can experience and understand the contextualized and ideological dimensions of literacy. However, studying issues in-depth with students requires time and room for extended processes in the curriculum. Any serious education reform needs to consider (a) how time is used at school and (b) what processes we want to develop with our learners before selecting and distributing thematic content. In terms of teaching young learners, this poses interesting questions about how to approach social participation through documentation in the curriculum.

Learning to read critically can be achieved in various ways: exploring "paperwork practices" (Kafka, 2020), the use and meaning of specific phrases and their histories, analyzing how documents such as contracts or agreements favor different social actors and understanding how different rhetorical choices reveal or mask agency. Students can also learn to analyze the language of official documents. The passive voice, for example, conceals the active subject, subtracting explicit responsibilities from language. In a sentence such as *"It was determined foreigners would not be vaccinated*," the subject is omitted, and nobody is responsible for this decision.

A critical reading of documents would include identifying "bureaucratic rules, ideologies, knowledge, practices, subjectivities, objects, outcomes"(Hull 2012, p. 253). Learning how to recognize different uses of language is vital for students to identify social actors in specific situations and knowing how to get more information, file a claim, or make a complaint.

The Twitter debate illustrates how the situated nature of showing and interpreting official documents is intimately connected with the social world in which it lives. It occurred in a historical moment when immigration is a highly politicized issue. Thinking about official documents and how they are rendered legitimate or illegitimate opens the door to questioning how social actors intervene in meaning-making and provides an opportunity to explore the unequal access to the affordances of literacy. These considerations need to be part of schooling.

Notes

[i] My thanks to Marino Miranda and Patricia Valdivia for their input on earlier versions of this paper and their assistance with preparing the manuscript.

[ii]Tengo FM2. Dicho documento sirve como comprobante de identidad para la vacunación" [@rubenperezsant2].

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