
Researcher Identity, Narrative Inquiry, and Language Teaching Research

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Whereas there has been much research on language and identity with respect to learners, teachers, and teacher educators, there has been little focus on the identity of the researcher, an important stakeholder in language education. Our research therefore addresses the following question: To what extent can narrative inquiry illuminate the ways in which researcher identity is negotiated in language teaching research? To address this question, we draw on a digital literacy study in multilingual Uganda to narrate how we engaged in our own storytelling, and the process by which we invited teachers to share their experiences of teaching through the medium of English as an additional language in a poorly resourced rural school. Central themes were our attempts to reduce power differentials between researchers and teachers, and our desire to increase teacher investment (Norton, 2000) in our collaborative research project. Drawing on numerous small stories (Bamberg, 2004; Georgakopoulou, 2006), we argue that several researcher identities were realized, including international guest, collaborative team member, teacher, and teacher educator. Our article supports the case that small stories enrich traditional narrative inquiry, both theoretically and methodologically, and make visible the complex ways in which researcher identity impacts research, not only in language teaching, but in education more broadly.

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In a compelling article published in the *TESOL Quarterly* in 1996, Suresh Canagarajah made a convincing case for reassessing the ways in which research reporting is undertaken in the social sciences, in general, and language education in particular. As he notes, with reference to most research reporting at the time,

For all practical purposes, the researcher is absent from the report, looming behind the text as an omniscient, transcendental, all knowing figure. This convention hides the manner in which the subjectivity of the researchers—with their complex values, ideologies, and experiences—shapes the research activity and findings. In turn, how the research activity shapes the

researchers' subjectivity is not explored—even though research activity can sometimes profoundly affect the researchers' sense of the world and themselves. (p. 324)

Canagarajah notes further that narratives have the potential to represent knowledge “from the bottom up,” (p. 327) and can represent the research process in a far more comprehensive and open-ended way than the more conventional research report. Marginalized groups, he claims, including women and traditional oral communities, frequently embody knowledge in narrative forms, which opens up possibilities for these groups to participate more actively in the knowledge construction of the academy.

A decade and a half has passed since Canagarajah made these important observations, which also critiqued the way in which Bonny Norton (Peirce) formulated her widely read *TESOL Quarterly* article on “Social Identity, Investment, and Language Learning” (Norton Peirce, 1995). Whereas Norton made the case for a theory of identity as multiple and a site of struggle, Canagarajah (1996) argued that Norton's own identity was largely absent from the written research report, qualifying his comments as follows:

The point here is not that the researcher failed to attend to these issues in her research; she very well might have. What is more important is that we need a genre of presentation that will encourage us to articulate and explore such concerns. (p. 329)

This article is, in part, a response to the issues raised by Canagarajah in 1996. It has particular relevance to the ways in which university researchers work with schoolteachers to foster a democratic environment that promotes the personal and professional development of both stakeholders. With great prescience, Canagarajah anticipated that narrative inquiry would become an increasingly vibrant approach to research, and in the field of language education, scholars such as Barkhuizen (2008, 2010), Bell (2002), Johnson and Golombek (2002), Kinginger (2004), and Pavlenko (2002, 2007) have effectively used narrative inquiry in their scholarly research and reporting.

This sea change is a welcome development, and gives us the opportunity to articulate and explore the significant issues of researcher identity missing from earlier research. Indeed, in the field of language education, whereas there has been an explosion of research on language and identity with respect to learners, teachers, and teacher educators (see Norton, 2010), there has been little focus on the identity of the researcher, an important stakeholder with considerable power, influence, and investment in the field. This article seeks to address this gap in

the language education literature, and makes the case that narrative inquiry generates the kind of data that are essential for research as praxis, in which there is a productive and sustainable relationship between theory, research, and classroom teaching (Denos, Toohey, Neilson, & Waterstone, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 2004).

In this spirit, the central question we address in this article is as follows: To what extent can narrative inquiry illuminate the ways in which researcher identity is negotiated in language teaching research? This question is centrally concerned with the complex relationship between researchers who are also teacher educators, and teachers who are also research participants. Our research question is motivated not only by the gap in the research literature on researcher identity, but also by our desire as both researchers and teacher educators to extend research insights into classrooms and communities, in the interests of enhanced language learning and teaching. In many fields of education, including language education, many researchers are also teacher educators, and there is a great need to better understand how the relationship between researchers and teachers is co-constructed.

In our research in Ugandan communities over the past decade, our research team at the University of British Columbia (UBC) has had the opportunity to appreciate and learn from the narratives of African teachers and students (see Kendrick, Jones, Mutonyi, & Norton, 2006; Mutonyi & Norton, 2007; Norton & Mutonyi, 2010; Tembe & Norton, 2008). Indeed, although interest in narrative inquiry in educational research has recently gained momentum in western countries, narratives have always been a powerful force in African epistemology. Scholars such as Yatta Kanu and George Dei, for example, speak of the power of narratives in African social life, noting that stories, proverbs, and anecdotes have played a critical role in promoting African philosophical thought, knowledge, and wisdom (Dei, 2004; Kanu, 2006). As we demonstrate in this article, our research has been enriched by these traditions.

This article explores a way to redress, in part, Canagarajah's (1996) observation that researchers' voices are frequently absent from research reports. In particular, it narrates how we engaged in our own storytelling during the digital literacy project, the process by which we sought to create opportunities for Ugandan teachers to share their stories, and how we negotiated our researcher identities in a rural African context. In doing so, as we demonstrate below, the article argues for the value of story in educational research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and that of "small" stories in particular (Bamberg, 2004, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006). We support the case that small stories enrich traditional narrative inquiry, both theoretically and methodologically, and we illustrate how

small stories provide a compelling response to Canagarajah's plea for researchers to be more visible in research reporting.

A STUDY WITHIN A STUDY

To address the research question discussed in this article, we draw on a recent digital literacy study (see Norton, Early, & Tembe, 2010) conducted as part of UBC's larger program of language and literacy research in Uganda. In 2003, Ugandan educators approached our research team for support in their efforts to promote English language and literacy in their country. A former British colony, Uganda is a country in which over 60 African languages are spoken, and English serves as the official language. English is the medium of instruction in all urban schools, both elementary and secondary, and in all rural schools after a period of transition in Year 4. As such, all teachers, not only those officially designated as English teachers, are teaching (English) language and content (see Barwell, 2005; Stoller, 2008; and Unsworth, 2008 for a variety of approaches and perspectives). Our ongoing research seeks to promote development along the collaborative lines advocated by the indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), the literacy scholar Brian Street (2001), and the language educator Adrian Holliday (1994).

In one of our more recent projects, begun in September 2008, we were happy to accept an invitation by the principal of a rural school in eastern Uganda, Sebatya Secondary School, to help promote digital literacy in the school. We learnt that the school is a poorly resourced co-educational day school, with a population of 700 students and 35 teachers. The newly re-elected government of Yoweri Museveni had just introduced Universal Secondary Education into Uganda, and the increasing numbers of students seeking admission into the school was adding to the pressure on available resources. As scholars such as Mutonyi and Norton (2007), Snyder and Prinsloo (2007), and Warschauer (2003) note, much of the research on digital literacy has focused on research in wealthier regions of the world, and we appreciate the need for research in poorly resourced communities to impact global debates on information and communication technologies (ICT).

In August 2009, we made a research trip to Sebatya Secondary School, which initiated the first phase of our digital literacy study, which concluded in May 2010. In this phase of the study, we investigated the extent to which the eGranary portable digital library (www.egranary.org) and the associated teacher professional development in digital literacy, might be an asset in this multilingual school. The eGranary digital library, a powerful hard drive that can be accessed with limited electrical

power and no connectivity, contains millions of documents that can be searched like the Internet. It includes Wikipedia, World Health Organization materials, Africa Journals Online, and numerous other resources, and can be adapted to upload local content. It can thus provide situated digital learning opportunities for teachers and students, enriched curricular materials for teaching English as an additional language across different subject areas, and opportunities for integrating local and global knowledge.

In our August 2009 research visit, we met with the school principal, teachers, and students; we explained our research interests; conducted workshops on the use of eGranary and digital cameras; administered a detailed questionnaire to teachers; and conducted a series of focus group interviews with nine teachers. Two of the teachers were English teachers, whereas the remaining teachers integrated language and content teaching in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. We conducted further questionnaires in October 2009 and March 2010, and continued to maintain regular contact with the school via email, surface mail, telephone, and Skype. At the conclusion of this phase of the project, on 25 May 2010, using a trainer-of-trainers model, we made arrangements for three of the focal teachers to participate in an eGranary upgrade workshop in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda.

During our August visit, there were two central sites in which we interacted with teachers. The first site was the school's largest room, which functioned as a staff room, computer laboratory, and instructional space. It was the only room in the school that had electricity, and contained large laboratory-style wooden tables covered with brightly colored cloth, multiple hard-backed chairs, and two functional computers. There was also a blackboard in the front of the room. It was in this room where the principal introduced us to the teachers, and in which we contributed additional information about our research, ourselves, and the digital equipment we had brought with us. The second site was the principal's office, where we conducted focus group interviews with the teachers. This room, the most private in the school, was very small, with the principal's desk taking up most of the space. About six chairs for visitors were arranged around the desk, and there was a small window looking out onto the school grounds.

The purpose of this article is not to address findings from the digital literacy study (see Norton, Early, & Tembe, 2010), but to focus on data the authors collected in August 2009. What became clear to us, in analyzing data from our tape-recorded presentations and discussions, our researchers' field notes and reflections, and our tape-recorded focus group interviews, was that stories told by us as the researchers, frequently co-constructed with teachers, formed an important and recurring theme in the data, and indexed a variety of researcher identities. An analysis of

these stories provides important insights into our research question: To what extent can narrative inquiry illuminate the ways in which researcher identity is negotiated in language teaching research?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND DATA CATEGORIZATION

In categorizing pages of transcript data capturing 26 hours of interviews, reflections, discussions, and presentations, we needed a conceptual framework to help us determine what constituted a story, in general, and a small story in particular; further, we needed a conceptual framework to help us navigate data focusing on researcher identity. We turn to an elaboration of each of these areas.

Stories and Small Stories

A comprehensive conceptual framework of what exactly constitutes a *story*, as distinct from other genres such as editorials, essays, poems, and reports, is a source of some debate in the broader educational literature and, in fact, constituted the subject of a special issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics* as far back as 1982 (Coots, 1982). More recently, the literature on narrative inquiry has explored a range of characteristics of the story, and we have found insights by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000), which are drawn from a wide range of narrative research, particularly helpful in the categorization of stories in our data. Further, the work of Bamberg (2004, 2006) and Georgakopoulou (2006) has given us much insight into small stories, which became the focus of our data collection.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 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.” This suggests that there is an important relationship between the storyteller and the intended audience; 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 (1990) 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” (p. 8). As Barkhuizen (2008) notes, such places 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, p. 9) note, is the frame of past-present-future, and narrative data sources may be classified with reference to their temporal orientation.

In reflecting on the stories we shared with teachers, we have also found the distinction between big and small stories in narrative inquiry very helpful. As Georgakopoulou (2006) notes, following Bamberg (2004), much narrative research addresses what could be called prototypical, or big, stories, which are fully fledged autobiographical life histories, examining nonshared personal experience of single past events. Relatively unexplored is what she and Bamberg have called “small” stories or “snippets of talk” (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 123) that are generally not regarded as part of the canon:

[S]mall 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.

Narrative Constructions of Self

What is particularly powerful about the concept of small stories, given our interest in researcher identity, is their significance for exploring the relationship between narrative and identity, or what Bamberg (2004, p. 368) calls a “narrative construction of self.” Whereas big stories may be oriented toward life histories, small stories are situated in small talk and chit-chat, frequently constructed in interaction and traced in discourse. Such small stories-in-interaction do not necessarily create a coherent sense of self, but highlight diverse identity positions in everyday interactive practices, and are highly significant for identity work. As Bamberg (2004) argues,

Rather than seeing narratives as intrinsically oriented toward coherence and authenticity, and inconsistencies and equivocations as an analytic nuisance, we turn the latter into what is most interesting. They offer ways into examining how storytellers are bringing off and managing a sense of themselves in contexts that require interactive accounting. (p. 368)

As an extension of Bamberg’s work, Georgakopoulou (2006) calls for more systematic research on small stories that establishes connection between their interactional features and their sites of engagement, and considers the implications of their inclusion for narrative research on

identity analysis. Such research requires a shift from the more essentializing question of what narrative tells us about the construction of self, to a consideration of “how do we *do self* (and *other*) in narrative *genres* in a variety of *sites of engagement*” (p. 128; italics in the original).

Norton’s work on language and identity (Norton, 2000, 2010), as well as that of Block (2007), Kramsch (2009), Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), and Toohey (2000), has also been helpful in providing a conceptual framework for categorizing and analyzing data on researcher identity. In terms of Norton’s work, which draws on poststructuralist theory, identity is theorized as multiple, changing, and a site of struggle; it is conceptualized as produced in the context of diverse relations of power, operating at the level of interaction between people, and in the context of broader social, political, and economic processes. At the level of social interaction, Norton (2010) notes, “Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space” (p. 350).

Further, Norton makes the case that identity is implicated in the investments that teachers and students have in the practices of classrooms and communities, and can also be imagined with reference to desires for the future. The concept of *investment*, a construct originally developed by Norton to explain the relationship between language learner identity and language learning commitment (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000), can be equally applied to a language teacher’s investment in a new research project, pedagogical practice, or training initiative. By asking the question, What is this language teacher’s investment in our project?, we are simultaneously asking if the project will help the teacher acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital and social power, particularly in the context of schooling. Barkhuizen (2010), for example, draws on the concept of investment to explain a research participant’s investment in language teacher education. As he notes,

Sela has invested in language teacher education, with the expectation that her university studies and specifically her teacher training will yield returns for herself, her family and the Tongan immigrant community. In getting as far as she has, Sela has made good use of the resources and opportunities available to her. (p. 13)

With particular reference to identity and narrative inquiry, as these pertain to contemporary conceptions of teacher education, key principles of relevance to our conceptual framework are drawn from scholars such as Barkhuizen (2010), Johnson and Golombek (2002),

Johnson (2006), and Tsui (2007). Central to this work, as Johnson (2006) notes, is the theorization of language teaching from a socio-cultural perspective that “defines human learning as a dynamic social activity, that is situated in physical and social contexts, and distributed across persons, tools, and activities” (p. 237). However, as in language education more broadly, there has been a paucity of studies that explore the critical role that researchers’ identities play in teacher education research. This is particularly important if teacher educators/researchers seek, as we do, to substantially redress how power inequities are enacted in institutional relations between universities and schools in both wealthy and poorly resourced communities.

ANALYTIC METHODS

Whereas we could identify many small stories in our data, drawing on the criteria established by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), as well as Bamberg (2004) and Georgakopoulou (2006) discussed above, we wish to focus on those stories that index, in a particularly compelling way, the multiple researcher identities that we enacted in the digital literacy study. Language education research has investigated the complex relationship between researchers and teachers (Deno et al., 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Hawkins, 2004), highlighting the many complex and subtle ways in which power is negotiated in diverse research sites. We were sensitive to these issues, and the data suggest that we sought to present our own identities as complex and multifaceted, thereby fostering a process by which teachers felt comfortable in sharing their stories and their own varied identities. Equally important, however, given that the goal of the collaborative project was to enhance language learning and teaching in the classroom, we were interested in stories that indexed the teachers’ investment in the project, and the extent to which they perceived the project as relevant to their own classrooms. As such, we focus on the small stories that illustrate how we sought to transform power differentials between researchers and teachers, and encourage investment on the part of the participants.

In this regard, we would like to clarify what we mean by *power* and offer two caveats with respect to our analysis of researcher identity. With reference to power, we are drawing in particular on Cummins (2000), who notes that relations of power can be either coercive or collaborative. In this article, we make the case that the diverse researcher identities we enacted arose from our desire to avoid coercive relations of power and to promote collaborative relations of power. At the same time (and this is our first caveat), we acknowledge that whereas we identified and categorized our more collaborative researcher identities with great care,

we cannot assume that there was congruence between the ways in which we enacted these diverse identities, and the ways in which teachers perceived them. Indeed, given that each teacher's social history and institutional identity would be unique, each teacher would have different investments in the research project and, hence, their perception of our diverse identities. Our second caveat, however, is that we had many private conversations with teachers, during tea and lunch breaks, and collegial walks around the school grounds. Such informal data cannot be shared in a public forum, but it is our view that such interaction helped to promote collaborative relations between researchers and teachers.

In identifying a range of small stories in our data, our categorization of data proceeded through three phases. In Phase 1, initial coding and category identification, we independently read the transcripts and established what we each perceived to be the most salient emerging researcher identities. In Phase 2, we exchanged and shared our category systems and, through discussion, modified the existing set of categories and identified emerging clusters of constructions of researcher identities. In Phase 3, as an interactive process, we re-analyzed the data in more depth according to the established constructs of researcher identities as a test for robustness. Thus, the data were categorized inductively and recursively.

Analysis of Researcher Identities

Through the analysis of the small stories pertaining to researcher identity, we became aware that four identity positions recurred most commonly in the narrative data, and we have classified them as follows: researcher as international guest, researcher as collaborative team member, researcher as teacher, and researcher as teacher educator. Nevertheless, whereas we have classified these small stories into one of these primary categories, there remain important overlapping features in many of the stories. To avoid confusion with respect to our respective identities, as well as those of observers/writers/researchers, we present our analysis of the four researcher identities in the third person.

Researcher as International Guest

When Norton and Early arrived at the Sebatya Secondary School on 6 August 2009, after a long dusty ride from the nearest town, the principal, Ms. Wakumire, invited them into the staff room, where the teachers were waiting to greet them. Ms. Wakumire welcomed them as valued guests of the school and explained that Norton was a Canadian scholar who had been to Uganda many times and had established a long-standing

relationship with her and other Ugandan educators. Norton thanked Ms. Wakumire for the introduction, and then proceeded to more fully introduce herself and Early to the teachers. She used a PowerPoint presentation, beginning with an image of a world map. The first three small stories illustrate the ways in which Norton sought to position herself and Early as what could be called *international guests*—that is, people with lives, histories, and a place in the broader world, whose long-term relationship with Ugandan educators led them to make the lengthy journey from their homes in Vancouver to a rural school in eastern Uganda.

Extract 1: [Norton, referring to an image of the world on the PowerPoint]. *Alright let me do something.... because I'd like everybody to share stuff. Here's a map of the world, right? Margaret and I, we live here. This is where we live. You see. So this here—this here is North America and this is Vancouver. So we live—we live in Vancouver. Okay.*

Extract 2: [Norton, still referring to the image of the world]. *We flew from here [Vancouver] and we flew to England, which is over there. And we flew overnight to England and then we flew overnight to Uganda. So—two nights on a plane to get here.*

Extract 3: [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. 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.*

In these three small stories, Norton constructs the researchers' identities as international guests who live in a region of the world some considerable distance from Uganda. From the outset of the introductions, Norton states, then models, her belief in the centrality of sharing personal experience in the context of teachers' professional development. As she notes, "I'd like everybody to share stuff." She shows the location of the researchers' homes on the west coast of Canada and tells the story of the long journey they took across space and time to bring them to Sebatya Secondary School. By also providing some history and an image of their place of work, she provides a character setting for the two researchers and gives the teachers an image of where the two researchers live their daily lives, including a mind map of where the story of their journey to Uganda begins. In this way, they present themselves as people with homes and lives that they have left far behind. Moreover, in her narration of the small stories, Norton references Early by her first name, makes frequent first person references, and generally invites the

teachers to think of the researchers as women who are open to sharing their own stories.

In Extract 4, Norton continues her story of the researchers' journey in which they carry in their suitcases nine computers, six eGranaries, plus two digital cameras, batteries, battery rechargers, and many books for a community library in a nearby region. As *guests*, it would be customary to arrive bearing gifts for the hosts, as a measure of appreciation for the hospitality they will receive. She also positions the researchers as guests who are uncertain of the rules and regulations of Uganda's Customs and Immigration, and are to some extent fearful of the immigration authorities. The story serves once again to make the researchers more visible and accessible as women who are themselves, at times, uncertain, vulnerable, and in positions where they lack power. This story was received with laughter—which became a frequent soundtrack throughout the time that the researchers spent with the teachers.

Extract 4: [Norton, referring to a range of equipment]. *We brought all this equipment with us. And we were afraid—we were afraid the immigration people were going to stop us, and take all the equipment away. [laughter] So we had to hide it all, and we put it in funny things. But anyway they let us—there was no problem at all. So I'm very pleased about that because what we've done is that um we've brought this, these computers for you, but we've also brought computers and eGranary for research sites in [other regions]. So we brought nine computers with us—in our suitcases [laughter].*

The researchers also realized their identities as guests who sought to show their appreciation in future visits. During one workshop that included students, the topic of the limited range of music available on eGranary came up. In Extract 5 below, Early recounted the story of what the research team had considered they might bring and checked to see what might be welcome in future.

Extract 5: [Early, addressing a digital literacy workshop]...*you have all the information on eGranary, but if you like pop music and games and so on—another thing that's possible is that you—that we could—we can buy a hard drive which is empty and we can put some very small things—not as much as eGranary, but some very small things that might be interesting to you. Like games, like music. And uh the—we can—we can download from the web [and bring those to you]—and put onto a different hard drive. So you should let us know, too. Because next time we come we can come with a—not an eGranary but a hard drive that has things that young men and women are very interested in. As well as school work...[laughter]*

Extract 5 once again presents the researchers as individuals who are not only concerned about research and scholarship, but also wish to respond to the investments of teachers and students, not only in the school context, but in wider community settings. In other words, in the same

way that the researchers sought to position themselves as having multiple identities, they also sought to recognize the multiple identities of research participants. As such, they also hoped to validate a wide range of participants' interests and experiences.

Although not explicitly present in tape-recorded transcripts, they also addressed in smaller and more private contexts, the complex issue of expectations regarding what gifts they were able to bring as international guests. They were careful to accurately index themselves as a small university research team with multiple commitments and limited resources, as distinct from a major funding agency or large nongovernment organization (NGO).

Researcher as Collaborative Team Member

As may be noted from the extracts above, the researchers repeatedly indexed that they constituted a team, as evidenced by the way in which they consistently used the first person pronoun plural *we*. Their identities 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 (Extract 6). She prompted Norton to continue the narrative by telling the teacher and student 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 opportunity to address the group:

Extract 6

Margaret: *Do you want to mention the cameras?*

Bonny: *Sure! Go ahead.*

Margaret: *No, go ahead.*

Bonny: *No, go ahead, Margaret.*

Margaret: *Um, the other thing we've brought [holds up a digital camera]—how many of you have used a camera before?*

Speaker: (inaudible)

Margaret: *So what we've brought are these [points to the camera]—teachers will use them and they will figure out how they want you [the students] to use them*

Bonny: *Yes.*

At this point, Early adds that there is another UBC faculty member, Maureen Kendrick, that she and Norton work with, who is particularly interested in photography. She explains that each one of the team brings different interests and skill sets to the digital literacy project and that they learn from one another for the collective benefit of the team.

In this small story about distributed knowledge among the researchers, researcher identity as collaborative team member is reinforced.

Early's comments about distributed knowledge among the three UBC faculty members were intended to reinforce the researcher's identity as one that valued teamwork. One of the participating teachers, Najji, provided evidence that this point was not lost on the participants. The following day, when Najji recounted to an expanded audience what had transpired during the workshop on the first day, he provided the following "moral" for the story of how teamwork can help to solve technical challenges in learning how to use the new digital equipment:

Extract 7

So our coming together like this is a way of putting our heads together to know what you can grasp—you can grasp a small part, he grasps another one, she gets another one. Now tomorrow the part which defeats you to get is the one you run to the friend and say 'now how do we do this?' so that together we can access that information for our own good.

With regard to issues of investment, it is interesting to note Najji's comment that teamwork will enable the teachers to access information "for our own good." The researchers were centrally concerned that the project be seen as both collaborative and relevant to Ugandan teachers, and Najji's comment suggests that the project did indeed yield benefits for classroom teaching. Extract 8 provides evidence that the conception of collaborative research in fact extended beyond the grounds of Sebatya Secondary School, to include other institutions in various parts of Uganda.

Extract 8

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 other research collaborators in Uganda and how, in turn, the participants in Sebatya were going to be part of a network that was 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 teachers were part of a larger research team involved in collaborative projects 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 digital workshops, but also in the focus group interviews. The following extract in a focus group interview, in which Norton tells the participants what the researchers are interested in and why, is illustrative of the teacher identity:

Extract 9 [during focal group interview]

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: Mm.] 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 small story. In Extract 10, during the workshop presentation on the second day of the visit, Norton thanks Najja, one of the focal participants, after he had superbly narrated to a large group what had transpired in the eGranary workshop on the first day of the visit, and what those in attendance had learned. The small story includes a statement of Norton's philosophy as a teacher.

Extract 10 [during a workshop presentation]

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]

In Extract 11 below, Norton seeks solidarity with the teachers and resists a practice that might position her in a more powerful position than the teachers. It illustrates how the researchers struggled to transform the principal's office from an interview room to a conversational space by rearranging the seating configuration in the room to promote a greater comfort level among participants. In this extract, Norton displays considerable discomfort when offered the principal's chair. Seeing her discomfort, the teachers rally to her aid and make space for her to come and sit with them on the sofa.

Extract 11

Bonny: *Um. I think I'm—I'll probably have to sit over here—*
Abednigo: *It's okay. You can sit on the principal's chair.*
Bonny: *Sit on the principal's chair.*
Speakers: [laughter]
Bonny: *Uh—*

Abednigo: *And—*
 Bonny: *Yeah. I'd—just in the interest of—*
 Musa: [inaudible]
 Margaret: *Do you want your notepad?*
 Bonny: *Yeah thank you. Um. Actually I feel kind of awkward sitting in the principal's chair.*
 [laughter]
 Bonny: *So I might end up sitting on top of this table.*
 Kaikara: *Yeah, Bonny, come and sit here—I can sit on the other side.*
 Bonny: *Oh. Okay.*

In Extract 9, Norton and Early illustrate how they sought to present themselves as fellow teachers rather than researchers. Indeed, Norton explicitly states, “We are all teachers.” In this way, they 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 Extract 10, Norton “performs” her role as teacher (Watson, 2006) and states her belief that she has succeeded as a teacher when the learner can perform a task independently, without the support of a more experienced mentor.

Extract 11 illustrates how Norton struggled to spatially as well as ideologically identify as a teacher by resisting the invitation to sit in the principal’s chair. What is interesting is the degree to which some teachers appeared to empathize with her plight, and understood Norton’s desire to distance herself from the principal’s power and authority. At the same time, however, it is possible that some teachers may have been puzzled by the fact that the “international guest” would decline a show of respect and hospitality. Negotiating the multiple identities of the researcher was, at times, a site of struggle.

Researcher as Teacher Educator

The fourth researcher identity enacted, and possibly the most important, was that of *teacher educator*. In the following co-constructed and negotiated narrative dialogues, a particular version of the researcher’s self as teacher educator is realized. 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.

Extract 12: *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 Extract 13, in one of the focus group sessions, Early co-constructs with teachers a small story about changing and contrasting views on the use of mother tongue in the multilingual classroom.

Extract 13

Margaret: *Um. In language teaching in North America 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: *Mm.*

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

Musa: *Mm.*

Margaret: *Is that—is that right? Do you feel—When you use the local language,*

Kaikara: *Yeah, yeah.*

Margaret: *—you might feel like you're doing something that's forbidden or—*

Kaikara: *You—you—we are condemned if we*

Musa: *[laughs]*

Bonny: *Yeah, yeah.*

Kaikara: *We are not doing the right thing.*

Bonny: *Yeah*

In the following two extracts, Norton indexes the teacher educator identity as she co-constructed and negotiated the following small stories on how the fine arts teacher (Extract 14) and an English teacher (Extract 15) narrated how they might use eGranary with their students.

Extract 14

Bonny: *And Najja but in arts, how do you think you can use [eGranary] in arts? Fine art.*

Najja: *All those things there. So if the students can access that—I think it would stick much better to them —if they see it and internalize it themselves—than you telling them.*

Bonny: *So that they would take some ownership of the learning.*

Najja: *Yes. Yes.*

Bonny: *That they—So it's not only the teacher who says this*

Najja: *Who says it—should be like this.*

Bonny: *There's also a wider authority as well.*

Najja: *Because it is supposed to be student-oriented and me I am to guide them. You give the basic, then the student develops the—the skill.*

In Extract 15, Penina, one of the English teachers, responds to Norton's question of what local content, specifically, she might wish to add to eGranary.

Extract 15

Penina: *Now, um—of course now here we have been asking students to write stories— [...]—if I wrote a story when I'm in England.* [Bonny: Yes.] *I will use this—a different setting.* [Bonny: Yes.] *You get—I hope you get it.* [Bonny: Yes, absolutely.] *But now if I was going to write a—a story on—on the setting of Uganda, I will use different names, —*[Bonny: Yes, exactly.] *Different characters.* [Bonny: Yes.] *The setting would be different.* [Bonny: Oh lovely.] *So actually it can help either in language [Bonny: Yes]—or teaching—*[Bonny: I agree]—*other literature skills.*

In the four extracts 12–15 above, there is much evidence to support the position that the identity of teacher educator was realized in diverse small-story narratives. Interestingly, this was realized most commonly in the smaller focus group interview sessions than in the presentations in the large-group settings. The researchers found the intimate context a more productive setting in which to work professionally with the teachers.

DISCUSSION

In preparing this article, we sought to reflect rigorously on how we conducted our educational research and the ways in which our own stories, and those of teachers in the study, were an integral part of the research process. Our analysis confirms that our researcher identities were subject to constant negotiation and change and that diverse narrative structures were frequently harnessed in order to render the power relationships between researchers and teachers more equitable. The multiple identities we enacted, including that of international guest, collaborative team member, teacher, and teacher educator, served to construct the researcher as complex and multifaceted, and the small stories we analyzed made these identities visible. To address the relationship between researcher identity, narrative inquiry, and language teaching research in greater detail, we discuss our data with respect to Hawkins and Norton (2009), who are centrally concerned with language teacher education and social change. With reference to a wide range of research, they offer five principles that we used to examine researcher identity with respect to narrative inquiry and language teaching research.

The first principle of central interest to our research is the principle of *reflectivity*, in which teacher educators display “deep reflectivity on their own practices” (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p. 7). Extract 5, wherein Early recounts the small story with respect to what else the research team might bring to their hosts in future visits, is an index of our reflectivity as

both researchers and teacher educators. Prior to leaving Vancouver, we debated at length whether to focus on the use of eGranary, or whether to bring other digital materials loaded onto a hard drive. Apart from the music and games referenced in Extract 5 to encourage the students to invest in digital literacies, we discussed bringing, in digital form, integrated language and content curriculum units and projects designed by teachers in Vancouver. However, we were reluctant to impose ideas over which the Ugandan teachers felt no ownership. We wondered how well such content-based units of work in English literature, social studies, mathematics, and science, designed for a Western context, might be appropriate within this rural African school. In the end we decided to wait until we had a more established relationship with the teachers, so that we could more effectively engage in professional conversations about how to recontextualize the work of Canadian teachers in the local Ugandan context.

The second principle, *dialogic engagement*, indexes the ways in which we sought to use collaborative dialogue to construct and mediate meanings and understandings. As Pavlenko (2002) notes, narratives are co-constructed and shaped by social, cultural, and historical conventions, as well as by relationships between the storyteller and interlocutor. As we analyzed our researcher narratives, we reflected on the extent to which our narratives were shaped by cultural, social, and historical conventions and by our desire to seek solidarity with our intended audience. Both researchers have witnessed hierarchical identities performed within institutions and have learnt that teachers often perceive that their own histories and experiences are irrelevant to teaching and research. We found this perception to be particularly common with teachers who have few material resources and a history of inequity at institutional and national levels.

Our narratives confirm that we were committed to changing this perception through dialogic engagement. In Extract 13, for example, both researchers promote the use of the mother tongue, as well as the development of multilingual literacies in content-based classrooms. We do this not only to promote multilingual literacies, but also to enable an appreciably greater achievement in student acquisition of subject-area knowledge than if students learned in an English-only environment (Cummins & Early, in press). Rather than presume that this pedagogical practice would be appropriate or, more to the point, possible within the tight policy constraints in Ugandan schools, we sought to engage in dialogue with our participants regarding this practice.

The third relevant principle is the *situated nature of programs and practices*. Hawkins and Norton note that critical language teacher educators draw on their cultural and historical knowledge of the context and students in order to work innovatively with teachers. In this regard,

as Bell (2002) argues, narrative inquiry requires an analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that narratives illustrate. There is recognition that people make sense of their lives through the narratives available to them but which are subject to restructuring as social circumstances and personal lives change. With respect to our researcher narratives, we have illuminated how we sought to build a research environment that made teachers feel sufficiently comfortable to discuss the situated nature of their programs and practices. Excerpts 4, 5, 10, 11, and 13, where there is congenial laughter, provide evidence, we believe, of a degree of success in this regard. More formal presentations were complemented by conversations we held while relaxing with teachers one-on-one and in small groups, during the breaks and after school, eating, talking, walking, and sharing. On these more informal occasions, we invited the teachers to provide us with sufficient cultural and historical knowledge of their context, and how their subject area was taught and examined, in theory and practice, so that we could work collaboratively and innovatively with them within the limits of their material resources, large class sizes, and linguistically diverse population.

Language teacher educators committed to social change take into consideration the languages, cultures, desires, and histories of teachers and seek to connect pedagogy to the backgrounds and experiences of the teachers' students. Hence, the fourth principle discussed by Hawkins and Norton is *responsiveness to learners*; learners are always central to teacher education practice, for both teacher educators and teachers. In Extract 12, for example, Norton notes that the insights of students with regard to eGranary would be as interesting for the teachers as for the researchers; and in Extract 14, the teacher Najja emphasizes his commitment to "student-oriented" learning, in which students "internalize" their learning. These observations echo those of Norton in Extract 10, who, similarly, wants learners to be "independent." A particularly powerful example of "responsiveness to learners" is given in Extract 15 by Penina, who notes that students' stories, which incorporate Ugandan cultural places, people, events, and practices, would be an important complement to the existing stories on eGranary. Clearly, the expectation is that learners will have greater investment in schooling if they can connect meaningfully with the language practices of their classrooms. Moreover, as Extracts 14 and 15 illuminate, we talked specifically about how eGranary might be responsive to learners in the context of particular content classrooms, for example, with Najja in fine arts classes and with Penina in English language and literature. Similar dialogues took place with the teachers of mathematics, science, and social studies, all of whom sought to integrate English language and subject content in their classrooms.

The final principle is that of *praxis*, which seeks to integrate theory and practice in the interests of educational and social change. In the field of education more broadly, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note, narrative inquiry is centrally concerned with the ways in which teachers' narratives shape and inform their practice, a recurring theme also evident in the field of language education (Casanave & Schecter, 1997; Nunan & Choi, 2010). Related to the points made with respect to the focal group interviews, we co-constructed and negotiated narrative dialogues with the teacher participants, such as evidenced in Extracts 13, 14, and 15. In this narrative context, construction zones (Newman, Giffin, & Cole, 1989) were established wherein teachers in professional conversations with the researchers reflected on their praxis, and have continued to do so through follow-up interviews, questions, e-mail exchanges, and the like. As we have argued throughout this article, we are focusing on praxis in our on-going efforts to promote the integration of language, content, and technology in the teaching of diverse school subjects through the medium of English.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The question we sought to address in this article is, To what extent can narrative inquiry illuminate the ways in which researcher identity is negotiated in language teaching research? To address this question, we identified the process by which we drew on the resources of small stories to enact a range of researcher identities in order to reduce power differentials between ourselves as researchers, and the teachers as participants. The diverse identities included those of international guest, collaborative team member, teacher, and teacher educator. Our hope was that collaborative relations of power, as enacted through these identities, would increase teacher investment in the digital literacy project and encourage both debate and action on issues of relevance to classroom teaching through the medium of English as an additional language. What is clear from our findings is that teachers were indeed excited by the potential of the digital resources made available to them and welcomed the opportunity to discuss how such equipment might enhance integrated language and content learning and teaching in multilingual Ugandan classrooms. Small stories thus illuminated not only our researcher identities, but also the investments of teachers in the digital literacy project, who sought to both understand and transform the digital resources available to them.

Our study confirms that small-story narrative inquiry is a productive means to investigate and understand researcher identity. It supports the case that small stories enrich traditional narrative inquiry, both

theoretically and methodologically, and are highly effective in promoting language teacher education. We have taken seriously Canagarajah's concern that researchers' voices are frequently absent in report writing, and we hope that this exploration of researcher identity does indeed make visible the complex ways in which researcher identity impacts research, and research impacts researcher identity. Such findings are relevant not only in language learning and teaching, but in education more broadly.

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THE AUTHORS

Bonny Norton: Stories, big and small, have always been central in my language learning and teaching research, whether in Africa, North America, or Asia. These stories have been shared in cars, classrooms, and kitchens, in oral and written form, enriching my research on identity and language learning, critical literacy, and international development. The greatest challenge I face in my narrative inquiry is how to do justice to the many stories that have been entrusted to me, in good faith and with great generosity. I strive to address this challenge by ensuring that the stories of language learners and teachers not only bear witness to personal challenges and successes, but also promote educational and social change, locally and globally. Advances in technology have enabled me to share my research insights with the international community, and I have a website at <http://lerc.educ.ubc.ca/fac/norton/> to facilitate the sharing of research findings. My privileges as a UBC professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education have given me access to a wide range of resources to support my research. These resources help to ensure that stories from the most remote regions of the world begin to change the stories told in the corridors of power.

Margaret Early: I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC), where I teach courses in the teacher education program in English as second language (ESL), graduate courses in TESOL, and research methods. Before coming to UBC, I was a classroom teacher and provincial coordinator of ESL in British Columbia (BC). It was there that I first understood how much can be learned from teacher and students' narratives. As such, stories have always significantly informed my praxis. Over the years, I have consistently received funding from several sources such as the BC Ministry of Education and Social Science and Research Council of Canada to conduct large-scale, local and national, collaborative research projects with teachers in integrated language and content and in multiliteracies. These research projects, whereas they have not drawn specifically on narrative research, have used qualitative

methodologies. The small stories told by teachers and students during the course of the interviews and focus groups conducted have been moving, powerful, and illuminating. I look forward in future to more systematically applying narrative research methods, either on their own or in mixed-method designs, in my analysis of such data.

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