

# 7 *Narrative inquiry in second language teacher education in rural Uganda*

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## Introduction

The study that is the focus of this chapter addressed the way in which researcher identity was negotiated in the context of second language teacher education research in a secondary school in rural Uganda (Norton & Early, 2011).<sup>1</sup> It drew on data from an on-going digital literacy study undertaken as part of our larger programme of language and (multi)literacy research in Uganda (see Norton & Early, 2011, for a list of relevant publications). The focal participants in the study were the university researchers, Norton and Early, as we conducted workshops on digital literacy for multilingual teachers and students whose medium of instruction across the subject areas was English. We also conducted semi-formal interviews and questionnaires with nine teachers representing a variety of subject areas. In our data analysis, we drew on the two researchers' 'small stories' (Bamberg, 2004a; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007) that were told as we engaged in talk-in-interaction with our Ugandan teacher colleagues.

## Aims

In Canagarajah's (1996) article in *TESOL Quarterly*, he argued compellingly that in the reporting of research in language education, the subjectivity of the researcher needed to be made more visible and be less 'absent from the report, looming behind the text as an omniscient, transcendental all knowing figure' (1996: 326). Moreover, he noted that narratives might hold particular promise to open up new avenues in this regard. Our study was, to some extent, motivated by the issues raised by Canagarajah, as we concurred that more attention to this topic remained urgently needed in the field of TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages). One important goal of our project was to address the following question: to what extent can narrative inquiry illuminate the ways in which researcher identity is negotiated in language teaching research? Specifically, we sought to gain a better understanding of how researchers' identities are represented in social interactions with teachers and the potential of 'small story research' to shed light on this.

## Theory

Regarding researcher identity, Norton's own research on identity (Norton, 2000, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011), as well as the work of such scholars as Block (2007), Pavlenko (2002, 2007), and Toohey (2000), was productive in framing our study. Norton, drawing on poststructuralist theory, holds that 'identity' is not 'fixed' but must be understood vis-à-vis a person's relationship to the broader social, political, and economic world. Within this perspective, identities change across time and space, and are reproduced in *situated* social interactions. Identity, Norton argues, is multiple, dynamic, and contradictory. Regarding narrative inquiry and identity, with respect to teacher education, the work of such scholars as Barkhuizen (2010), Golombek and Johnson (2004), Johnson and Golombek (2002), Tsui (2007) was especially productive in conceptually framing our study. Central to their work, and to ours, is the theorization of language teacher education from a sociocultural perspective. Thus, we took the position that learning across the age-span is 'a dynamic social activity, that is situated in physical and social contexts, and distributed across persons, tools, and activities' (Johnson, 2006: 237). However, we considered that the critical role that *researchers'* identities play in language teacher education has been under-researched and for two reasons we believed that such research was timely.

Firstly, given the social turn in teacher education, it is critical to articulate how researchers' identities are intimately implicated in and shape the process (content and form) by which knowledge is mobilized, exchanged, and recontextualized across disparate sites. Second, given the field's increased understanding of the ways in which social activities gain their meaning from larger sociohistorical discourses, it is crucial that researchers, themselves, become more aware of how their *personal discourses* are implicated in the ways in which their own identities, as well as those of others, 'are constructed and reconstructed through human relationships' (Johnson, 2006: 238) in teacher education projects. This work is essential if teacher educators/researchers seek, as we do, to redress how social hierarchies and inequities are enacted in institutional relations between universities in the global economic core (i.e. well-resourced countries) and schools in the economic margins (i.e. under-resourced countries) (Blommaert, 2005).

## Narrative

As Ochs and Capps (2001: 57) noted, the predominant construct of *narrative* employed in applied linguistics research has been the

prototypical Labovian one, with the following qualities: 'A coherent temporal progression of events that may be reordered for rhetorical purposes and that is typically located in some past time and place. A plotline that encompasses a beginning, a middle, and an end, conveys a particular perspective and is designed for a particular audience who apprehend and shape its meaning.' These 'big' coherent stories of personal, past experiences were not central to our data, but as we listened to the tapes of our presentations and teacher interviews and read our reflections, what struck us forcibly was the recurring presence of another type of *narrative*, the ones that as Bamberg (2004b: 254) aptly puts it, 'we tell in passing in our everyday encounters with each other and which I consider the *real* stories of our lived lives'. These rich, everyday narratives are what he and other scholars, notably Georgakopoulou and Bamberg (Bamberg, 2004b; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007) have called 'small' stories:

small stories ... are employed as an umbrella-term that covers a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell. These tellings are typically small when compared to the pages and pages of transcript of interview narratives.

(Georgakopoulou, 2007: vii)

What is particularly powerful about small stories, given our interest in researcher identity, is their significance for exploring the relationship between *narrative- and- identity*, or what Bamberg (2004a: 368) calls a 'narrative construction of self'. Several features of this approach to narrative research resonated with us (see also chapters by De Fina, Coffey & Rugen, this volume). In keeping with Norton's (2000) construct of identity, this narrative research perspective is a 'socially situated approach to storied identity' (Bamberg, 2004b: 254); that is, 'The subject within this approach is clearly more social [than in the prototypical narrative] in a Bahktinian and Vygotskian sense' (p. 254 ). Moreover, like Norton , central to this work is that identities are not 'fixed' but changing and a site of struggle. As Bamberg (2004a: 234), explains it, the small story research approach starts 'from the assumption that self and identity are not givens ... but rather, that they are constantly under revision and interactively renegotiated'. Moreover, also in keeping with Norton's work, the small-story research approach 'does not presuppose a unitary subject as the grounds for its investigation' (Bamberg, 2004c: 224 ). Thus, as we began our 'conceptual dabbling' (Barkhuizen, 2011: 392) through

what was for us previously uncharted scholarly territory, we found that the small story approach to narrative research fitted well, in multiple respects, with the poststructuralist and socio-constructivist perspectives in which we viewed identity construction and contemporary views of teacher education. It also fitted well with what Barkhuizen (p. 394) has termed the process of ‘narrative knowledging’ in which we engaged. This latter construct is very productive in coherently articulating the approach we took in researching our own narratives. As we researched our own small stories to make sense of and realize our experiences, we were also constantly mindful of ‘the active, fluid nature of meaning making, and [our own] aims to avoid conceptions of narrative knowledge as stable, permanent, and unchallengeable’ (p. 396).

## Context

As explained above, our study of researcher identities was a study within a study that was itself part of a larger programme of work in Uganda. The context for the study that is the focus here was a school pseudonymously called Sebatya Secondary School, a co-educational day school in rural eastern Uganda, which has approximately 700 students and a staff of 35. In September 2008, the UBC team was invited by the principal to help promote digital literacy among teachers and students. The eGranary2 portable digital library (that can be used with limited electrical power and no connectivity), a laptop computer, as well as digital cameras were the digital communication tools of interest. We (Norton and Early) followed up the invitation with a research visit to the school in August 2009: we met with the principal, teachers, and students and conducted a two-day workshop on the use of eGranary and the other digital tools. On the first day of the workshop, there were approximately 20 teachers present, who were joined by 30 senior students for the morning workshop on the second day. Nine of the teachers agreed to actively participate in the research project. They, along with the others, attended the workshops, and then they shared their insights about the digital tools and their teaching contexts more broadly in diverse data forms.

## Data

It is important to clarify from the outset that the data which we collected and ultimately employed for the researcher identity study was not in the first instance gathered for that purpose. In this regard, our study is likely to be atypical in that we collected the data as part of a

digital literacy study rather than a researcher identity study. The two research questions we were addressing in our larger project were: (1) how do digital tools function as placed resources in Ugandan society? (2) to what extent do identities shift as teachers learn from and contribute to global knowledge production? Thus, our original research questions were centrally concerned with the innovative use of digital resources to promote social inclusion in poorly resourced regions of the world. This was collaborative research, intended to be conducted in the spirit of capacity-building advocated by such scholars as the indigenous scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Smith, 1999). However, since the teachers had had little previous exposure to digital tools, we conducted a two-day workshop on the use of eGranary and the other digital resources that we had brought. We wanted to record these workshops, as we thought that the collection of naturally occurring spontaneous talk-in-interaction would be useful in developing an enhanced understanding of the mobility potential of information and communication technology (ICTs) from the economic centre to the economic margins. With this in mind, we tape-recorded the workshops, took photographs, and collected some short video footage.

On the first morning, Norton led an interactive workshop that lasted approximately two and a half hours including a tea break, with Early in a supporting role, observing and taking field notes. This data was audio-recorded in full and later transcribed. During the lunch period, we each sat, ate, and talked with different teachers and then went on a long walk around the school grounds, where we exchanged information and experiences from our personal and professional lives.

After lunch, we broke into three smaller groups that rotated through three workstations. One group worked with Norton hands-on with the eGranary, learning how to use it, checking its content for relevant material, and exploring how materials might be downloaded and printed for classroom applications. A second group worked with a volunteer assistant, who had accompanied us, to learn how to use the digital cameras for both still and short video-clip applications. There was a great deal of sharing of experiences and stories about how some teachers had used (non-digital) cameras in the past, as well as stories of how they hypothesized they might use them in their respective subject areas in the future. The third group worked with Early with the computers and tried to learn some of the new software, including photoshop, and how to upload images from the cameras and onto the computers, as teaching tools. This session again lasted two and a half hours and some participants stayed longer.

It was inappropriate to audio-record the informal conversations, although critically important in our interactions with the

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teachers, and it proved difficult to audio-record the smaller noisy, dynamic sessions, and so we used written and audio-recorded reflections to try to (re)capture that spontaneous talk in interaction, the events, and practices. On the morning of the second day, some additional teachers joined the workshop, and, unexpectedly, some 30 senior students from the student council became participants. We did some quick revisions to our plans for the session and after a brief introduction by Norton, assisted by Early, we asked the teachers from Day 1 to review and teach the newcomers what they themselves had previously learned, before we moved on to further professional development around digital literacies. These two-and-a-half-hour sessions were also recorded and later transcribed.

Below is an illustrative example of a small story told by Norton from one of the workshop sessions where both multilingual students and teachers were in attendance:

1. Norton: Alright let me do something for you because I'd like everybody to share
2. stuff. Here's a map of the world, right? Let me show you where I live.
3. Margaret and I live here. This is where we live. You see. So this here - this
4. here is North America and this is Vancouver. So we live - we live in Vancouver.
5. Okay. And this is where you live in Uganda. Okay. Obviously you live here
6. So when we came here, Margaret and I, we flew from here and we flew to
7. England which is over there, over there. Over there.
8. And then we flew overnight to England and then we flew overnight to Uganda.
9. So two nights on a plane to get here. Just so- and then on the plane, we brought
10. all this equipment with us. And we were afraid - we were afraid the immigration
11. people were going to stop us, and take all the equipment away.
12. Ss and Ts [laughs]

13. So we had to hide it all and we put it in funny things. But anyway they let us-
14. there was no problem at all. So I'm very pleased about that because what we've
15. done is that um we've brought this: these computers for you, but we've also
16. brought computers and E-Granary for- do you know Busolwe? We are also
17. working with a community library in Busolwe. And then we are also working at um Kyambogo, you know Kyambogo University?
18. Ss and Ts: Yes.
19. Yeah. So we are working with one of our students who has got his Master's
20. degree. And he's at Kyambogo University. He's working with primary teachers'
21. colleges. Uh at ... and Kibuli. So we brought computers for there. And
22. then we brought two computers for um donations. So we brought nine computers
23. with us. In our suitcases.
24. Ss. and Ts. [laugh]
25. But we got through, we got through and we're here ...

As indicated above, nine teachers agreed to participate in greater depth in the research process, two of whom, as subject English teachers, were key participants. The remaining seven teachers represented instruction in both the humanities and the sciences. The teachers shared their insights about the digital resources and the contexts of their teaching in which these resources had been placed. We collected data in various forms including face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, email exchanges, professional conversations, photographs, video-footage, and our written and audio-recorded reflections. The questionnaires required short, open-ended responses and included items related to the teachers' previous experience with computers, with email, and with other digital devices. We also addressed questions regarding eGranary's perceived strengths and limitations

and how it might be adapted for pedagogical purposes in the teachers' subject areas.

The semi-structured interviews followed up on the themes of the questionnaire. The two focal teachers were interviewed together, and the other teachers were interviewed in two small groups organized by disciplines (humanities and sciences). In all, then, three semi-structured interviews were conducted, each approximately one hour in length. In addition to following up on the questionnaire information, additional information was gathered in the following areas: (1) the challenges the participants faced in attempting to improve the teaching of their subject area within the limited resources of their local context; (2) how the teachers innovatively made use of local resources to support their students' learning; and (3) how eGranary as a placed resource may (or may not) be useful in their work. These interviews were highly interactive, and the two of us and the teacher participants, in the small groups, served as co-conversationalists in the social practice of exchanging lived experiences of the past and projected (near future) events in their praxis. The interview data was transcribed in full and revealed many co-constructed small stories. Below is an illustrated example of the small-group interview data:

1. Norton: Yeah. You know, I know we could go on
2. talking for hours–
3. Early: (*agreeing*). Mmmhmm.
4. Norton: – because what you are saying is so important. But we will continue
5. the conversation – one way or another, in the future. But your insights have
6. been very helpful and thank you for giving your time to us and we will
7. certainly share these insights. But I think you're doing an amazing job
8. because I think you have maybe one of the hardest jobs in the education
9. system. Really. And I think it's amazing what you are doing. But um- and
10. but – but we will do whatever we can with our research and with the
11. communities we work with to bring pressure, you know, to provide the



12. evidence to show that more resources have to go into education
13. Kaikara (*agreeing*): Mmmhmm.
14. Norton: – and also of course into the sciences as well.
15. Early: But the other thing too is that people are permitted to use the
16. resources they have
17. Norton: Yeah, yeah.
18. Early: So you have mother tongue as a resource –
19. Norton: Uh-huh.
20. Teachers: Mmmhmm.
21. Early: – and you're not permitted to– even to use the resources
22. Teachers: Mmmhmm. no
23. Early: – that are available to you.
24. Norton: Yeah. Yeah.
25. Early. It seems uh – that that's really tragic.
26. Norton: And that is also not consistent with research, you know –
27. Teachers: Mmmshmm.
28. Norton: – which really does support uh– not all the time, but when people need it for meaning.

## Analysis

In scrutinizing pages of data capturing 26 hours of interviews, presentations, discussions, and reflections, we first needed to consider which of the diverse data forms to use in our short story analysis. The choices fell between using only the digitally recorded, fully transcribed data from the workshop presentations and teacher interviews or to also employ the available data in the form of the researchers' personal reflections. This latter data that drew on ethnographic techniques (field notes, photographs, written journals, and digitally recorded reflections<sup>3</sup>) could have been employed to include additional small stories in interaction, drawn from memory and chronicled after the events. They would provide not only narratives from the participants at different times, and in different spaces, but also a broader context for the study, one in which there were many one-on-one personal,

sincere exchanges of everyday stories of our lived experiences. Many of these stories were powerful emotionally, politically, and educationally. However, there were complex ethical dilemmas that arose with respect to this data. As Kvale, (2006:498) points out, there are interviewers [researchers] 'who through their gentle, warm and caring approaches may efficiently circumvent the interviewee's defenses to strangers and invade their private world'. In order not to run the risk of employing what participants may have considered to be 'off the record' conversations about their 'private world' and appropriating them into the researchers' own reflective narratives, we decided not to use this data and to analyse only the talk-in-interaction in the more 'public' professional settings.

Next, we selected criteria to use in determining what constituted a small story. Here we found productive the ground-breaking and influential work of Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, whose 'definition' is quoted earlier, and whose focus is not so much on narratives as texts but on narratives understood as constitutive social practices (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007:12). The following insights by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) were also particularly helpful in our categorization and analysis of small stories in our data.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 8) make the case that 'stories function as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived'. What this suggests is that there is an important relationship between the storyteller and the audience for the story; storytellers use stories to reflect upon life and to explain themselves to others. The storyteller is thus seeking a human connection with the audience and is striving for an affective response. The constructs of place, context, and time are crucial in the production of such narratives. With regard to place, Connelly and Clandinin (p. 8) argue that 'Place is where the action occurs, where characters are formed and live out their stories and where cultural and social context play constraining and enabling roles'. However, as Barkhuizen (2008) notes, such 'places' do not exist in isolation and are best understood with reference to wider sociocultural and political contexts, operating at local, national, and international levels. With regard to time, the central structure, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 9) note, is the frame of past-present-future, and narrative data sources may be classified with reference to their temporal orientation. However, we were mindful that small stories are often fragmented and sometimes a little incoherent.

With the insights from these key narrative scholars in mind, the first phase of our analysis was to individually read the transcripts, locate small stories, and undertake a thematic analysis, one that

according to Riessman (2008) is the most common in analysing narrative. While we could identify many small stories and themes in the initial data analysis, what struck us both, and became the dominant theme in our analysis, was how we sought to effectively establish a collaborative relationship with our research participants, in which professional conversations could occur and power differentials could be reduced. As we scrutinized this discourse, we noted the many social positions we took up in our attempts to accomplish a more egalitarian relationship with our participants. Language education research has investigated the complex relationship between researchers and teachers (Denos et al., 2009; Toohey & Waterstone, 2004), highlighting the many complex and subtle ways in which power is negotiated in diverse research sites. Clearly, we were sensitive to these issues, and what the transcripts illuminated, even at first reading, was that we worked in ways, often unintentional, to represent ourselves as various types of people other than 'researchers' to try to diminish hierarchical social distinctions.

Once we had identified the dominant theme and the performance of our multiple identities within the discursive tellings, we refined our analysis. First independently, and then through a discussion of the 'identity' types that we had each categorized, we established more specifically what we perceived to be the most salient researcher identities that we had (re)produced in the interest of establishing collaborative relations of power. Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008: 3) state that small stories have significance in conveying, 'how the teller wants to be understood, what sense of self they index'. We sought to do this in our analysis by separately and then dialogically working through a shared iterative process of a micro-linguistic analysis of how we represented ourselves in the here and now followed by an analysis of how that event constructed us vis-à-vis our relationship to the broader social, political, and economic world. In sum, we sought to link the sense of self we were indexing in the small story to larger sociocultural and historical social practices. In principle, this is not dissimilar from Bamberg's definition of positioning (2006:144–5). Below we will illustrate how we undertook our analysis and refer readers back to the first sample extract in the 'Data' section above, lines 1–17.

We read through the transcripts and agreed that there were arguably three interrelated small stories in the 17 lines of transcriptions. The first extends from, 'Alright let me do something ...' (line 1) to, 'So we live – we live in Vancouver. Okay' (line 4). The second small story begins with, 'We flew from here ...' (line 6) and ends with, 'So two nights on a plane to get here' (line 9). The third small story starts

at, 'We brought all this equipment with us' (line 9) and finishes at, 'we've brought this: these computers for you' (line 15).

Each of these three small stories has identifiable characters, settings, and events. In the first short story, as a linguistic analysis will attest, the characters are 'I' Norton (lines 1, 2), 'we' Early and Norton (lines 3, 4), and 'you' the participants (lines 1, 2, 3, 5); the setting is 'Vancouver' (line 4); and we have two events (i) 'to share stuff' in Sebatya, and (ii) 'to live' in Vancouver. In this story, Norton constructs an identity as a person who believes in the centrality of sharing and indexes the two researchers as having homes and daily lives on Canada's West Coast, a place that they have left far behind. Moreover, she references Early by her first name 'Margaret and I' (line 3) and makes frequent first-person references to invite the teachers to think of them as women beyond 'researchers' and 'foreign experts'. In doing so, we noted in our analysis that she is likely mindful of and resisting the larger sociohistorical discourses that might be associated with their titles and as indexed in the school principal's introduction. Here we noted that we are 'travellers', 'sharers', and 'friendly, approachable women with daily lives'.

In the next short story, the characters are again 'Margaret and I, we ...' (line 3) who as Norton tells the story; 'flew overnight to England' (line 8) and, 'we flew overnight to Uganda' (line 8), so 'two nights on a plane to get here' (line 9). The setting changes according to the beginning (Vancouver), middle (England), and end (Entebbe), and the event was our journey. Clearly in this event we are 'world travelers' rather than researchers, again indexing ourselves as having 'other' identities, and as we tried to relate this vis-a-vis the broader ideological context, we turned to identity constructs such as 'global citizens', as place-holders until we had analysed other short stories and could do cross-story analysis to determine the dominant, recurring identity positions that we took up.

In the third small story, the characters are once again, 'We' and 'Us', Bonny and Margaret (lines 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15), the 'immigration people' / 'they' (lines 10-11, 13), and 'you', the teachers and students of Sebatya (line 15). The setting is Entebbe International Airport and the event is our entry interview with Customs and Immigration Officials. The teachers had already been told by the principal that we had brought nine computers, six eGranaries, two digital cameras, batteries, battery rechargers, and books for the school and the local community library in a nearby region. Here the teachers heard first-hand the lived story of how we had entered the country.

When we next considered this researcher construction of self in the discourse, relative to broader ideological discourses, we identi-

fied two significant identities: (i) as a guest it would be customary to arrive bringing gifts for the hosts, as a measure of appreciation for preparations that the hosts had made to make the visit possible and comfortable; and (ii) as *women removed from their daily lives* and as such, at times, vulnerable and uncertain of Ugandan norms, rules, and regulations, caught in positions where they lacked power. Lines 12 and 24, representing the sustained and spontaneous laughter that our story provoked, indexes a warm, empathetic, response to our situation from the participants. We continued this way in our analysis through all our identified short stories, relevant to the dominant theme, and then worked to categorize and classify the various types of persons we constructed into four identity positions that recurred most commonly in the narrative data.

## Findings

Through our analysis we classified the researcher identities that we constructed as follows: researcher as international guest, researcher as collaborative team member, researcher as teacher, and researcher as teacher educator. A summary and examples from the transcripts will be given for each.

### *Researcher as international guest*

When we arrived at the Sebatya Secondary School on 6 August 2009, after a long dusty ride from the nearest town, the principal, Ms Wakumire, invited us into the staffroom, where the teachers were waiting to greet us. After the introductions, Norton thanked Ms Wakumire, and then proceeded to more fully introduce herself and Early to the teachers with the help of a PowerPoint presentation. Two examples of small stories pertaining to this researcher identity have been shared above. Below is a third, with the students as well as the teachers as the audience:

[Norton, searching Wikipedia on eGranary]. I'm going to see if I can find the University of British Columbia. That's our university. We're just going to see if it comes up. Yes it does. So you know um— see let me show you here. That's my university. University of British Columbia. OK. [Speaker: OK.] And it probably, you know, it's um – and it gives us – look it tells us that it's around – this is 1908 so it's over a hundred years old – and our department there – oh let me show – you'd be interested in this. You see we live on the sea. So you see this is an image [shows an image of the campus with the ocean and the mountains in the background] there you can see on the sea.

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In this small story, by providing some history and an image of our place of work, Norton provides a ‘character setting’ for the two researchers and gives the teachers and students a visual image of where we work and live. In this way, the researchers are constructed as people with working lives in a geographically very different country and as people who live by the sea and walk by the ocean and mountains every day. Moreover, in her narration of the small stories, Norton shows herself to be someone who appreciates and takes pride in her place of work and the natural beauty of her surroundings. In some measure, this quickly helps to demystify the researchers and to make their diverse and more ‘everyday’ identities and realities more visible.

*Researcher as collaborative team member*

As may have been noted in the extracts above, there is a consistent use of the first- person pronoun plural, ‘we’, in the data, indexing a ‘team’. The identities of the researchers, as collaborative team members, were also realized in several other ways. For instance, when Norton paused, at the end of the narrative recounting of how eGranary came to be developed and used, to consider what might be the next logical step in the session, Early intervened with a supportive suggestion. She prompted Norton to continue the narrative by telling the participants about the other digital equipment that they had brought with them. Norton then took the intervention as an opportunity to provide Early with the chance to address the group:

Early: Do you want to mention the cameras?

Norton: Sure! Go ahead.

Early: No, go ahead.

Norton: No, go ahead Margaret.

Early: Um, the other thing we’ve brought (*holds up a digital camera*) – how many of you have used a camera before?

Speaker: (*inaudible*)

Early (*addressing the students*): So what we’ve brought are these (*points to the camera*) – the teachers will use them and they will figure out how they want you to use them.

Also, following on from where the transcript above (see ‘Analysis’ section) left off in line 22, the next short story further indexes the researchers as ‘collaborators’:

Norton: We've brought these computers for you, but we've also brought computers and eGranary for— do you know Busolwe? We are also working with a community library in Busolwe. And then we are also working at Kyambogo — So we are working with one of our students who has got his Master's degree. And he's at Kyambogo University. He's working with primary teachers' colleges [in rural and urban areas].

This narrative of who we are also working with, and how in turn the participants in Sebatya are going to be part of a network that is building research capacity within Uganda, further reinforces the notion of researcher as collaborative team member locally, nationally, and internationally. It confirms that the researchers, and in turn the participants, are part of a larger research team involved in capacity-building in a number of sites around Uganda.

### *Researcher as teacher*

A third researcher identity represented was that of 'teacher'. This was evident, as might be expected, in the workshop presentation, but also in the focus group interviews. The following extract, which occurs early on in one of the focus group interviews, in which Norton tells the participants what we are interested in and why, is illustrative of this identity:

Norton: We're very interested in what are your particular challenges that you find in teaching. Because obviously we are all interested in improving education. [Teachers: MmmHm.] Obviously. We are all teachers. [Teachers: Yes.] So we need to identify first of all the particular challenges that uh— that you— that you have in your own subject areas.

The 'researcher as teacher' identity was also realized in the following short story:

Norton: That is amazing. Thank you. And Najja, I'm ... You know, the best thing about teaching is that in the end you want to stand back because you want people that you have taught to actually — you don't want them to depend on you anymore. You want people to be independent. And uh people have learned, so like, we can pack up and go home. (*laughter*)

Here Norton thanks Najja after he had superbly narrated to a new group of participants what had transpired in the first eGranary workshop and what had been learned by those in attendance. This is

followed by a statement of her philosophy as a teacher, who should ultimately be dispensable.

So in the first extract, we illustrate how in the focus interviews we sought to present ourselves as fellow teachers rather than researchers. Indeed, Norton explicitly states, 'We are all teachers.' In this way, we invited the teachers to share the challenges they had experienced in their teaching lives, with the confidence of knowing they had a sympathetic audience of colleagues. In the second extract, Norton 'performs' her role as teacher (Watson, 2006) and states her belief that she has succeeded in her task when the learner can perform a task independently, without the support of a more experienced mentor.

### *Researcher as teacher educator*

The fourth researcher identity represented was that of 'teacher educator', as the following extracts illuminate. The first extract comes from Norton's narration of how the researchers might change their plan for a session designed for teachers, after the unanticipated addition of 30 senior students as workshop participants.

Norton: So what I think we will do is get some feedback from the students, and I think that's also good for the teachers to hear. And then after we've got feedback from the students, then we'll just, you know, we'll clear the room and just work with the teachers. Does that make sense, Margaret?

In this story about a hypothesized future event, the researchers are determining what process would make for the best learning conditions for the teachers, while respecting the interests of the students. Thus, the characters that they are performing in this story are educators of teachers. In the following co-constructed and negotiated narrative dialogue, particular versions of the researcher's self as 'teacher educator' are also realized. Early narrates a small story about changing views on the use of mother tongue in a second language classroom:

Early: Um. In language teaching in North American for a long time they told people not to use the native languages. This is really changing now. And the government actually in some places have policies that are— have changed their mind. And so they're encouraging local language use.

Musa: Mmmhmm.

Early: But it sounds as though here when the teachers do it they're almost as though they're going against the— the policy.



Musa : Mmmhmm.

Early: Is that– is that right? Do you feel– When you use the local language,

Kaikara: Yeah, yeah.

Early: –you might feel like you’re doing something that’s forbidden or–

Kaikara: You– you– we are condemned if we

Musa: *(laughs)*

Norton: Yeah, yeah.

Kaikara: We are not doing the right thing.

Norton: Yeah.

Here, Early is arguably teaching the teachers about changes in contemporary policy and teaching practices in the West with respect to use of mother tongue. This is in fact a conversation that is returned to later with Norton talking about the support for mother tongue use from the latest research on the topic.

In the two extracts above, there is substantial evidence to support the position that the identity of ‘teacher educator’ was realized in the researchers’ co-constructed and negotiated narrative dialogues with the teachers as research participants. Interestingly, this was realized most commonly in the smaller focus group interview sessions rather than in the monologues in large-group settings. Likely, we found the intimate context and more equitable power relationships a more productive setting in which to work professionally with the teachers.

In sum, in the small stories above, salient researcher identities that have been realized and discussed include ‘the researcher as international guest’, ‘collaborative team member’, ‘teacher’, and ‘teacher educator’. However, it needs to be noted that these identities were not discrete but frequently overlapped in complex ways. Moreover, other identities, such as that of ‘travellers’, ‘Westerners’, ‘sharers’ ‘global citizens’, ‘advocates for social justice’, ‘parents’, and ‘comediennes’ also became salient at different junctures. Some of these were subsumed under the four dominant researcher identities described above; however, space limitation preclude full discussion of all these other relevant and important identities that were intrinsically connected to those discussed.

With respect to how we discussed and interpreted these findings, as previously stated, we consider that the critical role that

researchers' identities play in language teacher education has been under-researched. To think through how our research can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between researcher identity, narrative inquiry, and language teacher education, we drew on the work of Hawkins and Norton (2009), who are centrally concerned with 'critical language teacher education'. From a comprehensive literature review on critical language teacher education to identify exemplars of contemporary pedagogical practices, Hawkins and Norton offer five key principles that we used to explore researcher identity with respect to narrative research and language teacher education. These include: (a) the situated nature of programmes and practices; (b) responsiveness to learners; (c) dialogic engagement; (d) teacher reflectivity; and (e) praxis in the interests of educational and social change. For a full discussion of how we linked our researcher identity findings to narrative research and language teacher education by means of these five principles, the reader is referred to Norton and Early (2011).

## Reflections

As researchers using the 'small story' approach for the first time, we were excited by its potential to serve as a highly productive methodological process to investigate researcher identities. These 'under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events' (Georgakopoulou, 2007: vii) opened up all kinds of possibilities for an analytical focus on the characters (the various social positions we took up), the events (not necessarily sequentially ordered), and the time-space contexts. The analytical approach we took evolved from our specific needs and purposes and seemed to serve them well in illuminating the multiple, contradictory, and 'unstable' identities that we as researchers performed. Additionally, through dialogue and iterative analysis, we were able to link these to the larger social, political, and historical discourses, that is, to situate particular local events in larger ideological social practices. This said, we acknowledge that there might not be full congruence between the ways in which we enacted our diverse identities and the ways in which the teachers perceived them. With more time, reflection, and input from the other 'characters' in the small stories, which were chronicled after the events, we may gain greater insight into our data. Further, we are aware that there may have been many untold stories, which could have led us to a richer set of conclusions.

## Further research

Following up on this small story narrative research, we are exploring using this analytical approach to focus on what might be revealed regarding the affordances of digital resources in developing English language and literacy across the curriculum in Ugandan schooling. English remains the dominant language of instruction from Primary 4 onwards, regardless of which local languages are spoken by the students and their families. As stated above, our research project sought a better understanding of (1) the challenges the teachers faced in attempting to improve the teaching of their subject area within the limited resources of their local context; (2) how the teachers innovatively made use of local resources to support their students' learning; and (3) how the digital communication tools (eGranary, laptops, and cameras) may (or may not) be useful in their work. We are currently locating the small stories co-constructed in the interviews and investigating the potential of applying an analysis that focuses on the structural and linguistic makeup of the stories told by the teachers to rigorously, analytically reveal the challenges and possibilities in developing their praxis. From that understanding, we could begin to work more collaboratively on the potential of digital tools in pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes located in the economic margins. If our early analysis proves fruitful, we would use this as a context in which to (1) refine our analytical procedures; and (2) extend our analytical procedure by trying to incorporate additional data outside of the transcripts of the presentations and interviews. This would include two sets of questionnaires, observations, and researchers' journal reflections.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we investigated to what extent narrative inquiry can illuminate the ways in which researcher identity is negotiated in language teaching research. We described how we drew on a digital literacy study in multilingual Uganda to narrate how we, as researchers, engaged in our own storytelling, and the process by which we invited teachers to share their experiences of teaching in a poorly resourced rural school. With reference to a variety of small stories, we argued that several researcher identities were realized, including 'international guest', 'collaborative team member', 'teacher', and 'teacher educator'. It was clear that we sought to reduce power differentials between researchers and teachers, with a view to increasing teacher investment in our collaborative research project. We concluded that

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small stories enrich traditional narrative inquiry and make visible the complex ways in which researcher identity impacts research in both language teaching and education more broadly.

### Notes

1. This chapter was adapted from Norton, B. and Early, M. (2011) 'Researcher identity, narrative inquiry, and language teaching research', *TESOL Quarterly*, 45, 415–43. Used with permission.
2. The eGranary system is an intranet that comprises a 750Gb hard drive with specialized browsing software, which can be attached to a PC or a local area network. It contains approximately 10 million educational documents, including Wikipedia, which can be searched like the internet (see <http://www.egranary.org>).
3. These were commonly recorded by Norton in the darkness of the early hours of the morning during electrical power outages.

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