
Identity, Investment, and Faces of English Internationally

Bonny NORTON

University of British Columbia, Canada

Abstract

This article has been developed from a keynote address given at the June 2015 Faces of English conference held at the University of Hong Kong. The article examines the trajectory of Bonny Norton's research on identity and language learning, highlighting her construct of investment, developed as a sociological complement to the psychological construct of motivation (Norton, 2013). An important focus of the paper is the expanded 2015 model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015), which responds to the changing communicative landscape of an increasingly digital world, and locates investment at the intersection of identity, capital, and ideology. Norton exemplifies her theories with data drawn from her collaborative research on English language learning in Canada, Pakistan, Uganda, and Iran. With reference to digital storytelling as a promising classroom practice, she argues that the challenge for English language teachers internationally is to promote learner investment in the language and literacy practices of classrooms by increasing the range of identities available to English language learners.

Key words: identity; investment; English; language learning; language teaching

1. Introduction

I would like to begin this article by sharing an email received from a former Ugandan graduate student, Doris Abiria, who had spent a year with her husband and two young boys at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, in 2010/2011. After returning to Uganda, Abiria wrote as follows (Early and Norton, 2012, p. 195):

The boys are getting better. In school the teachers complain they have gone with a style they are calling Western. The teachers say the boys have an accent that they do not hear while

the boys say the teachers speak English up side down... Paul talks to the teacher in class any time he wishes when children are expected first to listen to the teacher and talk when the teacher asks them. Now we keep checking on them frequently in school and supporting them more at home. We hope that by next year they will be okay.

The experience of Paul and his brother is not atypical in our mobile world, in which global travel and international exchanges are increasingly common. However, as people move across regional and national borders, the language and literacy practices that are valued in one place are not necessarily valued in another place (Blommaert, 2010). For example, an accent that is comprehensible in Canada may be less comprehensible in Uganda, and there are important differences between Canadian English and Ugandan English. At the same time, it is not only linguistic features that distinguish Paul's English from that of his peers; it is also the language practices of the classroom – who speaks, when, and how – that distinguish Paul's English from that of his peer group. While Paul was identified as a successful student in Canada, if he is to be accorded the identity of a successful student in Uganda, he needs to adjust to the variety of English considered legitimate in his Ugandan school, and he needs to adopt the language practices expected of young learners in this context.

In this article, I draw on this vignette to exemplify the constructs of identity, investment, and imagined communities that I have developed in my work over the past two decades, and which have been examined with much insight by Claire Kramsch (2013). I then turn to a discussion of an expanded model of investment that I have developed with Ron Darvin, which responds to changes in the communicative landscape in an increasingly digital era, and locates investment at the intersection of identity, capital, and ideology (Darvin & Norton, 2015). The next section examines the ways in which I have drawn on the model to enrich my analysis of collaborative research I have undertaken with a range of English language learners in Canada, Pakistan, Uganda, and Iran. Before concluding, I discuss the implications of these ideas for classroom practice, highlighting the possibilities of digital storytelling for expanding the range of identities available to English language learners, and promoting learner investment in the language practices of classrooms.

2. Identity, Investment, and Imagined Communities

Drawing on the work of Weedon (1987), I have argued in my research that identity is multiple, a site of struggle, and changing across time and space. It is clear from the opening vignette that Paul had a number of identities, including that of Ugandan student and Canadian student, and that these identities represented a site of struggle for him as he transitioned from one country to the other and from a Canadian to a Ugandan institution. The definition of identity I have developed is relevant to the challenges Paul faces in his Ugandan classroom: “the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands

possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 4). In navigating a new relationship to the Ugandan world, Paul is redefining his identity from that of “Western” student to that of “African” student. This relationship is being structured by the practices of his Ugandan classroom and community, which are being scaffolded by both teachers and parents. Paul needs to understand that his possibilities for the future are dependent, at least to some extent, on the ways in which he understands and accommodates to the practices valued in his Ugandan classroom.

I have argued that in order to claim more powerful identities from which to speak, language learners can challenge unequal power relations by reframing their relationship to others. This reframing depends, to some extent, on what I have called the learner’s *investment* in the language practices of a given classroom or community. It is partly to explain a situation like Paul’s that I have developed the sociological construct of “investment” as a complement to the psychological construct of “motivation” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). In my early research with immigrant women in Canada (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013), I observed that existing theories of motivation in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) were not consistent with the findings from my research. Most theories at the time assumed motivation was a character trait of the individual language learner and that learners who failed to learn the target language were not sufficiently committed to the learning process. Such theories did not do justice to the identities and experiences of the language learners in my research. For this reason, I made the case that the construct of “investment” might help to complement constructs of motivation in the field of SLA.

My construct of investment, informed by Bourdieu’s (1991) theories of capital, language, and symbolic power, signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and the way power relations are implicated in language learning and teaching. I have noted, “if learners ‘invest’ in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money) which will increase the value of their cultural capital and social power” (Norton, 2013, p. 6). Unlike constructs of motivation, which frequently conceive of the language learner as having a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical “personality,” the construct of investment conceives of the language learner as having a complex identity, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction. According to Bourdieu (1991), what language and what speaker is considered “legitimate” must be understood with respect to a given “field” or social context that is often characterized by unequal struggles for meaning, access, and power.

Paul was a highly motivated student, but he was not, initially at least, invested in the language practices of his Ugandan classroom. For example, he did not wish to seek permission to contribute to class discussion, nor he did not want to have to listen to the teacher before he could speak. His parents realized, however, that if Paul was to expand his possibilities for the future, he would need to invest in the language practices of the classroom, or he would run the risk of being considered an unsuccessful learner. Clearly, it may also have been possible for the teacher to adjust classroom practices in response

to Paul's investments. I have argued that in addition to asking, "Is the learner motivated to learn?" a teacher could ask, "What is the learner's investment in the language practices of my classroom?" In Paul's classroom, however, as in many classrooms internationally, there was little room for the negotiation of power. Without supportive parents, Paul may have become disengaged from classroom practices, or more troubling, dropped out of school entirely.

Of central interest here is Paul's imagined identity and imagined community – or perhaps more accurately, the community Paul's parents hope he will join in the future. In Norton (2001), I drew on my research with two adult immigrant language learners in Canada to argue that while the learners were initially actively engaged in classroom practices, the realm of their desired community extended beyond the four walls of the classroom. This imagined community was not accessible to their respective teachers, who, unwittingly, alienated the two language learners, who then dropped out of the language class. While Benedict Anderson (1983) talks of the imagined community with respect to the nation, I am interested in a wider range of communities that might be desirable to the language learner – whether a sporting community, a network of professionals, a choir, or a group of comic book readers (Kanno & Norton, 2003). An imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and helps to explain a learner's investment in the target language. Paul's parents hope he will be part of an imagined community of successful Ugandans in the future, and sought to help him navigate the language practices of his new classroom in order to achieve a desirable identity in both the present time and his imagined future.

My research on identity and language learning, and that of an increasing number of scholars internationally (see Norton & Toohey, 2011, for a review) is best understood in the context of a shift in the field from a predominantly psycholinguistic approach to SLA to include a greater focus on sociological and anthropological dimensions of language learning (Block, 2007; Douglas Fir Group, 2016). Such research is interested not only in linguistic input and output in SLA, but in the relationship between the language learner and the larger social world. It has examined the diverse social, historical, and cultural contexts in which language learning takes place and how learners negotiate and sometimes resist the diverse positions those contexts offer them. What is assumed in this research is that "language" is not only a linguistic system of words and sentences, but also a social practice that engages the identities of learners in diverse and often contradictory ways. In this view, important questions are not only, "Can the language learner speak?" but also, "Who has the right to speak?" and "Can the language learner command the attention of listeners?" In my own research on identity and language learning, a broad range of social theorists from diverse disciplines have been influential in shaping my ideas, most notably Pierre Bourdieu (1991) and Christine Weedon (1987). Such scholars are interested in the relationship between social structures and human agency, and between language practices and social power.

3. An Expanded Model of Investment

In the 1990's, when I developed my early theories of identity and investment, large-scale

migrations were transforming the economic and cultural landscapes of many urban centers. As people of different language backgrounds crossed borders to fill the labor needs of these countries, these urban centers became more multilingual and multicultural. Learning English in countries like the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom was critical in enabling migrants to integrate into their new communities and find meaningful employment. The construct of investment became a means to examine how language learning expanded both symbolic and material resources for speakers, and how non-native English speakers were able to access and participate in contexts usually dominated by native English speakers. Research on investment has not been restricted to English dominant countries, however, with journal special issues on the topic in both China and francophone Europe (see Arkoudis & Davison, 2008; Bemporad, forthcoming; Norton & Gao, 2008).

As technological innovations continue to transform the 21st century by offering a more flexible and fluid engagement with the world, there are important implications for theories of language and identity (Darvin, in press). The spaces of socialization and information exchange continue to multiply, in both face-to-face and virtual worlds, locally and globally. As learners move across transnational borders, or even remain within their own national borders, they are able to learn and use English in exciting new ways. How they negotiate these spaces has become increasingly relevant to language education research, even as the power operating in these spaces becomes less visible. It has therefore become necessary to examine how investment in this shifting communication landscape positions learners. In this new digital era, how do English language learners claim the right to speak?

To help address these questions, I have worked with Ron Darvin to develop an expanded a model of investment that responds to the demands of a more mobile and digital world, in which language learners move in and out of online and offline contexts (Darvin & Norton, 2015). This model (see Figure 1) recognizes how the skills, knowledge, and resources learners possess are valued differently in these multiple spaces. As learners are able to interact with others from diverse parts of the world that share specific interests, language learners are exposed to a range of belief systems and world views. To draw attention to how these ideologies operate on micro and macro levels, this model examines both communicative events and communicative practices. Institutional processes and patterns of control shape what become regular practices, but it is in specific instances or events that learners are able to question, challenge, and reposition themselves to claim the right to speak. Our model thus locates investment at the intersection of identity, capital, and ideology, in order to provide a window on the ways in which structures of power work, while finding opportunities for language learners to exercise agency (Huang & Benson, 2013; Miller, 2014).

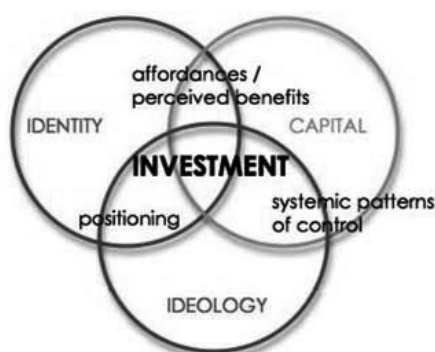


Figure 1. Darvin and Norton's 2015 Model of Investment (*Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, p. 42)

In our model, Darvin and I refer to *ideologies* as “dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 72). Neoliberal ideology, for instance, upholds the supremacy of market forces and the pursuit of profit (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). Ideological assumptions guide the choices people make until these assumptions become “normal” and “common sense,” and repeated actions become “practice.” Hence, ideology is constructed and maintained through the imposition of power, through hegemonic consent, and the repetition of practices. In the same way, language ideologies that privilege English, for instance, are reproduced through language policies constructed by governments, the acquiescence to such policies, and the use of English in different discourses with limited forms of resistance.

As learners as young as Paul navigate across online and offline spaces, ideologies collude and compete, shaping learner identities and positioning them in different ways. Further, the model recognizes that the value of a learner's economic, cultural, or social capital shifts as it travels across time and space. Its value is subject to but not completely constrained by the ideologies of different groups or fields. As Bourdieu (1991) notes, it is when different forms of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate that they become symbolic capital. It follows that the extent to which teachers are able to recognize the value of the linguistic or cultural capital learners bring to the classroom—their prior knowledge, home literacies, and mother tongues—will impact the extent to which learners will invest in the language and literacy practices of their classrooms. This leads me next to a wider discussion of the different “faces” of English language learners internationally, and their diverse investments in English language learning.

4. Faces of English Internationally

Drawing on my collaborative research on identity and English language learning across global sites, including Canada, Pakistan, Uganda, and Iran, I will illustrate the ways in which the 2015 model of investment can help to inform debates on English language

learning internationally. Of central interest in the model is the interplay of identity, capital, and ideology, and the conditions under which language learners invest in language and literacy practices of their classrooms. The model extends the question from my earlier theory, “To what extent are learners invested in the language and literacy practices of their classrooms and communities?” to include the following questions:

What are learners’ *imagined identities*? How do these impact their investment in different language and literacy practices?

What do learners perceive as *benefits* of investment, and how can the *capital* they possess serve as *affordances for learning*?

What *systemic patterns of control* (policies, codes, institutions) make it difficult for learners to invest and acquire certain capital? How have prevailing *ideologies* structured learners’ investments?

4.1 Young English language learners in Canada

In my research with Archie comic readers in Canada (Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004), I collaborated with Karen Vanderheyden to examine the investments of young girls and boys in comic books written in English. The readers were approximately 9 to 12 years of age, and included both native speakers of English and English language learners. In Extracts 1, 2, and 3, the investments of a young Korean boy by the name of Joong-Ha, aged 11, are compellingly articulated. In Extract 1 we learn that it is comic book reading, more than any other learning activity, which has advanced his English skills. One of the benefits of investing in the reading of comic books was thus enhanced language learning. This takes place despite the ideological position, noted by Joong-Ha, that many teachers think comic books are “bad,” because “there’s few words and a lot of pictures.” (Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004, p. 213) In Extract 2, we learn that with immigration to Canada, Joong-Ha’s relationship to the wider world shifted considerably, across both time and space, and we gain greater insight into his past community (his “old life”), as well as his current and future imagined community (his “new life”). Joong-Ha clearly wished to be an integral member of his new Canadian community, without negating his Korean community, and the reading of comic books was helping him to negotiate both worlds. Extract 3 illustrates the extent to which Joong-Ha engaged in translingual practices in both English and Korean as he traded Archie comics and navigated new identities in Canada. The linguistic capital that he had as a Korean speaker served as a resource for him, an affordance of learning.

Extract 1:

Karen: When did you come to Canada?

Joong-Ha: Two years ago.

Karen: Did you speak English in Korea?

Joong-Ha: No.

Karen: So you’ve learned all your English in the last two years?

Joong-Ha: Yes.

Karen: That's amazing. That's fantastic. Has it been easy for you to learn English?

Joong-Ha: No.

Karen: What has helped you to learn English?

Joong-Ha: Reading comics.

Karen: Seriously?

Joong-Ha: Yeah, I read a comic every day. I read Calvin and Hobbes and Archies and adventure things.

Extract 2:

Karen: Now you've talked about reading comics in Korean, that you read some Korean comics. So I'm really interested in that. What kind of comics do you read in Korean?

Joong-Ha: They're like fighting things.

Karen: How do they compare to Archie comics?

Joong-Ha: This is like new life and that's old life.

Extract 3:

Karen: Now when you trade, are you trading with other Korean kids or are you trading with Canadian kids? Or, who are you trading with?

Joong-Ha: Both.

Karen: So some of your Korean friends read Archie also? Now when you trade with your Korean friends, do you speak in Korean with them about Archie, or is it in English?

Joong-Ha: English. Well sometimes Korean.

Drawn from another compelling interview, Extract 4 provides the reflections of a young Canadian-born native English speaker called Dylan, aged 12, who comments on the relationship between newcomers to Canada, defined by Dylan as "kids with English problems," and their native English speaking peers. What we learn from this young boy is that if the social capital of English language learners is to be enhanced through more regular interaction with native speakers, there has to be investment from both native speakers and language learners. It is the common interest in Archie comics that can provide this dual investment. At the same time, however, Dylan captures well the ideological position that English language learners are sometimes seen, not as multilingual speakers, but as people who "have English problems" and are sometimes considered "stupid." It is clear that ideological discussions on the benefits of translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013) have had little penetration in some Canadian schools.

Extract 4:

Karen: I want to find out one more thing. You've got ESL kids and a lot of them hang out with their own group of friends. Then you've got English-speaking friends and they hang out together. Is popular culture like Archie a good way of bringing kids together?

Dylan: Well, yes because I know that one reason most of the kids with English problems and kids with good English don't relate is because the English kids seem to think that either they are stupid because they can't speak English which is totally a misconception or they're not like them and they're kind of pushed away by that.

Karen: So that's what you think, that it's a good way 'cause they can talk to each other?

Dylan: 'Cause it would give them something to realize that these kids like some things that they like, that they are kids who like things that other kids like, which is a way of bringing them together.

4.2 Pakistani youth as English language learners and tutors

In my research with Farah Kamal in Pakistan (Norton & Kamal, 2003), we examined the investments in English of middle-school students aged approximately 11 to 14 who, while English language learners themselves, had been active in teaching English to young orphans from Afghanistan. Student responses to the importance of English related to the benefits of investing in English, both locally and internationally, and the ways in which the learning of English can advance the speaker's cultural, economic, and social capital. Note Shahida's comment in Extract 5:

Extract 5:

The English language is an international language spoken all over the world and it is the language of science. Therefore to promote their education and awareness with modern technologies, it is important to teach [the Afghanis] English.

Pakistani students noted that another benefit of learning English is that it would enable the Afghan children to communicate directly with people all over the world, without the help of translators, and explain to the wider community how much they had suffered. Fariha's comment in Extract 6 notes that English is an international lingua franca, and supports the ideological position that English belongs not only to native speakers, but to all who speak it in the international community:

Extract 6:

English is the language spoken commonly. This language is understood throughout the world. If the Afghan children learn English, know English, speak English, they will be able to discuss their problems with the people of the world.

Students such as Jamshed also noted in Extract 7 that English serves as a common language not only across nations, but within multilingual nations, which, in turn, has important implications for a nation's imagined identity:

Extract 7:

We choose this as our next step because English is the international and global media language and most of the Afghan immigrants do not know English and have no particular

language to communicate with local people. Therefore we choose this as the next step so they can communicate with local people.

Finally, it is knowledge of English, students believed, that would redress imbalances between developed and developing nations, and help advance greater global equity. This ideological position is articulated by Salma, in Extract 8:

Extract 8:

The world is not at all really aware of the problems faced by the people living not only in third world countries but also in far away nations due to lack of knowledge about their culture, and about their language.

4.3 Adolescent English language learners in Uganda

Turning now to my long trajectory of research in the African country of Uganda, one particularly interesting research participant was Henrietta, an 18 year-old female student who participated in a study on the use of digital resources for HIV/AIDS education and enhanced English language learning (Norton, Jones, & Ahimbisibwe, 2011). Henrietta lived in a rural Ugandan village that had limited electricity and no running water, with a per capita income of less than \$1 a day. In the study, we brought Henrietta and her peers to an Internet café in a neighboring town to research HIV/AIDS. By working on this task, the benefit for Henrietta and other students was the opportunity to develop the ability to navigate the web to find useful information, while at the same time improving their English skills. During data collection, Henrietta noted that her “main interest in learning more about computers is to know how they use Internet, to communicate to people in the outside countries”. She stated her belief that knowledge gained through the Internet would benefit self-knowledge, as she would learn more about herself “through sharing view with Canadian people”. Her fervent desire to “join the group of knowledgeable people in the world” is indicative of a powerful imagined identity that helped structure her investment in the language and literacy practices of the digital literacy course.

Ron Darvin and I have noted, however, that Henrietta’s opportunities to develop her literacy and to continually engage in transnational conversations in English may be highly restricted (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Not only was Henrietta’s own economic capital limited, but also the technological infrastructure of her local community was poorly resourced. In this case, both her own social location and the economic position of rural Uganda constrained access to the technology necessary for Henrietta to master literacies that would help her develop her cultural capital. While she may have been driven by a strong desire to learn more about computers and to connect with other people internationally, her social location made it very difficult for her to enter these new spaces of socialization and enhance her social capital. Even though her investment in transnational conversations can be seen as a way to increase her social capital, the perceived benefit may not be sustainable.

Because of the ideological discourses of globalization that construct Henrietta’s own conceptions of value, she positions herself as inadequate, as one who is not sufficiently

“knowledgeable.” This view reproduces ideologies in which the global is privileged over the local, and the global North is seen as more knowledgeable than the global South. As Henrietta seeks to gain access to affordances of learning like digital devices and books, systemic patterns of control will also determine this access. These include the limited allocation of technology budgets to local schools, the development of connectivity infrastructure in rural Uganda, and business processes that impact the affordability of devices. Ideologies that privilege urban vs. rural, middle vs. lower class, or male vs. female will also position Henrietta further and shape her capacity to gain certain affordances.

In terms of linguistic capital, although she speaks English, which has become a lingua franca of the Internet, Henrietta’s access to valued forms of English is also restricted. Interestingly, what she finds particularly appealing about the Internet is that it gives her the opportunity to “understand more about English language”. As she notes, “I got communication. I have learnt the English language because the English in Internet has been very create and it has arranged properly”. How others will position her as a female teenager from rural Uganda will shape the dynamics of their interaction with her and the value they place on her linguistic capital.

4.4 Adolescent and adult English language learners in Iran

More recently, in August 2012, Mehri Mohammadian and I conducted research on the appeal of English Language Institutes (ELIs) for Iranian youth and adults, and we have a number of findings relevant to debates on identity and the faces of English internationally. Our pilot study, which focused on interviews with administrators at five ELIs in Shiraz, Iran, found that the majority of students who participate in English classes at ELIs are school-aged students with varying levels of income. While learners need to have some economic capital to learn English, they do not need to be wealthy. As one administrator noted, in Extract 9:

Extract 9:

The English language is quite popular in Iran, especially in Shiraz for different reasons. In Shiraz most people, even low-income families, are concerned about the education of their children. That has been quite helpful to us for running our institute. That is why we have been successful.

These school-aged language learners attend English classes at ELIs after school hours, usually from 6-8 p.m. As noted in Extract 10, students are invested in the language practices of the ELI classrooms because these practices differ greatly from those in public schools.

Extract 10:

The students directly, after finishing school, come here and they are so tired, but they come with interest because they like it! Because the system is totally different from the public schools. Here, we have more flexible techniques and ways of teaching.

We found that the number of female students at ELIs is far greater than that of male students, highlighting the investment of female students in English language learning. It is also consistent with research around the globe that suggests the learning of English is a way of seeking gender equity (Kobayashi, 2002; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). In Iran, young women have limited mobility, and going to cinemas, restaurants, or coffee shops with friends is generally not approved by parents. For such families, the benefits of English classes are that they are a particularly desirable form of outdoor recreation and a place where young women can safely experience a different world.

We also learnt that Iranian students have diverse investments in learning English, because of the benefits of being able to find information from different sources on the Internet, continuing education abroad, getting scholarships, finding better jobs, traveling to foreign countries, or living abroad. Their participation in English classes at ELIs is not mandatory, but they are eager to learn English and “they come with interest”, as one of the administrators noted. As for the adult language learners, we also found a range of investments in language learning. One administrator explained, in Extract 11:

Extract 11:

People like to learn English because it’s an international language and it means a passport for them to gain status. If they want to be somebody, to go abroad, to have new opportunities, they have got to learn the English language.

It is clear from such comments that investment, identity, and capital are highly related, and that learners’ imagined identities are particularly salient to their investment in the practices of English classrooms. Interestingly, however, one administrator noted that in teacher training sessions, he always tells the teachers, “don’t think that everybody who comes to class wants to learn a language or English. For some people it’s a kind of relaxation, it’s a hobby. It’s a fun place” and went on to say the following, in Extract 12:

Extract 12:

For people who are suffering from emotional hardship or for those who are experiencing some kind of family drama, English classes are a kind of psychological relief. For them, English class is a place of refuge where they can spend a couple of hours on language learning and forget about their life difficulties.

5. Investment and the Faces of English

As presented in section 4 above, the model of investment invites reflection on three sets of questions with regard to English language learners internationally. The first question is as follows: *What are English language learners’ imagined identities, and how do these impact their investment in the language and literacy practices of their classrooms?* We learn from these studies that in contexts like Pakistan, Uganda, and Iran, where English is generally not spoken as a mother tongue, students are invested in English as a lingua franca that

connects them to a wider world. The imagined identity of English language learners, younger and older, is that of a global multilingual citizenry, scaffolded by English, in which people are knowledgeable about other nations, and seek collaboration across borders. The arguments presented suggest that English does not belong to native speakers of the language, but to all those who use it, whether native or non-native speaker. However, for English language learners in English-dominant countries like Canada, where English language learners are learning English as a second rather than foreign language, the imagined identities of English language learners are more complex, as they engage on a daily basis with native speakers, whose power is visible to the English language learner. This does not preclude an imagined multilingual identity for English language learners; however, imagined identities are predicated on language policies and ideological practices in a given country.

Second is the question: *What are the benefits of investment, and how does the capital learners possess serve as affordances for learning?* For all the learners in the studies discussed, the benefit of learning English was that it enhanced the learners' social, cultural, and economic capital, providing for a more promising future. It was not always the case, however, that the capital students already possessed served as affordances for learning. For example, it was rare to find examples in the data that provided support for the mother tongues of the English language learners in the diverse research studies. The linguistic capital of the learners remained largely invisible, whether learners were in Canada, Pakistan, Uganda, or Iran. Further, the popular cultural capital of learners, such as the comic book readers in Canada, received little validation from teachers, despite evidence that it enhanced language learning. In addition, it was clear that the economic capital of the Afghan refugees, and Ugandan students such as Henrietta, might have been inadequate for sustained English language learning.

This is related to the third question: *How do systemic patterns of control and prevailing ideologies impact a learner's investment in language learning?* While most learners took the ideological position that the learning of English was highly beneficial, it is of concern that learners raised few questions about the impact of the global spread of English (Pennycook, 2007), and made little reference to the advantages of multilingualism (Kramsch, 2009; May, 2014). For example, if English is considered the preeminent language of science and technology, what implications does this have for the construction and distribution of knowledge on a global scale? Clearly there are important implications for the identities of students worldwide, many of whom, like Henrietta, might devalue the knowledge they have if it is not validated by anglophone networks. What is not adequately addressed in my data are the invisible mechanisms of power exercised by such systemic patterns of control as immigration policies, university admissions programs, and language testing agencies. The challenge for language teachers, more generally, and for English teachers, in particular, is to harness the capital that students already have, and use it as resources for learning. Further, teachers need to help learners identify and navigate systemic patterns of control and make visible ideological practices that limit and constrain human possibility. This challenge leads me to the implications of identity and investment research for classroom pedagogy.

6. Identity, Investment, and Classroom Practice

There are many exciting ways in which language teachers can help learners expand the range of identities available to language learners and encourage learner investment in the language and literacy practices of their classrooms (Cummins & Early, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Wen, 2015). By way of illustration, Darvin and I have been exploring the possibilities offered by digital storytelling, which serves as a pedagogical extension of our model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2014). Digital stories are brief personal narratives told through images, sounds and words, and which use new media technology. They incorporate students' past and present lives in the learning process, and their hopes for the future. Children, youth, and adults can identify and reflect on pivotal moments that have shaped their life trajectories and reframe them through the creative and collaborative use of multiple media and modes. Because of connectivity and the transportability of the digital, student stories can be shared not only with local communities but also with transnational audiences (Hafner, 2014; Toohey, Dagenais, & Schultze, 2012).

There are a number of resources online that discuss the elements of digital storytelling and its learning applications. Founded by Joe Lambert, one of the pioneers of digital storytelling, the *Center for Digital Storytelling* (<http://storycenter.org>) provides examples of migrant stories and features the *Digital Storytelling Cookbook*, which discusses story elements and approaches to scripting and digitizing story elements. There is also an innovative project at the University of California, Berkeley, called *Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth* (<http://www.oaklanddusty.org>), or DUSTY, an after-school program where volunteers from the community help students of diverse backgrounds to create multimedia presentations (Hull & Katz, 2006). A Canadian initiative called *Scribjab* (<http://www.scribjab.com>) is a website and iPad application for young learners to read and create digital stories using multiple languages, and was developed by Kelleen Toohey and Diane Dagenais at Simon Fraser University. The *African Storybook* (<http://www.africanstorybook.org/>) is another exciting project with much potential for transforming classrooms and schools in Africa. Developed by the South African Institute for Distance Education (Saide), it is providing open-access digital stories, in African languages, English, French, and Portuguese for young learners in sub-Saharan Africa (Norton & Welch, 2015). An extension of this project has been developed by Liam Doherty at the University of British Columbia, called the Global African Storybook Project (<http://global-asp.github.io/>), which is translating freely available digital stories from the African Storybook Project into multiple languages worldwide, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Japanese, and Nepali.

7. Conclusion

The trajectory of my collaborative research suggests that language learner investment is important for language learning internationally, whether learners are in Canada or Uganda, China or India. Further, it is productive to investigate investment with respect to the constructs of identity, capital, and ideology, as this may help make visible the ways in which power relations enable or constrain language learning. The range of research discussed,

across a wide variety of global sites, supports the view that investment is enhanced when the pedagogical practices of the teacher increase the range of identities available to language learners, whether face-to-face, digital, or online. To affirm learners' complex identities, classroom practices need to draw from and legitimize learners' cultural capital – their prior knowledge and experience – while seeking to better understand and affirm learners' imagined identities. I have suggested that digital storytelling is one particular method that might increase learner investment in the language practices of classrooms. Through the act of constructing a story through different multimodal elements and languages, learners are given an opportunity to exercise their agency and claim their right to speak and be heard.

Such findings have important implications for research (De Costa & Norton, in press), as well as classroom pedagogies that promote greater agency on the part of learners (Wen, 2015). Drawing on research discussed in this article, language teacher education programs are encouraged to provide teachers with greater opportunities to explore language as both a linguistic system and a social practice. Such programs should encourage teachers to harness the social, cultural, and linguistic capital that language learners already possess, and to better understand their hopes for the future. With regard to the teaching of English in particular, it is increasingly clear that ownership of English is associated with all who speak it in the global community, whether native or non-native speaker. An examination of the identities and investments of English language learners provides much insight into the face and future of English internationally.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Lillian Wong for her generous invitation to serve as a keynote speaker at the 2015 Faces of English conference at the University of Hong Kong, Ken Hyland for his warm hospitality at the Centre for Applied English Studies, and Wen Qiufang and Zhou Yan of Beijing Foreign Studies University for lively conference conversations.

References

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Editions.
- Arkoudis, S., & Davison, C. (Guest Eds.) (2008). Chinese Students: Perspectives on their social, cognitive, and linguistic investment in English medium interaction. (Special Issue) *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 18(1).
- Bemporad, C. (forthcoming). Language investment, une notion majeure pour saisir les dynamiques sociales de l'appropriation langagière [Language investment, a major construct for understanding social dynamics in language learning]. *Language et Société*.
- Block, D. (2007). The rise of identity in SLA research, post Firth and Wagner (1997). *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(1), 863–876.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *A sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* [Trans. G. Raymond and M. Adamson]. Cambridge: Polity Press and Harvard University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- Cummins, J., & Early, M. (2011). *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Staffordshire, England: Trentham.
- Darvin, R. (in press). Language and identity in the digital age. In S. Preece (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of language and identity*. Oxon, England: Routledge.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2014). Transnational identity and migrant language learners: The promise of digital storytelling. *Education Matters: The Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 55–66.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36–56.
- De Costa, P.I., & Norton, B. (in press). Identity in language learning and teaching: Research agendas for the future. In S. Preece (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and identity*. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Douglas Fir Group (2016). A transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100 (in press).
- Duchêne, A., & Heller, M. (Eds.) (2012). *Language in late capitalism: Pride and profit* (Vol. 1). Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- Early, M., & Norton, B. (2012). Language learner stories and imagined identities. *Narrative Inquiry*, 22(1), 194–201.
- Hafner, C. (2014). Embedding digital literacies in English language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(4), 655–685.
- Huang, J., & Benson, P. (2013). Autonomy, agency and identity in foreign and second language education. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 36(1), 7–28.
- Hull, G. A., & Katz, M. L. (2006). Crafting an agentive self: Case studies of digital storytelling. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 41(1), 43–81.
- Kanno, Y., & B. Norton (Guest Eds.) (2003). Imagined communities and educational possibilities. (special issue) *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4).
- Kobayashi, Y. (2002). The role of gender in foreign language learning attitudes: Japanese female students' attitudes toward English learning. *Gender and Education*, 14(2), 181–197.
- Kramsch, C.J. (2009). *The multilingual subject*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Kramsch, C. J. (2013). Afterword. In B. Norton (2013) *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation (2nd ed.)* (pp. 192–201). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- May, S. (2014). *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL, and bilingual education*. London and New York: Routledge
- Miller, E. (2014). *The language of adult immigrants: Agency in the making*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Norton, B. (2001). Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom. In M. Breen (Ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research* (pp. 159–171). Harlow, England: Pearson Education.

- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* (2nd ed.) Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Norton, B., & Gao, Y. (2008). Identity, investment, and Chinese learners of English. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 18(1), 109–120.
- Norton, B., Jones, S., & Ahimbisibwe, D. (2011). Learning about HIV/AIDS in Uganda: Digital resources and language learner identities. *Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes*, 67(4), 568–589.
- Norton, B., & Kamal, F. (2003). The imagined communities of English language learners in a Pakistani school. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4), 301–307.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (Eds.). (2004). *Critical pedagogies and language learning*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching*, 44(4), 412–446.
- Norton, B., & Vanderheyden, K. (2004). Comic book culture and second language learners. In B. Norton & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 201–221). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norton, B., & Welch, T. (May 14, 2015). Digital stories could hold the key to multilingual literacy for African children. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/digital-stories-could-hold-the-key-to-multilingual-literacy-for-african-children-40405>.
- Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 9–31.
- Pavlenko, A., & Norton, B. (2007). Imagined communities, identity, and English language learning. In *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 669–680). Springer USA.
- Pennycook, A. (2007). *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. London & New York: Routledge
- Toohey, K., Dagenais, D. & Schulze, E. (2012). Second language learners making video in three contexts. *Language and Literacy*, 14(2), 75–96.
- Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.
- Wen, Q. (June 2015). *Production-oriented approach (POA) to teaching adult English learners in China*. Keynote presentation at the CAES Faces of English conference, University of Hong Kong.

(Copyedited by DING Yanren)

About the author

Bonny NORTON is a Professor and Distinguished University Scholar in the Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of British Columbia, Canada. Her primary research interests are identity and language learning, critical literacy, and international development. In 2010, she was the first recipient of the “Senior Research Leadership Award” by the Second Language Research SIG of the American Educational Research Association, and in 2012 was inducted as an AERA Fellow. Her website is: <http://www.educ.ubc.ca/faculty/norton/>