

Hue TESOL Conference - September 2011

Changing perspectives of literacy, identity and motivation: Implications for language teaching

Paul Mercieca
School of Education



Curtin University

Tel: 61 8 9266 4224

E-mail: p.mercieca@curtin.edu.au

Aims of paper:

1. To locate language teaching within a frame of social action, focussed on empowering learners.
2. To identify some suitable approaches inside, outside and beyond the classroom.

Content of paper:

Cultural Identity and Cultural Literacy

Critical Intercultural Literacies

More recent perspectives on learner motivation

Implications for Pedagogy

Implications for Intercultural Communication

Conclusions

Cultural Identity and Cultural Literacy

Teaching needs to engage with cultural identity, which ‘derives from and modulates’ individual literacies (Ferdman, 1990). Literacies are not just ‘skills’.

Cultural identity involves ‘the perceived bases for a person’s categorisation... and the person’s feeling for this cultural content’. Individual perceptions of ‘core’ cultural aspects vary. (Ferdman, 1990). It is fluid.

My research (Mercieca 2010) on British migrants in WA showed that cultural shape-shifting or ‘lability’ co-exists with stability, adaptability, mobility and flexibility.

In the WA ‘Northern Soul’ scene individual identity exists within an ethos of sociality – like dancing ‘alone in a crowd’. Cultural identity is ongoing, established via distinct practices. The global dance subculture, evolved from the 60s‘mod’ scene.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPmtYmSMdpM>

Connections to youth and ‘home’ provide continuity despite migration. Involvement transcends gender, ethnicity and social status, creating a portable identity. Many ‘soulies’ are ‘transilient’ (Richmond, 1969), but have firm local and global ties.

My research implies that an adaptable identity and redefined literacies can be derived from subcultures, whose ‘spearhead’ members can bridge the culture gap for others.

In schools, if values are mismatched, a ‘constructive cultural identity’ and effective learning will be compromised (Ferdman, 1990). Social constructivist research, following Vygotsky (1987), looks at how school literacy can build on personal experience.

Ferdman’s cultural literacy differs from Hirsch’s (1987) prescriptive ideas. Based on Bourdieu’s (1984) ‘cultural capital’, Schirato and Yell (2000) describe cultural literacy as a ‘feel’ for negotiating between cultural practices.

Critical Intercultural Literacies

Additive literacy (Bauer, 2009) builds on Cummins' (1981), suggesting L1 literacy skills/strategies transfer effectively to L2. Barton and Hamilton (2000) see literacy are plural, as practices involve different media, cultures/languages and domains of life.

Literacy is now described as a socially constructed practice (Papen, 2005). We have moved from deficit views of 'illiteracy' to incorporate multiliteracies (Pegrum 2008).

Multiliteracies are skills, but also critical social practices, which enable fuller involvement in open and multicultural societies.

Feenberg (1991), McLaren (1995), Weil (1998), Courts (1998) and Pegrum (2008) have argued for **critical intercultural literacies**, through which we learn about and from other cultures, and how to negotiate between cultures.

Via Social Constructivism, Socio-Cultural Theory, Complexity Theory, The Ecological Approach, Post-Structuralism, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Discourse Analysis, the current focus on literacy signals several shifts in perspective:

From Communicative Competence to Intercultural Competence

From Print Literacy to Multiliteracies

From National Literacy to Global Literacy

The focus is not just on ‘reading the word’ but ‘**reading the world**’. (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

More recent perspectives on learner motivation

Recent re-theorising in relation to identity has implications for classroom practice.

Gardner & Lambert 's (1959, 1972) instrumental motivation is for career/study and integrative motivation is oriented towards L2 culture. Similarly, extrinsic motivation seeks external rewards and intrinsic motivation seeks no obvious rewards (Deci, 1975).

Dörnyei (1994, 2005, 2009) has suggested that instrumental orientation is often more influential and Lamb (2004, 2009) refutes a clear binary distinction. Further, motivation is a 'process', linked to global, bicultural, multicultural identities.

Coetzee-Van Rooy (2006) argues for complex rather than ‘simplex’ identities. Her study of English in South Africa associates integrative motivation with discourses of assimilation and acculturation (Schumann, 1978).

Identities are now seen as personally and socially forged (Norton 2000, 2001). Norton and Toohey (2001) have argued for a focus on the socio-cultural contexts of learning.

Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981) described socio-cultural contexts where experienced participants engage with novices. Rueda and Moll (1994) suggested motivation is ‘created within cultural systems of activities involving the mediation of others’.

L2 learners belong to social groups, though individuals identity and agency are vital. My research, echoing Giddens (1987), confirmed the way social structures are both constituted by agency and are the medium of such constitution.

We need to move beyond abstract motivation models and learner types, engaging with ‘transportable identities’(Richards, 2006; Ushioda, 2009), grounded in the ‘real’ world and virtual worlds.

Global culture (Lamb, 2004) helps to motivate younger learners, though literacy and identity may be best forged via sociality and conviviality. In ‘virtual’ learning, interaction is more important than autonomy (Little, 1991, 2004).

Implications for Pedagogy

Inside the classroom

Street (1994) has suggested that literacies are not only about skills, but also about ‘taking on particular identities associated with them’- an expanded vision of pedagogy is needed.

Giroux (1989) vindicated a language of possibility in schools. Adapting Au (1998), there follow 5 ways to guide/re-affirm practice:

- (a) Making the aim of learning explicit
- (b) Accommodating the use of L1
- (c) Making connections to local and global cultures
- (d) Adjusting classroom approaches
- (e) Modifying assessments

(a) Making the aim of learning explicit

Learning should create meaning by drawing on student interests and experiences, while still attending to the power-code literacy of mainstream culture.

b) Accommodating the use of L1

L1 literacy is valuable per se. L1 provides stability of identity and helps effective communication in some contexts. ‘Only English here’ signs are unhelpful.

(c) Making connections to local and global cultures

Texts relating to learner backgrounds may increase motivation to listen and read. Personal experiences are a good source for writing and speaking. Younger learners may be particularly engaged by materials which explore global cultures.

(d) Adjusting classroom approaches

Teaching approaches may need to be adjusted culturally, without compromising beliefs about classroom efficacy. For example, teachers may need to display authority more directly. See Bax vs Harmer (2003).

(e) Modifying assessments

Inclusive approaches are needed to reduce sources of bias such as prior knowledge, language, and question type. However, alternative forms of assessment (eg portfolios) may still create negative backwash if they are 'high-stakes'.

Outside the classroom

The adjustments just suggested may be subject to negative external forces. Looking outside classrooms for multiliteracies development, the role of informal learning (Certeau, 1984; Illich, 1971; Rogers, 2004: Williams, 1958) is well established.

Some models of multiculturalism (Gudykunst, 1988; Kim, 1979) obviate the need for ‘third cultures’ (Shuter, 1993). Kramsch (1993, 2009) has argued for such dynamic spaces as appropriate informal learning contexts.

Bianco, Liddicoat and Crozet (1999) have suggested ‘third places’ help migrants develop ‘intercultural competence’.

Ferdman (1990) advocated cultural engagement, but did not fully explore areas of popular culture. Pegrum (2008), drawing on Bhabha (1994) and Bianco et al (1999), suggests the useful third space of film.

However, film, popular literature and the internet lack a certain type of sociality. Subcultures based around music, dancing and sport can help to create group identity, empathy and friendships, particularly at a local level.

My research reveals a convivial (Illich, 1975) merging of ‘productive’ and ‘evasive’ pleasures (Fiske, 1987). Hobbies and diversions are opportunities to ‘read the world’, taking place in third spaces/places such as pubs, clubs and parks.

Global subcultures can provide ‘third places’ for migrants just as bars and coffee shops help manage transitions between home and work.

And non-verbal communication can help to establish common engagement. When a Sri Lankan group wandered into a Perth Northern Soul night (Mercieca, 2010) there were many smiles on the dancefloor – interaction was kinesic and proxemic.

In essentially monolingual settings, such as Vietnam, there are less tangible third spaces. However, global subcultures are accessible through music, film, TV and the internet – media attuned to younger learners.

Shuker (1994) revealed that Australian children were exposed to communication media for nearly twice as much time as formal schooling – current figures may be even higher.

Proponents of critical media pedagogy also underestimate the ability to resist interpellation.

Implications for intercultural communication

Some reflection about World Englishes is needed, to identify contexts of intercultural contact.

Kachru's (1985) concentric circles critiqued interlanguage fossilisation and emphasised pluralism, though his geographical model still privileged inner circle speakers (Graddol, 1997; Rajadurai, 2005).

Modiano (1999) put EIL speakers into a first centripetal circle, regional speakers into a second, alongside indigenised variety speakers, and learners into a third, though his proficiency model too comfortably places 'home counties' speakers in the centre.

Coetzee-Van Rooy (2006) suggests Kachru's outer circle can be often be autonomous, with an inner-circle of middle-class speakers, as in India (Ramanathan, 1999), whilst the inner circle is effectively in more contact with its satellite expanding circle.

As Phan (2005) has argued, there are relationships of power between centres and peripheries, effectively making English a non-neutral language.

Despite globalisation, most language speakers are essentially located by geography and defined ideologically. For better communication to result from the increased pool of English speakers, several possibilities appear hopeful.

Firstly, as Phan (2005) suggests, new English users need ownership of teaching, assessment and language use. By uncoupling language use from ‘centre’ conformity, communication be a more equal means of exchange.

Secondly, concerns for intelligibility ignore the need for intercultural awareness. A regional speaker can often communicate effectively if able to bridge the culture gap.

Thirdly, as unilingualism seems more dated (Bianco, 2010), bidialectalism now appears to be crucial. All language learners need exposure to a wider range of varieties, in order to communicate more effectively with others.

Conclusions

- Cultural identities shape L2 literacy learning. Inside and outside the classroom, global subcultures can help to develop bicultural identities, integrating a global English speaking self with a local L1 self (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006).
- Third places enable vital socio-cultural engagement, although virtual spaces are well-attuned to younger learners. For effective intercultural communication beyond the classroom, we need to encourage bidialectalism.
- A re-conceptualisation of motivation can focus on global belonging – an integration towards other speakers in all imagined ‘circles’. We should retain a stable sense of who we are, but we need to consider other ways of being.

Conclusions

- Cultural identities shape L2 literacy learning. Inside and outside the classroom, global subcultures can help to develop bicultural identities, integrating a global English speaking self with a local L1 self (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006).
- Third places enable vital socio-cultural engagement, although virtual spaces are well-attuned to younger learners. For effective intercultural communication beyond the classroom, we need to encourage bidialectalism.
- A re-conceptualisation of motivation can focus on global belonging – an integration towards other speakers in all imagined ‘circles’. We should retain a stable sense of who we are, but we need to consider other ways of being.

References

- Au, KH (1998) 'Social constructivism and the school literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds', *Journal of Literacy Research*, vol. 30, no.2, pp. 297-319.
- Bakhtin, MM (1981) *The dialogic imagination: four essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Courts, P (1998), *Multicultural literacies: dialect, discourses and diversity*, Peter Lang, New York.
- Barton, D & Hamilton, M (2000) 'Literacy practices', in *Situated literacies: reading and writing in context*, eds D Barton, M Hamilton & R Ivanic, Routledge, London.
- Bauer, EB (2009) 'Informed additive literacy instruction for ELLs', *The Reading Teacher*, vol. 62, no. 5, pp. 446-448.
- Bax, S (2003) 'The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching', *ELT Journal*, vol. 57, no.3, pp. 278-287.
- Bhabha, H (1994) *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, New York.
- Bianco, JL, Liddicoat, AJ & Crozet, C (1999) *Striving for the third place*, Language Australia, Melbourne.
- Bianco, JL (2010) 'Some ideas about multilingualism and national identity', *TESOL in Context* vol.20, no.1.

Bourdieu, P, & Passeron, JD (1977) *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, London, Sage.

Certeau, M de (1984) *The practice of everyday life*, Trans. S Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

Coetzee-Van Rooy, S (2006) 'Integrativeness: untenable for world Englishes learners?' *World Englishes*, vol.25, no.3/4, pp. 437-450.

Courts, PL (1998) *Multicultural literacies: dialect, discourses, and diversity*, Peter Lang, New York.

Cummins, J (1981) 'The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students', in *Schooling and language minority students: a theoretical framework*, ed CF Leyba, Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.

Cummins, J (1986) 'Empowering minority students: a framework for intervention', *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 56, pp. 18-36.

Cummins, J (1994) 'From coercive to collaborative relations of power in the teaching of literacy', in *Literacy across languages* (pp. 3-49), eds BM Ferdman, R Weber, & AG Ramirez, SUNY Press, Albany.

Deci, EL (1975) *Intrinsic motivation*, Plenum, New York.

- Delpit, LD (1988) 'The silenced dialogue: power and pedagogy in educating other people's children', *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 58, pp. 280-298.
- Dörnyei, Z (2005) *The psychology of the language learner: individual differences in second language acquisition*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.
- Dörnyei, Z (1994) 'Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classrooms', *Modern Language Journal*, vol.78, pp. 273-284.
- Dörnyei, Z (2009) 'The L2 motivational self system', in *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9-42), eds Z Dörnyei & E Ushioda, Multilingual Matters, Bristol.
- Feenberg, A (1991) *Critical theory of technology*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Ferdman, BM (1990) 'Literacy and cultural identity', *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 60, no.2, pp. 181-204.
- Fiske, J (1987) *Television culture: popular pleasures and politics*, Methuen, London.
- Freire, P & Macedo, D (1987) *Literacy: reading the word and the world*, Routledge, London.
- Gardner, RC, & Lambert, WE (1959) 'Motivational variables in second language acquisition', *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, vol.13, pp. 266-272.
- Gardner, R & Lambert, W (1972) *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*, Newbury House, Rowley.
- Giddens, A (1987) *Social theory and modern sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Giroux, HA (1989) 'Schooling as a form of cultural politics: toward a pedagogy of difference', in *Critical pedagogy, the state and cultural struggle* (pp. 125-151), eds HA Giroux & P McLaren, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.

Gudykunst, WB (1988) 'Uncertainty and anxiety', in *Theories in intercultural communication* (pp. 123-156), eds YY Kim & WB Gudykunst, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.

Harmer, J (2003) 'Popular culture, methods, and context', *ELT Journal*, vol. 57, no.3, pp. 288-294.

Hirsch, ED Jr. (1987) *Cultural literacy: what every American needs to know*, Houghton, Boston.

Illich, I (1971) *Deschooling society*. Penguin, London.

Illich, I (1975) *Tools for conviviality*. Fontana, London.

Kim, YY (1979) 'Toward an interactive theory of communication-acculturation', *Communication Yearbook*, vol.3, pp. 435-453.

Kim, YY (1994) 'Interethnic communication: the context and the behavior', *Communication Yearbook*, vol.17, pp. 511-538.

Kramsch, C (1993) *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Kramsch, C (2009) 'Third culture and language education', in *Contemporary Applied Linguistics. Vol.1, Language Teaching and Learning* (pp.233-254), eds V Cook & L Wei, Continuum, London.

Lamb, M (2004) 'Integrative motivation in a globalizing world', *System*, vol. 32, pp. 3-19.

Lamb, M (2009) 'Situating the L2 self: two Indonesian school learners of English', in *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 229-247), eds Z Dörnyei & E Ushioda, Multilingual Matters, Bristol.

Little, D (1991) *Learner autonomy 1: definitions, issues and problems*. Authentik, Dublin.

Little, D (2004) 'Constructing a theory of learner autonomy: some steps along the way', in *Future perspectives in foreign language education*, eds K Mäkinen, P Kaikkonen, & V Kohonen, Publications of the Faculty of Education in Oulu University, 101, pp. 15-25, Oulu.

McLaren, P (1995) *Critical pedagogy and predatory culture: oppositional politics in the postmodern era*, Routledge, London and New York.

Mercieca, P (2010) '*Northern Soul*' in a Western Australian migrant community: construction of meaning, identity and cultural literacy (Doctoral dissertation), University of Western Australia, Crawley, WA.

Norton, B (2000) *Identity and language learning: gender, ethnicity and educational change*, Longman, Harlow.

Norton, B, & Toohey, K (2001) Changing perspectives on good language learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, vol.35, no.2, pp.307-322.

Papen, U (2005) *Adult literacy as social practice - more than skills*. Routledge, London.

Pegrum, M (2008) 'Film, culture and identity: critical intercultural literacies for the language classroom', *Language and Intercultural Communication*, vol.8, no.2, pp. 136-54.

Phan LH (2005) 'Toward a critical notion of appropriation of English as an International Language', *Asian EFL Journal*, vol.7, no. 3, pp.48-60.

Ramanathan, V (1999). "'English is here to stay": a critical look at institutional and educational practices in India'. *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 33, no.2, pp. 211-230

Rajadurai, J (2005) 'Revisiting the concentric circles: conceptual and sociolinguistic Considerations', *Asian EFL Journal*, vol.7, no. 4, pp.73-87.

Richards, K (2006) 'Being the teacher: identity and classroom conversation', *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 27, no.1, pp. 51-77.

Rueda, R & Moll, L (1994) 'A sociocultural perspective on motivation', in *Motivation: Theory and Research* (pp.117-137), eds HF O'Neil, Jr. & M Drillings, Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ.

Rogers, A (2004) 'Looking again at non-formal and informal education – towards a new paradigm', in *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education*, viewed <www.infed.org/biblio/non_formal_paradigm.htm>

Schumann, JH (1978) 'Second language acquisition: the pidginization hypothesis', *Language Learning*, vol. 26, no.2, pp. 391-408.

Schirato, T & Yell, S (2000) *Communication and cultural literacy: an introduction*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards.

Shuker, R (1994) *Understanding popular music*, Routledge, London.

Shuter, R (1993) 'On third culture building', *Communication Yearbook*, vol. 16, pp. 429-436.

Street, BV (1994) 'Struggles over the meaning(s) of literacy', in *Worlds of literacy* (pp. 15-20), eds M Hamilton, D Barton & R Ivanic, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, UK.

Ushioda, E (2009) A person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation, self and identity, in *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 215-228), eds Z Dörnyei & E Ushioda, Multilingual Matters, Bristol.

Vygotsky, LS (1978) *Mind in society: the development of higher order psychological processes*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Vygotsky, LS (1987) 'Thinking and speech', in *The collected works of LS Vygotsky: Vol. 1 Problems of general psychology* (pp. 37-285), eds RW Rieber & AS Carton, Plenum, New York.

Weil, DK (1998) *Toward a critical multicultural literacy*, Peter Lang, New York.

Williams, R (1958) *Culture and society*, Harper Torch, New York.

Northern Soul Dancers

Wigan Casino 1970s

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPmtYmSMdpM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5BjusPO3-8>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nVfxgvSUrc>

2010

http://showstudio.com/project/fashionbody/video/left_shin