Abstract: Teachers often struggle to find ways to use their refugee-background students’ native languages in ways that encourage both the development of the native language and academic language and literacy learning in the new language. This project examined how a critical media literacy curriculum unit, which used Facebook as a tool for interaction and publishing student work, served as a context for both English and native language literacy development. Participants were adolescent newcomers from the Horn of Africa. All had limited or interrupted formal schooling experiences and were still developing print literacy skills; yet as transnationals, most used social media to interact with others locally and globally, in multiple languages, oral and written. Our data elucidate how former refugee youth used all of their languages in both inter- and intra-culturally sophisticated ways. Findings illustrate the varied ways that native languages are used across social and academic purposes in the classroom, and the ways in which culture is defined and delimited in the instruction and among youth.

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