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Identity, Literacy and the Multilingual Classroomⁱ Bonny Norton

Introduction

Interest in identity, literacy, and multilingualism represents a shift in the field of language education from a focus on psycholinguistic models of language learning to include greater interest in sociological and anthropological dimensions of language learningⁱⁱ. Those interested in identity and language teaching are concerned not only about linguistic input and output in second language acquisition (SLA), but in the relationship between the language learner and the larger social world. To address our interests, we have examined the diverse social, historical, and cultural contexts in which language learning and literacy development take place, and how learners negotiate and sometimes resist the diverse positions those contexts offer them. In order to better understand these contexts, we are also interested in the extent to which relations of power within classrooms and communities promote or constrain the conditions under which language learners speak, listen, read, or write. We take the position that, when learners speak or remain silent, when they write, read or resist, we need to understand the extent to which the learner is valued in a particular classroom, institution, or community. We ask, for example, whether a learner's gender, race, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation may position learners in ways that silence and exclude. At the same time, however, we seek to understand the diverse ways in which learners may challenge both subtle and overt forms of discrimination, and what implications this has for language teaching. We take the position, therefore, that language is more than a system of signs; it is social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated.

Parallel to changes in conceptions of "language" are changes in prevailing conceptions of "literacy" in the field of education^{iv}. As Luke (1997) notes, while earlier psychological perspectives conceived of literacy as the acquisition of particular behaviors, cognitive strategies, and linguistic processing skills, more recent insights from ethnography, cultural studies, and feminist theory have led to increasing recognition that literacy is not only a skill to be learned, but a practice that is socially constructed and locally negotiated. In this view, literacy is best understood in the context of larger institutional practices, whether in the home, the school, the community, or the larger society. These institutional practices, in turn, could be understood with reference to what is called the "literacy ecology" of communities, in which there is frequently inequitable access to social, economic, and political power (Barton, 2007; Hornberger, 2003, Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000). The complex ways in which families, schools, and communities interact and differ in their literacy practices provide significant insights into the ways in which people learn, teach, negotiate, and access literacy both inside and outside school settings.

These parallel trajectories in the fields of language and literacy education, respectively, have much in common, and have had a great impact on my own research on identity, literacy, and the multilingual classroom in the international community. In this chapter, I will present four multilingual contexts in which I have sought to explore the subtle connections between literacy, identity, and language teaching. These collaborative research projects reflect a trajectory of research over the last two decades, beginning with research in South Africa in the early 1990s, followed by research in Canada and Pakistan, and concluding with my ongoing research in

Uganda. In South Africa, we studied resistant readings of texts used for assessment purposes (Norton Peirce & Stein, 1995); in Canada, we examined the appeal of Archie comics for young people (Moffatt & Norton, 2005, 2008; Norton, 2003; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004); in Pakistan, we investigated perceptions of literacy amongst middle-school students in Karachi (Norton & Kamal, 2003); and in Uganda, we continue to investigate a wide range of language and literacy practices in different regions of the country. In this chapter, I will present some of the key findings from each of these four global research sites, focusing on the relationship between literacy, identity, and language teaching in these multilingual contexts. The research is informed by, and continues to inform, my theoretical interest in investment and imagined identities, as discussed next.

Investment and Imagined Identities

The theoretical assumptions associated with research on identity, literacy, and multilingualism suggest that language learning is not a gradual, individual process of internalizing a neutral set of rules, structures, and vocabulary of a standard language. Rather, such theoretical principles suggest that language learners need to struggle for ownership of meaning-making; they need to learn to command the attention of their listeners; and they need to negotiate language as a system and as a social practice. In this regard, my work on the constructs of "investment" and "imagined communities and imagined identities" seeks to contribute to these debates.

Investment

In ongoing research (see Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton, in press), I have sought to integrate poststructuralist conceptions of identity and human agency by developing a construct I have called "investment." Departing from current conceptions of "motivation" in the field of language learning, the concept of investment signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak, read, or write it. Investment is best understood with reference to the economic metaphors that Pierre Bourdieu uses in his work, in particular the notion of "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). The term cultural capital is used to reference the knowledge, credentials and modes of thought that characterize different classes, and which have differential exchange value in different social fields (cf. May, this volume).

In my work, I have argued that if learners "invest" in language and literacy, they do so with the understanding that they will attain a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. By symbolic resources, I refer to such resources as language, education, and friendship, while material resources refer to such resources as capital goods, real estate and money. As the value of their cultural capital increases, so learners' sense of themselves, their identities, are reassessed. Hence there is an integral relationship between investment and identity.

Unlike more traditional notions of motivation, which often conceive of the language learner as having a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical "personality," the construct of investment conceives of the language learner as having a complex identity, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction. Further, while scholars such as Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) have sought to accommodate theories of the self in new constructs of motivation, it remains a psychological construct with a quantitative orientation, while investment must be seen within a sociological, qualitative framework, seeking to understand the relationship between a learner's desire to learn a language, their changing identity, and relations of power in human interaction.

The construct of investment provides for a different set of questions associated with a learner's commitment to learning the target language. In addition to asking, for example, "To what extent is the learner motivated to learn this language?" the teacher or researcher asks, "What is the learner's investment in the language practices of this classroom or community?" Despite being highly motivated, a learner could be excluded from the language practices of a classroom and, in time, positioned as a "poor" or unmotivated language learner. Alternatively, the language practices of the classroom may not be consistent with the learner's expectations of good language teaching, and the language learner may not be invested in the language practices promoted by the teacher. The notion of investment has been taken up by other scholars in the field, and is proving productive for understanding the complex conditions under which language and literacy learning take place^{vi}, including a special issue on investment that appeared in the *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* (Arkoudis & Davison, 2008). Cummins (2006) has argued that the construct of investment has emerged as a "significant explanatory construct" (p. 59) in the second-language learning literature.

Imagined Communities and Imagined Identities

In daily life, people interact with members of many communities, including the neighbourhood, the workplace, the school, and the religious institution. As Wenger (1998) suggests, however, people are also affiliated with communities of the imagination. Benedict Anderson (1991), who originally coined the term "imagined communities," observed that nations are imagined communities, because members of a given nation will never know most of their fellow-members, but still remain connected to them through the power of the imagination. Thus, in imagining ourselves allied with others across time and space, we can still feel a sense of community with people we have not yet met and with whom we may never have a direct relationship.

In 2001, I applied the term imagined community to language learning and teaching theory (Norton, 2001), and was particularly interested in the relationship between imagined communities, imagined identities, and classroom resistance. This relationship can be illustrated with reference to data I obtained from a Polish student, Katarina, who was an adult immigrant language learner in Canada. Katarina withdrew from her English language course after four months in response to her teacher's evaluative comment that Katarina's English was not "good enough" to take a computer course. What might be perceived as a particularly strong reaction to her teacher's comment is best understood with reference to Katarina's history, investments, and imagined identities.

In her native country, Katarina had been a teacher for 17 years and was a highly respected professional. In Canada, she eagerly sought recognition from people who were fellow professionals, and she wished to have a career in which she could meet like-minded people. As she said, "I choose computer course, not because I have to speak, but because I have to think." Katarina's imagined community was thus a community of professionals (cf. Canagarajah, this volume), and was as much a reconstruction of her professional past in Poland as it was an imaginative construction of her future in Canada. Katarina's language teacher was a member of this imagined community, a community in which Katarina believed she had already achieved a respected status. When Katarina felt that her teacher failed to acknowledge her professional identity, positioning her as an immigrant, she was greatly distressed. When, indeed, the teacher appeared to discourage Katarina from taking a computer course that would give her greater access to her imagined identity, Katarina refused to continue participating in the language class. I

concluded that Katarina's act of resistance helped her to preserve the integrity of her imagined community and imagined identity.

These concepts have been further developed in diverse collaborative publications (cf. Early & Norton, in press; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton & Early, 2011; Norton & Gao, 2008; Norton & Williams, 2012; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007), and have proved productive for other scholars in a variety of research sites^{vii}. There is a focus on the future when learners imagine who they might be, and who their communities might be, when they become multiliterate or multilingual. However, these imagined communities may well have a reality as strong as those in which learners have current daily engagement, and might have a significant impact on their investment in language and literacy learning. My research suggests that a teacher's lack of awareness of learners' imagined communities and imagined identities could compromise a learner's investment in the language practices of the classroom.

Research Across Time and Space

In my research projects in different regions of the world, I have sought to develop and enrich the constructs of identity, investment, and imagined communities in the field of language learning and teaching. Of central interest in my research is to enhance opportunities for English language learning without compromising investments in multilingualism and multilingual literacy. At the same time, I seek to better understand learner investments in both the English language and multilingualism, and the relationship between learner investment and learner identity. My hope is that an enhanced understanding of this relationship will, in turn, support and enrich multilingual pedagogical practices. I turn now to research studies on literacy, identity, and multilingualism in South Africa, Canada, Pakistan, and Uganda.

Resistant Readings in South Africa

Struggles over conceptions of literacy across multilingual contexts, and the effects of power on the construction of meaning, are the subject of my early collaborative research in South Africa, a country which was just beginning to emerge from its apartheid past. One particular research project, conducted with Pippa Stein in the early 1990s (Norton Peirce & Stein, 1995), focused on the pre-testing of a reading text that was being considered for inclusion in a pre-admissions English language test to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, where English is the medium of instruction. The passage in question, drawn from a local newspaper, described police action against a group of monkeys that had eaten fruit from the trees in a white suburban neighbourhood of Durban. The piloting of the text, which we called "The Monkeys Passage," was undertaken with a group of black students, all English language learners, in an inner-city Johannesburg school. We found that the students had very different interpretations of the text when the conditions under which they read it changed. Under test conditions, the students read the passage as a simple story about monkeys stealing fruit, but in the communal discussion following the test, the students read the text as symbolic of apartheid injustice. One of the central questions we sought to address was why the meaning of the passage shifted so radically from one social occasion to the next.

The answer to this question, we argued, was a function of the changing identities of the students, with respect to the particular "genre" in which the meaning of the text was negotiated. Drawing on Kress (1989, 1993), we made the case that a genre is not the more conventional notion of oral or written "text type" as, for example, a sonnet, term paper, interview, or prayer. Rather, with reference to Kress, we made the case that a genre is constituted within and by a

particular social occasion which has a conventionalized structure, and which functions within the context of larger institutional and social processes. In this formulation, the social occasions that constitute a genre may be formulaic and ritualized, such as a wedding or committee meeting, or less ritualized, such as a casual conversation. The important point is that the conventionalized forms of these occasions and the organization, purpose, and intention of participants within the occasion give rise to the meanings associated with the specific genre. Furthermore, as Kress has demonstrated, the increasing difference in power relations between participants in an interaction has a particular effect on the social meaning of the texts within a particular genre. In essence, in genres where there is great power difference between the participants, the mechanism of interaction, the conventionalized form of the genre, is most prominent, while the substance of the interaction, the content, is less prominent.

During the test event, when Stein was administering the test, the students were powerless test-takers; during the communal discussion, however, the students were informed, powerful, community members. After the scripts had been duly collected and handed in, the power relations between Stein and the students altered dramatically. Stein sat informally on a desk, inviting comment and criticism. She was no longer the test-maker and the students test-takers; she was no longer the expert and they the novices. In this context, it was Stein who was the novice and the students the experts. Further, students were no longer isolated and silent: they interacted with one another animatedly; they debated, argued, and laughed together. They had the time to reflect and critique. On this more egalitarian social occasion, the substance of the interaction (the content of the text) became more prominent than the mechanism of the interaction (the testing rituals), and there was no longer a single, legitimate reading of the text. Students could draw on their background knowledge and experience to analyse the social meaning of the text, and there was place for multiple readings.

Our central finding was that the meaning of a reading passage can shift in the context of different social occasions, shifting identities, and changing relations of power. The research supports the view that literacy cannot be understood apart from relationships between people, in a given time and place, with differential access to resources. During the second social occasion, the value ascribed to the Monkeys Passage was complex and contested. For some students —most students — the Monkeys Passage was positioned as a text reflecting race and class interests at the expense of less powerful interests. "It's about black people, who are the monkeys 'on the rampage' in white people's homes"; "It's about who owns the land"; "It's about violence in our society", said these students. For others, the text remained a simple story about monkeys. The implications for the assessment of language learners are profound (cf. Leung, this volume).

Archie Comics and the "Literate Underlife" of Multilingual Students in Canada

Archie comics, which address the lives of a group of adolescents in the United States, are popular in Canada, and indeed, many parts of the world, and are widely read by pre-adolescent children of diverse language backgrounds, 60% of whom are girls. In embarking on this research (Moffatt & Norton, 2005; Moffatt & Norton, 2008; Norton, 2003; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004), our aim was not to promote or denounce Archie comics, but to better understand the ubiquitous Archie reader, and to determine if insights from Archie readers might have significance for language and literacy education. The research was conducted in a Vancouver, Canada, elementary school from 1998–1999, and involved 55 elementary students, aged 10 to 12, 25 of whom were language learners of English, the medium of instruction.

In our research we found that Archie comic readers were subject to an interesting set of power relationships in their home and school contexts. Students noted that their parents and teachers were frequently dismissive of their love of comic books, describing them as "garbage" and "a waste of time". Archie readers had incorporated such views in their own understandings of literacy, drawing a distinction between what they called "real reading" and "fun reading". "Real reading", in their view, was reading what the teacher prescribed; it was "educational"; it was "challenging"; but it was seldom "fun". The reading of Archie comics was "fun" because readers could construct meaning, make hypotheses, and predict future developments without trying to second-guess the teacher. The findings suggest that the inequitable relationships of power between teachers and parents, on the one hand, and children, on the other, may limit a young reader's engagement with text, sometimes rendering it a meaningless ritual.

A second important finding from the research was that the reading, lending, and borrowing of comics provided a common set of interests and activities that constituted what Finders (1997, p. 25) would describe as the "literate underlife" of pre-adolescent children. Of particular significance is that the rituals associated with comic books helped strengthen relationships between children of diverse linguistic backgrounds, enhancing their language and literacy development. As Dyson (1996, p. 492) notes, "Curricula must be also be undergirded by a belief that meaning is found, not in artifacts themselves, but in the social events through which these artifacts are produced and used." Consider the following conversation between Karen, the interviewer, and Parry, an 11-year-old bilingual speaker of Korean and English:

Karen: Now when you trade, are you trading with other Korean kids or are

you trading with Canadian kids? Or, who are you trading with?

Parry: Both.

Karen: So some of your Korean friends read Archie also? Now when you

trade with your Korean friends, do you speak in Korean with them

about Archie, or is it in English?

Parry. English. Well sometimes Korean.

Toohey (1998, 2000) has demonstrated that rituals of lending and borrowing among school children are intricate practices that engage the identities of students in complex ways. In her study of a multilingual elementary school classroom in Canada, Toohey found that children would engage in borrowing and lending rituals in order to enter into social interaction with other students, which would in turn build relationships and peer networks. Our study confirmed this finding, and we found that borrowing and lending took place both within and outside the classroom. Of particular significance was the fact that these rituals, as 12-year-old Dylan noted, had the effect of bringing children of different linguistic backgrounds together, "Cause it would give them something to realize that these kids like some things that they like, that they are kids who like things that other kids like, which is a way of bringing them together."

Two related observations from the research are relevant to an exploration of the relationship between identity and literacy in language teaching. First, the Archie study suggests that the pleasure children derive from popular culture, in general, and Archie comics, in particular, is associated with a sense of ownership over meaning-making. It is this sense of ownership that gives children the confidence to engage with popular culture both energetically and critically. For the Archie comic readers in our study, their goal in debating the merits of characters, events, and stories was not to anticipate other interpretations and critiques, but to

draw on their own knowledge and experience to reflect, engage, and defend. Second, although the study provides much evidence to suggest that the Archie reading community was vibrant and social, and strengthened relationships between children of diverse linguistic backgrounds, the children's investments in Archie comics received little recognition or validation from teachers or parents. The study suggests that literacy educators need to better understand rather than dismiss those practices that students find engaging and meaningful, whether in or outside classrooms.

Literacy and Imagined Identities in Pakistan Youth

In our 2001–2002 research study (Norton & Kamal, 2003), students in Karachi, Pakistan, took part in a global social action project called the Youth Millennium Project, in which 80 middle-school students, calling themselves "The Reformers", collected stationery, books, and supplies for a local orphanage serving Afghan refugee children. Part of the project was also to teach the Afghan children "some simple English phrases". We were intrigued by the students' interest in literacy, and their promotion of the English language. We were also curious about the vision of the future held by these students at a time of great social and political instability. We collected data on these issues through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and email exchanges. The following findings inform our understanding of the relationship between identity, literacy, and multilingualism in the Pakistani context.

First, we were interested to find that the students' conceptions of literacy were consistent with many current theories of literacy in the scholarly literature. The students held the view that literacy is not only about reading and writing, but also about education more broadly. "Literacy plays a vital role in the progress of a country," said Saman, while Nida noted passionately "without education our beloved country Pakistan cannot develop." Other students, however, extended this view to include the notion that a literate person has greater ability to reason than one who is illiterate. Shahid, for example, noted that a literate person "can make better decisions" than an illiterate person, while Kamran said that, "if we are not literate we cannot do any work with thinking." These same students noted, in addition, that material resources are needed to promote both literacy and development. They pointed out, for example, that what they called the Afghan "childlabours" in their community could not access literacy classes because they were supporting their destitute families. The students were well aware of the resources of wealthier countries, with Ahmed noting somewhat optimistically "we know that in developed countries everyone is educated and goes to school; that is why they are rich and have no problems." For students in Pakistan, literacy must be understood with reference to social, economic, and political power.

Like their notions of literacy, the students' responses to the importance of English were complex and best understood in the context of Pakistan's ambivalent status in the international community. In seeking to teach the Afghan children "some simple English phrases", students were invested in the belief that English is an international language and the language of science, technology, and the media. As Shahida said:

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

Students noted that English serves as a common language not only across nations, but also within nations, and expressed the hope that knowledge of English would redress imbalances between

developed and developing nations. With only a few exceptions, the students demonstrated little ambivalence towards the English language, and perceived it as an important tool for social, economic, and political advancement, both within Pakistan, as well as the international community. When students were pressed to consider whether the spread of English had any negative consequences, only two students noted that a country's native languages could be compromised, and only one noted that the spread of English would be accompanied by the spread of western culture, what he called "a bad sign". Students expressed the hope that a future Pakistan would be one in which all inhabitants were literate, knowledgeable about English, and technologically advanced. They desired a peaceful society, true to the principles of Islam, and respected in the international community.

Multilingual learners in Pakistan were thus invested in literacy and the English language because they wanted to appropriate identities as "educated" people, living in a "developed" country, with access to both symbolic and material resources. However, it was of concern to us that students might in fact overestimate the benefits that can accrue from the development of literacy and the spread of English (see May, 2008; Pennycook, 1998). Ahmed's assessment, for example, that people who are educated "are rich and have no problems" might lead to a crisis of expectations. Of even greater concern was the way in which pedagogical and social practices may be serving, perhaps inadvertently, to reinforce the view held by the students that people who are literate are more rational and intellectually able than those who are not literate. If students in Pakistan, and perhaps in other parts of the world, equate literacy with rationality and intellectual ability, while at the same time embracing English as *the* international language of science, media, and technology, this may perpetuate the view that those who are literate in English are more rational and intellectually able than those who are not literate in English. How to address this concern remains a central challenge for educators, policy-makers, and researchers.

Digital Literacy and Multilingual Students in Uganda

In a number of our ongoing language and literacy projects in Uganda, which began in 2003, we have found that multilingual students of varying ages are highly invested in the development of digital literacy (Kendrick et al., 2006; Norton et al., 2011; Norton & Williams, 2012). In one project, undertaken in southwestern Uganda in 2004–2005, we worked with 19 secondary-school girls in Senior 3 (ages 16 to 19) to explore the use of digital photography as a multimodal pedagogy (Kendrick et al., 2006; cf. Block, this volume). The dominant languages in this region of the country are Luganda, Lunyankole, and Lukiiga, although English is the medium of instruction in secondary schools. The purpose of our research activity was to provide the girls with a visual, artistic way in which to explore and view specific aspects of their lives through the lens of the camera; to improve English language and literacy development by using photography as an entry point for discussion, reading, writing, and critique; and to become familiar with technology they had not used before. Through journal writing and conversations, the girls discussed what they learned through their participation in the photography project, such as the way in which their experience with the camera made them feel more confident about learning about other types of technology. Of particular note, however, was that almost all of the girls also mentioned their improvement in their English language competence. When asked directly how (if at all) they believed that this project facilitated learning English, the girls mentioned reading comprehension (as a result of studying the manuals); writing (writing about their pictures and in their research journals); and listening and speaking (from group discussions, meetings and presentations). In a conversation with Shelley Jones, a member of our research team, one of the girls (Rose) expressed the following point in relation to learning English (Kendrick et al., 2006, p. 110):

Shelley: How is learning English through doing a project like this different

from learning English in the classroom?

Rose: In class teachers write on the blackboard and we just listen.

Shelley: In the ... project how do you use English?

Rose: Communication.

Shelley: Do you learn more by studying English or by communicating in

English?

Rose: Communicating.

Shelley: Why?

Rose: Because when you communicate, you think your own English.

In a follow-up study conducted in 2006 with 12 of these young women (Norton et al., 2011), we investigated whether a digital literacy course would help the young women gain access to information about HIV/AIDS through global health websites, available in English, Uganda's official language. In particular, we investigated the learners' investments in the language practices of the digital literacy course, and the relationship between learner investments in digital literacy and learner identities. Our findings suggest that the learners' investments in the digital literacy course derived not only from the significance of HIV/AIDS to their lives, but from the opportunity to appropriate a range of imagined identities that offered enhanced possibilities for the future. One participant called Tracy, for example, specified her interest in becoming part of a global academic community, as she desired: "To talk with people from different countries like to acquire some information from outside universities", while Jenenie expressed an interest in expanding her knowledge and worldview by becoming "mentally modernized". Particularly profound was the comment by Henrietta that, in becoming digitally literate, they had "joined the group of knowledgeable people around the world".

The young women's investments in the language practices of the digital literacy course derived, in part, from the opportunity they had to access the English language in multiple new ways. For example, in response to the question, "How do you think you could benefit from learning to use the computer?" Henrietta noted that she would "understand more about English language", commenting further that, "I got communication. I have learnt the English language because the English in internet has been very create and it has arranged properly."

Discussion

In these four research sites, spanning three continents and two decades, we found that the multilingual students in our studies had complex investments in their respective literacy practices, particularly with regard to literacy in English. These investments were associated with a range of identities, including those of the imagination. In South Africa, as students' identities shifted on the two social occasions during the pre-testing of the Monkeys Passage, the learners' investments in the text were renegotiated. During the test event, the first social occasion, students' investment in the text was associated with academic access and future possibility, leading to acts of compliance as "test-takers". During the second social occasion, in which many students became "resistant readers", students' investment in the text was structured by a history of racism and discrimination in South African society, in which black students were relatively powerless subjects.

In the Archie comic study in Canada, students of diverse language backgrounds were invested in these popular cultural texts because they had a sense of ownership over meaning-making, and were able to enter social relationships and form peer networks, some across linguistic divides. With respect to reader identities, students were in a position of relative power as they read their Archie comics, and could engage actively in the construction of meaning. In teacher-controlled texts, in contrast, the readers were in a position of relative powerlessness, and sought primarily to second-guess the teacher's reading of the text. With reference to Kress's notion of genre, our research suggests that student investment in the text, and the identity "reader", is strengthened when students engage with the substance of the text rather than its conventionalized form. Further, our research suggests that the literate underlife of the classroom helped to build relationships across linguistic divides, creating vibrant multilingual peer networks. Such communities fell beneath the radar of parents and teachers, who, inadvertently perhaps, sought to discourage students' investments in comic book culture, losing promising opportunities for creative pedagogical practices.

Insights from multilingual Pakistani students are best understood in the context of their complex identities and investments in a time of social and political instability, both nationally and internationally. The research suggests that the struggle for literacy, access to English, and technological progress are interdependent, and reflect the desire of students in a post-colonial world to engage with the international community from a position of strength rather than weakness. For these students, English and vernacular languages could co-exist in mutually productive ways, and the appropriation of English did not necessarily compromise identities structured on the grounds of linguistic or religious affiliation. At the same time, however, the implicit conflation of literacy in English with rationality and intellectual ability was a cause of much concern, and requires greater attention from educators, policy-makers, and researchers.

In Uganda, the young multilingual women in two of our studies were invested in digital literacy because of the opportunity it gave them to explore a range of new identities, both in their everyday lives, and in their desired futures. Digital photography, for example, enabled them to reflect on the conditions that constrained the range of identities available to them, and those that provided enhanced possibility. The digital literacy course provided the opportunity for them to enter into wider global networks and to become, as Henrietta put it, "mentally modernized". The role of the English language was seen to be significant in the process of becoming digitally literate. What they sought, however, was innovation in the teaching of English; they expressed their reluctance to "just listen" in teacher-fronted classrooms. Much as the readers of Archie

comics in Uganda claimed ownership of meaning-making in their engagement with popular culture, so the young women in Uganda sought to "think their own English" in their classrooms and communities (cf. Leung, this volume).

The Multilingual Turn in Language Education

The trajectory of research discussed in this chapter raises three central concerns that have particular relevance to the multilingual turn in language education. First, consistent with the research of language and literacy scholars interested in globalization (cf. Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 1999; Luke, 2004; Pennycook, 2010; Ramanathan, 2005; Street, 2001), we learnt from many of the students in our studies that if we wish to understand the meaning of literacy in the lives of multilingual learners, we cannot ignore the imperatives of the material world and the ways in which resources are distributed – not only nationally, but internationally. Canagarajah (1999) makes a compelling case that, in developing countries in which there is a daily struggle for food, clothing, shelter, and safety, researchers cannot indulge in theoretical debates and abstract policies, but need to address the material realities of the communities in which we conduct research. Luke (2004), similarly, argues that, while we as educators might debate the meaning of critical literacy, we may not do justice to the physical and material challenges of students in diverse communities throughout the globe. The multilingual students in South Africa, Canada, Pakistan, and Uganda were well aware of the relationship between literacy in English, the distribution of resources, and human possibility. For these students, and many other students in poorly resourced regions of the world, a community that is both literate and competent in English is also a community that has social, economic, and political power.

Second, this trajectory of research has led us to rethink the relationship between literacy and identity in the multilingual classroom. The written word, while still important, is only one of the many semiotic modes that multilingual students encounter in the different domains of their lives. From popular culture, drama, and oral story-telling to television, the Internet, and digital worlds, young people in different parts of the world are engaging in diverse and innovative ways with multiple "texts". The challenge for literacy educators is to reconceptualize classrooms as semiotic spaces in which learners have the opportunity to construct meaning with a wide variety of multimodal texts, including digital, visual, written, and spoken texts. Scaffolding such a curriculum are critical pedagogical theories in which learners are given opportunities to claim ownership of the meaning-making process (cf. Norton & Toohey, 2004).

Third, it was more than two decades ago (Norton Peirce, 1989) that I confronted the question of how notions of communicative competence are framed within the field of English language teaching (see also Leung, 2005, this volume; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008; Wallace, 2003). I argued that a concern for the "rules of use" in the teaching of English internationally is an inadequate pedagogical goal if teachers are concerned about the relationship between language, identity, and human possibility. The research I have conducted across time and space suggests that these concerns remain current in the field of English language teaching, and that the debate has now been extended to include the impact of global technologies on language teaching (Block & Cameron, 2002; Lam, 2000; Rassool, 1999; Snyder & Prinsloo, 2007; Warschauer, 2003). Rassool (1999, p. 238), for example, argues that communicative competence within a technological global world refers to the interactive process in which meanings are produced dynamically between information technology and lived experience. The extent to which we are informed will, in turn, affect the extent to which we respond to and act upon our understanding. In this regard, she argues, the very principles of democracy are at stake.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on my research with multilingual learners in South Africa, Canada, Pakistan, and Uganda to make the case that literacy practices in the multilingual classroom are not only about reading and writing, but about relationships between text and reader, student and teacher, classroom and community, in local, regional, and transnational sites. As such, when students invest in a set of literacy practices, they also invest in a range of possible and imagined identities. As language educators, we need to take seriously the findings that suggest that if learners have a sense of ownership over meaning-making, they can engage actively in a wide range of literacy practices; however, if there is little ownership over meaning-making, learning becomes meaningless and ritualized. Further, the studies suggest that meaning-making is facilitated when learners are in a position of relative power within a given literacy event, and when learners' social, cultural, and linguistic identities are validated. As language educators, the research challenges us to consider what pedagogical practices will help students develop the capacity for imagining an enhanced range of identities for the future. What changes in languageteacher identity will be necessary for pedagogical practices to be more innovative and productive? As we gain greater appreciation for the relationship between literacy, identity, and multilingualism, such questions will become increasingly intriguing and important.

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Notes

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ⁱ This chapter is based on a plenary address given at the IATEFL conference in Cardiff, UK, in April 2009 (see Norton, 2010).

ⁱⁱ See Block, 2003; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Gao, 2007; Morgan, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Ricento, 2005; Swain & Deters, 2007; Zuengler & Miller, 2006.

iii See monographs by Block, 2007; Clarke, 2008; Goldstein, 2003; Heller, 2007; Kanno, 2008; May, 2008; Miller, 2003; Nelson, 2009; Norton, 2000; Potowski, 2007; Rampton, 2006; Stein, 2008; Toohey, 2000.

iv Albright & Luke, 2007; Anderson, Kendrick, Rogers, & Smythe, 2005; Auerbach, 1989; Barton, 2007; Blommaert, 2008; Comber & Simpson, 2001; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2007; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Heath, 1983; Hornberger, 2003; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Janks, 2010; Kendrick, 2003; Kress, 2003; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000; New London Group, 1996; Prinsloo & Baynham, 2008; Ramanathan, 2002; Street & Hornberger, 2008.

^v Early & Norton, in press; Kendrick, Jones, Mutonyi, & Norton, 2006; Mutonyi & Norton, 2007; Norton & Early, 2011; Norton, Jones, Ahimbisibwe, 2011; Norton & Williams, 2012; Tembe & Norton, 2008.

vi See, for example, Anya, 2011; Bearse & de Jong, 2008; Chang, 2011; Cornwell, 2005; Cummins, 2006; De Costa, 2010; Haneda, 2005; Kim, 2008; McKay & Wong, 1996; Pittaway, 2004; Potowski, 2007; Ross, 2011; Shin, 2009; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Tomita, 2011.

vii See, for example, Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008; Chang, 2011; Cortez, 2008; Dagenais, 2003; Gao, 2012; Gordon, 2004; Murphey, Jin, & Li-Chin, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003; Silberstein, 2003; Song, 2010; Torres-Olave, 2006; Villareal Ballesteros, 2010, Xu, 2012.