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Identity in Second Language Teaching and Learning

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No, an identity is never given, received or attained; only the interminable and indefinitely phantasmatic process of identification endures.

(Derrida, 1998, p. 28)

Identity has become one of the most frequently employed concepts in the social sciences and humanities (Bendle, 2002) and the fields of education (Gee, 2000) and applied linguistics have proved no exception to this trend (Belcher & Lukkarila, forthcoming; Block, 2007; Cummins, 2006; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Fleming, 2003; Lin, 2008; Menard-Warwick, 2005; Morgan, 2007; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Part of the reason for this popularity can be traced to the term's capacity to provide a conceptual link between seemingly opposed tendencies; indeed, echoing Eagleton's (2000, p. 2) comments on culture, a similarly prolific term, it is possible to argue in relation to identity that "within this single term, questions of freedom and determinism, agency and endurance, change and identity, the given and the created, come dimly into focus". Eagleton's use of the term "identity" in the above quote, as something that is opposed to, or in tension with, "change", suggests that identity is about the psychic, social and semiotic work necessary to sustain a sense of unity and sameness across time and space. Yet, as we will discuss in more detail below, identity relies on difference and on *social* categories in order to achieve its coherence. The social origins and traces of the "other" within identity have led some to argue that identity is a "fiction" rather than an "existential fact" (Menard-Warwick, 2005). This distinction between identity as an existential fact and as a fiction echoes the divide highlighted by Mansfield (2000) between theories and approaches which see identity/subjectivity¹ as a "thing" to be discovered, liberated, examined and/or explained, as, for example, in most psychoanalytic theories, and theories that see identity as an effect, of discourse or power, as is the case with postmodern and poststructuralist approaches to identity (Mansfield, 2000).

Whichever of these views we adopt, identity relies on a repertoire of communicative resources (e.g. rituals, texts and signs) through/by which categories of difference/individuality are perceived, maintained or resisted and these communicative resources are fundamentally social in nature. Indeed, it is the importance attached to the representational means/tools involved that underpins Blommaert's (2005) conceptualization of identity as "semiotic potential", a perspective that aligns closely with the mediational foci of socio-cultural and activity theories (see e.g. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; van Lier, 2004).

Indeed, the above tensions between identity as *sameness/uniqueness* and identity as *difference* (from) parallel debates around the continuity versus the malleability of identity, debates that form a significant fault line in research on identity in second language education (SLE) (Menard-Warwick, 2005). In turn, these identity debates echo debates centring on the ontological/existential status of languages and cultures. For example, minority/indigenous language rights debates typically rely on the objectification/demarcation of languages into discrete, enumerative entities, with populations ascribed to them, in order to make them the “legitimate” objects of expert intervention for revitalization purposes. Yet other work confounds the very possibility of talking about the existence of discrete languages per se (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Reagan, 2004) and it can be argued that such objectifying, reificatory approaches lend themselves to cultural stereotyping (Holliday, 2005; Kubota, 2004).

The rise of identity as a concept in the social sciences also requires attention to historical factors such as the long process of Western secularization from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries—the shift from theocentric to anthropocentric visions of the universe, and from the “soul” to the “mind” as the locus of what we now refer to as identity (Porter, 2004). This shift brought with it a concomitant emphasis on worldly life, self-fulfilment and activity, a process reflected in and supported by the late twentieth-century burgeoning of media and consumer cultures and practices targeting the individual, for example, lifestyle shows and self-help manuals. However, despite the dominant Western narrative, which views these developments in terms of the growth of individual choice and freedom, they can also be seen as reflective of our increasing (self-)subjection to discourses of commoditization and consumption, an issue we address below in a section on neoliberalism and SLE.

The “Inner World” of the Subject: Language, Identity, and Psychoanalytic Theory

Perhaps the epitome of an anthropocentric world view is to be found in Descartes’ (in)famous *cogito*, “I think, therefore I am”, with its assertion of self-conscious reflection as the founding principle of knowledge and truth and its assumption of the self’s separateness and individuality (Hall, 2004). However, the idea of a self-sufficient individual self took a potentially disturbing turn in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the new science of psychology sought to unlock the hidden secrets of the human mind, while psychoanalysis uncovered the dark forces lurking beneath consciousness. Freud’s notion of the unconscious was taken in a new—and for the purposes of this chapter vitally important, given the significance attached to language and identity in his theories (Roseboro, 2008)—direction by Lacan, whose subversion of the Cartesian *cogito* is reflected in his statement, “I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think” (Chiesa, 2007, p. 39). For Lacan, identity formation occurs through a double process of misrecognition, or alienating identification. This first occurs in the “mirror stage”, which entails momentous changes for the child, including a distinction between itself and the (m)other/mirror-image (self as “other”), coupled with the (illusory) promise of potential for self-reliance and mastery.

The alienation of the mirror stage is redoubled with entry into the symbolic order (language), a social system of signification, which precedes and exceeds any given individual, yet which, at the same time, mediates the individual’s relations with others and with the world. As Butler puts it, “when the ‘I’ seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration” (2005, p. 8). This alienation is compounded by the insufficiency of language to convey the individual’s intentions and desires completely, whilst also, paradoxically, often conveying more than the individual intended (Chiesa, 2007). In Eagleton’s words, “we are fated, then, to express ourselves in a tongue which is forever foreign” (2008, p. 86, cf. Derrida, 1998). Such insights confound received understandings that

by acquiring additional languages we move ever closer to the promise of complete communication, or that second languages are necessarily alienating, given that all language is alienating (McNamara, 2009). As Granger's (2004) psychoanalytic study of silence in second language acquisition (SLA) suggests, the transition from first to second language compounds the unconscious loss and emotional displacement inherent in first language acquisition.

Indeed, it could be argued that Lacan provides a theoretical underpinning for the liberating effect that some commentators have described as an important element of second language learning (House, 2003), given that this learning bypasses the initial trauma of entering the symbolic realm that learning the "mother tongue" entails. However, it would be simplistic or essentializing to depict the translingual subject as residing in permanent states of either abjection or emancipation. As Pavlenko (2006) reports, many translingual writers find the latter learned language as a medium of emotional release, offering "new 'clean' words, devoid of anxieties and taboos, freeing them from self-censorship, from prohibitions and loyalties of their native culture" (p. 20). Yet, they also recognize that "the use of the 'stepmother tongue' comes with a price: the ever-present nostalgia for the primeval emotionality of the selves linked to the mother tongue, the language that retains the incomparable ability to wound, to heal, and to caress" (p. 20). Clearly, both emotional loss and liberation can arise from the psychic/semiotic mediation of translingual practices. At the same time, the fact that such perspectives and evocative descriptions have arisen at all in SLE sheds light on the degree to which psychoanalytic perspectives have invigorated research on the "inner world" of bilinguals and second language learners (cf. Granger, 2004; McNamara, 2009; Pavlenko, 2006), and in ways profoundly different from earlier considerations of affect and motivation in the SLA literature.

Identity, Agency, and Power

Misrecognition and alienation are not only concerns/conditions of the mind but also of the social world. Indeed, they are central to Althusser's notion of identity formation through ideological interpellation, or "hailing", as when, in a scene that is at once "exemplary and allegorical" (Butler, 1997, p. 106), the police officer calls "hey you" and we guiltily turn around regardless of whether or not we are the one being hailed. We accept the legitimacy of the state and its institutions, despite knowing at some level that the state has no claim on us: "Law abiding behaviour results not from the threat of punishment, but from a complex complicity with power" (Kay, 2003, p. 105). Or to put it in more Foucauldian terms, we might say that identity positions are materializations of discursively structured power relations.

Indeed, Foucault is probably the theorist most linked to the view that sees the individual not as a pre-given entity but as an effect of discourse, of subjectivity as something that takes shape within the operations of the Foucauldian couplet, power/knowledge. Foucault rejects the notion of the individual as the self-originating source of her/his own meaning: "one has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself ... [in order to] ... account for the constitution of the subject within an historical framework" (Foucault, 1980, p. 115). Still, to understand identity as subjectivity, on these terms defined by Foucault, does not reduce us to the status of "puppets on a string", helpless in the face of power and blinded by "false consciousness". But it does frame our capacity to act or imagine otherwise—to have *agency*—since, following Foucault, discourses also create the conditions for their transgression.

Across identity work in the social sciences, and inherent in the seminal texts and theorists cited in this introduction, the issue of *agency* is crucial, especially in relation to its causal connections with language and its implications for SLE (Ahearn, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2008). Echoing the rational, free-willed subject of the *cogito*, to what extent are our thoughts our own—their essence conveyed intact through a putatively transparent and neutral medium of language? Or, conversely,

to what extent are we *determined*—“spoken” by the language we use, the discourses we inhabit, or by the primordial structures of culture and mind against which we are relatively powerless? Perhaps it is both and “in-between” whereby agency is not a universal, a priori condition but one socially embedded and enabled through specific discursive constraints, a conceptualization that seems to align with Bakhtin’s dialogical notions of voice and answerability (e.g. Hall, Vitanova & Marchenkova, 2005; Thorne, 2005). These kinds of questions—and the theoretical answers to which we subscribe—define the *horizons of possibility* (cf. Simon, 1992) for identity work in SLE.

Identity Work in SLE: Selective Appropriations

In her survey of identity theory in SLA and literacy studies, Menard-Warwick (2005) astutely notes how these sub-fields have selectively appropriated (p. 253) conceptual elements from key figures such as Foucault (e.g. discourse) and Bourdieu (e.g. habitus, capital). The broader point is crucial: though the boundaries of fields have become increasingly blurred, common interests serve to maintain a sense of disciplinary cohesion. Periodically, however, persistent field-internal problems are recognized, prompting researchers to look outside their existing knowledge base for ideas that might serve to revitalize tired habits of thought. An underlying and persistent field-internal problem in applied linguistics and SLE has been an overwhelming reliance on psycholinguistic and social psychological explanation in SLA research, on the one hand, and a strong bias against openly ideological and ethnographic inquiry, on the other (e.g. Block, 2003). Through membership in discrete and stable communities, learners were assumed to possess particular traits and language habits, whose estimated proximity or distance from the target language and culture, served to “explain” failure or success in SLA. Indeed, as Firth and Wagner (1997) noted, the native speaker and non-native speaker seemed to be the only two identities entertained in SLA and applied linguistics. Based on this somewhat insular model, pedagogical interventions were directed entirely towards informing/changing learner attributes to align ever more closely with the target of native speaker competence—an inherently political approach that ironically disavowed politics and ignored mainstream prejudices and power hierarchies that marginalized learner opportunities.

This authoritative, disciplinary canon was challenged by Norton Peirce’s 1995 *TESOL Quarterly* article (see also Norton, 2000). Drawing on poststructural notions of subjectivity and discourse (cf. Weedon, Foucault), Norton (2000) proposed a dynamic notion of identity as “multiple and contradictory” and “a site of struggle” (p. 127), in which neither students nor teachers could be seen as speaking or behaving in predictable ways that indexed stable ethnolinguistic categories or that offered straightforward evidence of the attitudinal and motivation types deemed essential for SLA. In addition, Norton’s influential construct of *investment*—informed by Bourdieu (cf. cultural and symbolic capital)—similarly challenged the apolitical and psycholinguistic biases of much interlanguage research, offering “the right to speak” and “the power to impose reception” (2000, p. 8) as ideological/discursive criteria necessary for an adequate understanding of second language competence.

The SLE field has since witnessed an extraordinary growth in identity-based research, in parts refining and extending the complexities that Norton’s investigation prompted. There have also been important critiques, particularly of the poststructural “subject-in-discourse”—a construct whose dynamic, multiple and contradictory qualities may be somewhat exaggerated and whose capacity for individual agency may be similarly over-stated (e.g. Luke, 2009, pp. 292–293). Despite these concerns, Norton’s work opened up new conceptual spaces.

In terms of lasting appropriations, poststructural metaphors of mobility across time, place and category/structure have become preferred means of explaining and framing self and collective understanding and for identity work in general. Notions of the *transcultural* and *transnational*, for example, allude to a world of intensified migration across political states—and states of mind—of *global flows*

(e.g. ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, ideoscaples, financescaples; cf. Appadurai, 1996) and of shifting and multiple allegiances brought about by newcomers who ultimately diversify and hybridize the urban spaces, language practices and identity regimes into which they are ostensibly integrated/assimilated (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Equally fluid metaphors can be cited here—ones that foreground provisionality and indeterminacy (e.g. *performativity*,² cf. Pennycook, 2004; *ethnography of performance*, Ibrahim, 2003), or that seek to explain syncretic and emergent phenomena in identity negotiation (e.g. *crossing*, cf. Rampton, 1995; *hybridity*, *third spaces*, cf. Bhabha, 1994; *contact zones*, cf. Pratt, 1991; *cosmopolitanism*, e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2008, Ch. 7). Indeed, such notions of “mobility” are increasingly viewed as desirable outcomes for SLE curricula, recent examples being research on *intercultural rhetoric* in second language writing (Connor, Nagelhout & Rozycki, 2008), or the notions of *interculturality*, *cosmopolitanism* and *global citizenship* as identity-based competencies to be nurtured through English as a lingua franca pedagogy, albeit with ideological concerns as to how and in whose interests—centre or periphery—these concepts are defined and realized (cf. “elite” and “deficit” cosmopolitanisms, Guilherme, 2007; Starkey, 2007).

One final metaphorical observation can be made: for a field aligned with the deep structures of mind (cf. Chomsky) and with synchronic description (cf. Saussure), and with an abiding fascination for closely-specified taxonomies of tasks and strategies, it is interesting to observe the extent to which the “linguistic turn” characteristic of postmodern thought has entered professional conversations beyond identity work. Witness, for example, the shifts in thinking encouraged by de-nominalized variants transformed though continuous aspect: e.g. *linguaging* in SLA studies (Swain, 2006) and in nation-state formation (Ramanathan, 2009a), as well as the notions of *grammaring* (Larsen-Freeman, 2003), or of *discoursing* in activity theory (Wells, 2007). Such morphological/semantic shifts allude to a key poststructural insight—that discourse and language practices—even at word level—are “person-formative” (Morgan & Ramanathan, 2005), shaping our own *subjectivities*, and the ways in which we understand ourselves, our communities and our fields/places of work, and more importantly, the degree to which we see ourselves as active participants in their unfolding. These are central concerns for identity pedagogies in SLE.

Conceptual Vernacularization: Identity as Pedagogy and Text in SLE

Selective appropriation of theory is not just about solving field-internal problems; it is also a process of *conceptual vernacularization*; that is, of engaging with concepts and contextualizing them in ways that reflect field specializations with the subsequent potential of developing unique understandings of interdisciplinary significance. In relation to identity, two areas of SLE expertise are especially important: a concern with pedagogy and a concern with language/texts/signs. Once grounded in these specializations, many of the postmodern metaphors described above take on important pedagogical and textual functions.

The notion of *transnationalism*, for example, serves as a unifying theme for a special issue on transnational literacies related to language learning and identity, edited by Warriner (2007). *Transcultural flows* frame Pennycook’s (2007) original analyses of global rap and hip hop and the performative identity work being done through the creative appropriation of English, in which the trans-semiotic texts of local and global hip hop provide strong evidence of new youth solidarities and modes of identity-based political activity; at the same time, they offer researchers a generous source of data with which to unsettle many prevailing assumptions regarding the appropriate sites and functions of SLA, particularly around the notion of English as an international or world language (e.g. Alim, Ibrahim & Pennycook, 2009; Ibrahim, 2003; Sarkar & Allan, 2007). Equally productive in application, Louise Pratt’s notion of *contact zones* has become a robust concept for research on the internationalization of university EAP (English for academic purposes) programs (see e.g. Nelson, 2005;

Singh & Doherty, 2004). Meanwhile, Deleuzian notions of *de-territorialization and nomadology* serve as conceptual lens for a recent anthology explicating multiple literacies theory in bilingual education (Masny & Cole, 2009) and foreground the complications/compromises (and inherent “rootlessness” invoked through the Deleuzian metaphor of “rhizome”) of postcolonial translation in Ramanathan’s (2005, 2006) work on the English-vernacular divide in the Indian state of Gujarat.

Beyond singular concepts, general identity categories and theories have become pedagogically “vernacularized”. A key example is the category/issue of race and racism as they align with SLE concerns and as comprehensively examined in a 2006 special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* and a 2009 collected volume, both edited by Ryuko Kubota and Angel Lin. Both publications detail key theoretical points, the socio-historical construction of racial categories (i.e. racialization), systemic and colour-blind discrimination (cf. whiteness studies), complex intersections with class, gender, ethnicity and nation (Amin & Dei, 2006), and how they articulate with professional roles and constructs in SLE (i.e. language ideologies regarding native-speakerness, accent intelligibility, standardized English; see e.g. Curtis & Romney, 2006; Shuck, 2006). Within this field of inquiry, the relevance of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is most often cited. Originating in legal studies, CRT challenges the discursive construction of impartiality and colour-blind neutrality in the law, revealing deeply ingrained and persistent racial inequalities tied to property rights and unacknowledged white privilege within the justice system (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 2006).

In Sara Michael-Luna’s (2009) classroom-based study, CRT becomes vernacularized as reading methodology, providing a critical lens with which to problematize the exotic and subordinate representations of ethnic and racial minorities in English as a second language (ESL) texts used for early childhood bilingual education. As Michael-Luna’s data shows, CRT also informs a pedagogy of *counter-storytelling* whereby students are encouraged to produce texts that celebrate the accomplishments of minority leaders less present or invisible in mainstream texts. Similarly inspiring, the pedagogical potential of CRT is elaborated in Lisa Taylor’s (2006) qualitative study of an anti-discrimination leadership camp for ESL youth in Toronto. Utilizing an experiential, problem-posing approach (cf. Freire), the students and camp counsellors explored common sense prejudices and racial hierarchies that persist within Canada’s liberal multicultural framework. Following CRT principles, the students developed ways of analysing/identifying racist practices as well as action plans to counter them in their schools and communities. In this respect, both these studies from Taylor and Michael-Luna exemplify the transformative potential of SLE pedagogies and textual practices, when grounded in local contexts and experiences.

Critical engagement and transformative pedagogies are also priorities in vernacularizing the notion of *sexuality*, arguably the most neglected aspect of identity studies in SLE until Cynthia Nelson (1999, 2005) introduced queer theory to the field, highlighting its priorities for second/foreign language research, pedagogy and teacher education. Queer theory, drawing inspiration from Butler (cf. performativity) and Foucault (cf. power/knowledge, discourse and subjectivity), is concerned not just with understanding the putatively “abnormal” (i.e. pathologized and stigmatized categories of gay and lesbian), but rather in how the discursive production and regulation of “normal” sexualities and gender roles in society requires the visible demarcation and abjection of “abnormal” practices. This focus on understanding and transgressing “heteronormativity”, suggests pedagogies whose ambitions extend beyond promoting mainstream tolerance for difference. As Nelson (2005) states: “Thinking queerly about teaching, then, means not just ‘including gay people’ but prompting inquiry about the cultural and linguistic production of sexual identities in day-to-day practices and discourses” (p. 110). In SLE, the ubiquitous reinforcement of heterosexual norms through language learning tasks, course texts and teaching habits has presented itself as an especially important focus for queer pedagogies. One key intervention has been the inclusion of the voices of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered ESL/EFL (English as a foreign language) students—again, thinking queerly,

not to build sympathy or tolerance, but to reveal to teachers the discursive normalization of *all* identities arising through SLE curricula and the silencing of particular minorities that can arise through unintended and unexamined classroom practices (e.g. Dumas, 2008; Kapra & Vandrick, 2006; Liddicoat, 2009; Vandrick, 2009, Ch. 7).

Queer consciousness-raising and counter-discourse extend, as well, to students' beliefs and assumptions, as demonstrated in a special issue on *Queer Inquiry in Language Education* (*Journal of Language Identity and Education*, 2006, 5(1); edited by Nelson), in which several contributors detail innovative, vernacularized approaches to teaching queerly across a remarkable variety of SLE settings (e.g. Curran, 2006; Moita-Lopes, 2006; Ó'Móchain, 2006). Whereas conventional research on teacher–student interactions has been concerned with the provision of “comprehensible input” (cf. Initiation-Response-Feedback patterns; e.g. Block, 2003), Curran (2006) examines the potential for disrupting and deconstructing heteronormative stereotypes through his own answers/responses to student questions in an Australian adult-ESL classroom. Based on ethnographic data from a fifth-grade class in Brazil, Moita-Lopes (2006) combines queer theory with critical discourse analysis and provides a set of reading guidelines for understanding the normalization of dominant sexualities in texts. Of note, for what might appear to be an especially unreceptive setting for sexual discussions of any kind—a Christian women's college in Japan—Ó'Móchain (2006) describes how he integrated the narratives of Japanese gays and lesbians into a content-based EFL course (e.g. cultural studies) in ways non-threatening while supportive of academic language learning. Ó'Móchain's students showed a new-found empathy based on awareness of the painful familial and social ostracism faced by lesbian and gay youth in Japan.

Whether or not the primary focus is on race as conceptualized through CRT, or on sexuality conceptualized through queer theory, the common thread running through these vernacularized identity practices is the intent to “distance” students from “taken-for-granted” internalized beliefs/norms (see Morgan & Ramanathan, 2005), in a sense, productively harnessing the affective tensions of misrecognition and alienating identification (cf. Lacan) detailed in theory and described in our introduction. Luke (2004) aptly describes this process as “an analytic move to self-position oneself as Other ... from dominant text and discourse [which] can be cognate, analytic, expository, and hypothetical, and it can, indeed, be already lived, narrated, embodied, and experienced” (p. 26). Towards this attainment, texts are strategically deployed and sequenced, but also diversified—“lived, narrated, embodied”, as well as digitized, visualized, spatialized—in the recognition that varied and integrated modes of communication contain signifying capacities or affordances for meaning-making that engage identities and realize experiences in ways unmet through other modalities, a reiteration of Blommaert's (2005) depiction of identity as “semiotic potential” (see e.g. Unsworth, 2008). It is also a potential recognized and promoted through *multiliteracies* pedagogies (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Cummins, 2006), which seek to utilize the expansion of new networks and audiences, text-types and literacy practices in affirming and transforming ways.

In Jim Cummins' (2006) notion of “identity texts”, the social and semiotic are effectively aligned with social justice concerns for minority language students in English-dominant schools. Based on a large multiliteracies project in Toronto and Vancouver schools, Cummins' data demonstrate that the authoring of compositions combining first and second languages—their production and circulation enhanced through digital and multimodal platforms—facilitates minority students' academic achievement by combining “maximum cognitive engagement and maximum identity investment” (p. 60). The enhanced capacity to “act on social realities” underscores Cummins' framework. As he persuasively argues, the positive reception generated for students' bilingual “identity texts” serves to redress a deficit orientation towards first language in mainstream schools and, in the long term, emboldens minority communities to challenge “common-sense” prejudices that devalue their traditions, knowledge forms and language practices.

The capacity for texts and pedagogies to (re)position identities vis-à-vis power relations and colonial histories similarly informs Bhattacharya, Gupta, Jewitt, Newfield, Reed and Stein's (2007) comparative analysis of the policy-practice nexus across three sites of English instruction (e.g. Delhi, Johannesburg, London). The unit of analysis for their classroom study is the *textual cycle*—the selection, sequencing and integration of texts, both conventional and multimodal—and its role in “the shaping of student identities in the English classroom” (p. 19). In examining teachers' methodological decisions and their effects on students, the authors argue that these micro-sites reveal the (re)production of particular stances in relation to the nation-state's appropriation and ownership of English. In the textual cycle in Delhi, for example, a lack of ownership is most pronounced through teaching decisions that emphasize the mastery of external standards and content disconnected from the life worlds of students. English thus becomes an imported commodity, acquired and reproduced for its socioeconomic utility. In the London classroom, the teacher's treatment of *Macbeth* indicates greater efforts at engaging with students' out-of-school identities, but primarily and instrumentally as preparation for state examinations. In Johannesburg, in contrast, the teaching of ninth-grade English through a popular teenage novel, *Who Killed Jimmy Valentine?*, demonstrates a textual cycle grounded in students' lived realities, involving them in a variety of meaning-making activities that position them as “potential transformers of their worlds” (p. 20).

These multimodal/multiliteracies case studies from Cummins and Bhattacharya et al., similar to the classroom realizations of CRT and queer theory described above, exemplify the notion of conceptual vernacularization that frames this section. Through close attention to texts and pedagogies, especially in second/foreign language learning contexts, researchers in SLE can be seen contributing unique field-internal insights that contribute to identity work across disciplinary fields. In the following sections we shall describe some of the more recent issues and innovative practices undertaken by SLE/applied linguistics researchers concerned with identity.

Identity Work in SLE: Recent Themes and Priorities

The relevance of postmodern and poststructural notions of identity continues to be explored and debated in a number of SLE publications (e.g. Block, 2007; Clarke, 2008; Lin, 2008; Menard-Warwick, 2005; Morgan, 2007). And as described in the previous section, theory often informs pedagogy in ways distinctively and indelibly SLE in focus. In second language pronunciation work, for example, the goal of intelligibility through syllabus design has been reconceptualized through poststructural identity in articles by Golombek and Jordan (2005) and Morgan (2003). In an second language reading context, Moffatt and Norton (2005) contrast a “traditional feminist” approach (i.e. the social/textual reproduction of patriarchy) with one informed by feminist-poststructuralism whereby a popular cultural text (e.g. an Archie comic) is depicted as having multiple meanings that both reproduce and critique dominant gender norms and whereby school-aged readers are affirmed as active meaning-makers and not passive recipients of the dominant gendered positions offered.

In addition, poststructural theory can be seen informing research on the identities/subjectivities and professional roles specific to SLE/applied linguistics and the kinds of deficit orientations and expert interventions that are operationalized on those brought into discourse. The label *ESL*, as a prominent example, fails to recognize multilingual competencies or dialect differences, as Waterstone (2008) observes. For adult learners, particularly in English-only classrooms, preoccupations with code proficiency often come at the expense of meaningful content, contributing to an infantilization of *ESL* curricula, and the inculcation of passive citizenship practices (e.g. Morgan & Fleming, 2009). Similarly, the construct of *Generation 1.5*, commonly evoked in the EAP literature to describe the second language phenomena/performance of adolescent migrants, is critiqued for its “discourses of partiality” by Benesch (2008), its underlying monolingual/monocultural assumptions

and elision of race as factors in the academic inadequacies ascribed to these youth. In the same vein, recent work has critiqued the ways in which discursive notions of a “standard” language, with clearly defined “native-speakers”, have contributed to the professional marginalization of those labelled non-native English-speaking teachers (see the collection in Braine, 1999).

Language teacher identity itself has become the focus of renewed investigation, and of pedagogical concerns beyond the native-speaker/non-native speaker divide. To reiterate an earlier point, once we re-conceptualize language and knowledge in post-positivistic terms that foreground their contingent and socially constructed development (e.g. Canagarajah, 2005; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Reagan, 2004) then we place the teacher (as well as, of course, the students) in a very different role from the traditional image of a transmitter (or receiver) of neutral knowledge. We start to recognize the complicated nature of knowledge, power, and identity, in which the teacher’s own identity suddenly takes on a new significance in understanding the dynamics of the language classroom (e.g. “teacher identity as pedagogy”, Morgan, 2004). Language teacher identity thus becomes a potential site of pedagogical intervention and an area of explicit focus in teacher preparation (Brogden & Page, 2008; Mantero, 2004; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005).

Aligned with this new focus is a heightened attention to context and the ways in which socio-economic and sociopolitical changes impact on the ways in which teachers’ identities are constructed in professional settings (Johnson, 2006; cf. our discussion of neoliberalism). Reflecting such concerns, Phan (2008) examines how the identities of English teachers in Vietnam are shaped through negotiation between competing discourses and values, while Clarke (2008) explores the connections between individual and social identity formation and the often invisible influences of wider sociopolitical factors in what initially appears to be purely pedagogical dimensions of the identity formation of a cohort of new English teachers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Employing a more narrative approach, Tsui (2007) examines the complexities of identity formation through the lens of one teacher’s struggles to negotiate multiple identities, meanings and practices, as he navigated his way through the complex process of becoming a teacher in contemporary China.

Perhaps the most significant development in language teacher identity research is the turn towards values, morals and ethics in the work of teachers (Crookes, 2009; Hafernik, Messerschmitt & Vandrlick, 2002; Johnston, 2003) and how it relates to teacher decision-making around curricula and school-based language policies (Farrell & Tan, 2008; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Stritikus & Varghese, 2005) and the conduct of interpersonal relations with students (Richards, 2006). Clarke (2009a, 2009b), in particular, recognizes the centrality of ethics to the work of teachers, but re-theorizes traditionally understood notions of morality and ethics in terms of Foucauldian notions of “ethical self-formation” and “care of the self” in order to explore the ways in which individual pre-service teachers exercised agency in the face of pressures to conform to, and be bounded by nationalistic discourses that predominate in the UAE context and by the powerful peer maintenance and monitoring of professional beliefs that reflected the social cohesion of the cohort. As we shall discuss below in a section on “the politics of identity”, the monitoring of beliefs—informally with peers, or formally through journals, web logs, narratives, etc.—can be professionally rewarding but also personally intrusive, and in ways that promote conformity rather than teacher autonomy.

Gender, in many respects, was the first and most prominent demographic domain through which identity work was introduced to SLE (e.g. Norton Peirce, 1995). In spite of its categorical longevity, it continues to be an area of renewed conceptual interest, and for reasons not unrelated to the demographics of SLE classrooms and the over-representation of women in a profession characterized by limited job security and poor working conditions (see e.g. Haque & Cray, 2007). The year 2004 saw the publication of two special journal issues and an edited volume focused on research on gender in SLE (*TESOL Quarterly*, 2004, edited by Kathy Davis & Ellen Skilton-Sylvester; *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 2004, edited by Juliet Langman; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). More recent

publications (Carroll, Motha & Price, 2008; Menard-Warwick, 2009; Park, 2009), utilizing ethnographic and narrative perspectives, illuminate the contingent ways in which gendered discourses not only constrain female students and teachers but also offer potential sites of transformative agency. Park's (2009) article, for example, examines the ways in which, Han Nah, a Korean immigrant enrolled in a TESOL program in the US, strategically positions her cultural and linguistic resources—resources that are all too often dismissed, silenced or overlooked in educational settings—as assets by teaching Korean and promoting bilingual education in the Korean-American community. A similar duality of constraint and opportunity is foregrounded in the identity negotiation of two college ESL students and four, first-year ESOL instructors in a recent study by Carroll, Motha and Price (2008). Integrating both critical narrative inquiry and critical feminist ethnography, the researchers found evidence of “imagined communities” (cf. Kanno, 2003) whose membership accorded liberating, non-traditional gender roles, but also the co-existence of “regimes of truth” (cf. Foucault) restricting the kinds of identity options and professional roles that these women might imagine and subsequently act upon. Indeed, the realization that imagined communities and language learner narratives are most often populated by women's voices speaks volumes to the “real-world” constraints that continue to restrict their participation.

In assessing the future of *indigenous identity*, the accelerated shift from and loss of aboriginal or First Nation languages in the world is most often raised as existential threat by the various stakeholders involved, and it has accelerated efforts at documentation and revitalization through a broad range of educational policies and practices as well as formalized rights-based initiatives (e.g. special issues in *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 2009, 66(1); *Teaching Education*, 2009, 20(1); Hornberger, 2006). Critical reflections on the efficacy of such interventions have also been raised, for example, by Patrick (2005) who questions the extent to which top-down, language rights policies can effectively motivate young Inuit in Arctic Quebec, and by Johnston (2002) whose case study of a failed Dakota immersion pre-school illustrates the crucial need to generate consensus amongst local stakeholders irrespective of the intrinsic merits of the curriculum being offered. Such an approach underpins Martin and Tagalik's (2004) commissioned research project to promote the Inuit language of Inuktitut as a full functioning official language alongside English in Nunavut schools, workplaces and public places. Central to their recommendations for a language of instruction framework are indigenous notions of *Aajiiqatigiingniq* (“consensual-decision-making”) and principles of *Inuit Qaujima-jatuqangit* (i.e. Inuit traditional knowledge) as well as training and support for local, Nunavumniut language and culture researchers as crucial to building long term community involvement and trust in the study's recommendations. As the authors note, “[h]istorically, research has been ‘done to’ Inuit communities as opposed to being ‘done with’ them” (p. 180), an experience common to all indigenous peoples and one that rightfully engenders scepticism of outsider intentions and capacities for genuine dialogue.

Menezes de Souza's (2005, 2007) work with the Kashinawa in Amazonian Brazil, demonstrates that scepticism of “expert” intervention, particularly the work of linguists and language policy makers, is indeed justified. Drawing on postcolonial theory, Menezes de Souza details a contact history of religious, colonial and anthropological paternalism, a relationship codified and perpetuated through the grammatical and orthographic (mis)representation of indigenous oral languages and in ways that invent the conceptual primitiveness required as justification for a “civilizing”, domesticating agenda. As counter-discourse, the author portrays the Kashinawa in active and contemporary terms, as engaged in the performativity of a contact-based identity through syncretic, multimodal texts that integrate both alphabetic writing and Kashinawa visual patterns. This ongoing process of Kashinawa re-traditionalization and ethnogenesis is aptly described as “‘entering a culture quietly’ ... but not to remain, or to stay put ... but to appropriate and transform, *in order to preserve one's own (indigenous) culture*” (2007, p. 166, italics in original).

This last observation from Menezes de Souza raises a provocative question in respect to indigenous peoples; that is, to what extent is a language—especially as it is demarcated and formalized by Western-trained linguists—essential to the preservation (i.e. performativity) of indigenous self-understanding? Given the diversity of aboriginal peoples and of colonial histories in the world, it is a question requiring context-specific answers. At the same time, it reconfirms the need for ongoing critical reflection amongst language specialists in light of our professional predispositions towards lingua-centric solutions for social problems, which may not always correspond with indigenous perceptions and priorities.

New Domains and Neglected Areas of Research

While we have foregrounded the conceptual and pedagogical contributions of poststructural theory in many of the sections above, it would nonetheless be misleading and limiting to address identity exclusively through such a framework, as aptly demonstrated, for example, by recent research on language education informed by a neo-Vygotskian, communities of practice perspective (Tsui, 2007; see also Haneda, 2006), as well as publications in applied linguistics/SLE informed by sociolinguistics (Omoniyi & White, 2006), language socialization (Bayley & Schechter, 2003), eco-semiotics (van Lier, 2004), sociocultural and activity theories (e.g. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) or by way of postcolonial theory (e.g. Lin & Luke, 2006). Indeed, it is possible to argue that poststructuralism has been (over)used to the point of saturation in studies of identities in SLE/ELT (English language teaching) (Block, 2007), contributing to a more general sense that after some twenty years or more of research in SLE, identity work has become conceptually exhausted, resulting in a kind of “identity fatigue”. However, significant new areas of interest have emerged recently, some of which are outlined briefly below.

One such recent research focus addresses the subjectivization of the body through various discourses of disease and disability (e.g. breast cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, epilepsy, autism), the theme of Ramanathan’s new book, *Bodies and Language* (2009b) as well as a forthcoming special issue on *Language Policies and Health* (2009, 8(4)) also edited by Ramanathan. Specific to schooling, a related research concern examines the complexities and consequences of (mis)diagnosing learning disabilities (LD) in English language learners as well as the types of pedagogical interventions that might preclude such remedial interventions (e.g. Bernhard, Cummins, Campoy, Ada, Winsler & Bleiker, 2006; Lesaux, 2006). Yet, as Mayer (2009) cautions, interventions on behalf of LD communities are not easily generalizable. Based on her work with deaf second language literacy learners, Mayer outlines several factors (e.g. absence of a standard first language print form in American Sign Language; inadequate phonological awareness supporting literate discourse, etc.) that complicate the potential for cross-linguistic transfer in the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (cf. Cummins, 2006).

Another area of increasing interest and debate in SLE is the domain of *spirituality* (Smith, 2007). For many language professionals, spirituality is coterminous with formal religion, and hence has no place in SLE. Such a view is reinforced by SLE’s focus on *formal* aspects of language, its emphasis on purely cognitive dimensions of learning, and its privileging of scientific and secular worldviews, which engender a wariness of religious/spiritual domains of experience and a consequent disregard for the more visceral and intense registers of thinking and being associated with these domains (e.g. Connolly, 1999). Some critique this wariness of spirituality through postcolonial experience, arguing that the association of secularism with modernity and religion/spirituality with tradition has become an ideological tool to discriminate against non-Western/non-liberal societies in general and Islamic ones in particular (Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Scott, 2007). Others question the desirability or even the possibility of hiding this dimension of identity in SLE settings. Moreover, they find the voiced proscriptions against religious identity work in SLE as somewhat hypocritical given the field’s

current preoccupation with the kinds of engaged identity pedagogies described in this chapter (Baurain, 2007).

For those opposed to the integration of spiritual themes and content in SLE, the main object of concern has not been intrinsic matters of faith, but rather on their worldly articulation, more specifically, a concern based on the historical alignment of English with colonialism and Christian missionary work, and its current alignment with Evangelical Christian teachers and organizations in the SLE field, utilizing the global demand for English as an opportunity and vehicle for the spread of gospel and the conversion of impressionable students (e.g. Johnston & Varghese, 2006; Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003). That this evangelical work is sometimes advanced via covert avenues and by “teachers” with little SLE training outside the parsing of biblical text is problematic not only for critical educators but also for SLE language professionals who self-identify as Christians. Such concerns, and the ways in which they address the secular/spiritual divide in SLE, are detailed and debated in a book edited by Mary Wong and Suresh Canagarajah (2009) titled, *Christian and Critical English Language Educators in Dialogue: Pedagogical and Ethical Dilemmas*. Though evidence of consensus across chapters in this remarkable book is limited, the fact that this conversation takes place at all is a significant accomplishment.

Given the worldly alignment of English with Christianity, and with forms of colonial, military and economic power from past to present, many SLE researchers have debated the extent to which English can and should be taught in Islamic societies, a theme developed in a special issue of *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* (2004, 4(2)) titled, *Islam and English in the Post-9/11 Era*, edited by Sohail Karmani. This was also the focus of a comprehensive website called TESOL Islamia (<http://www.tesolislamia.org/>), which addressed the challenges of teaching English in ways compatible with Islamic values and the lingua franca needs of Muslim nation-states and citizens. However, this website is no longer available. Towards this end, Mahboob’s (2009) recent article, “English as an Islamic language”, provides numerous examples of Islamic ideologies/values present in the discourse structures of Pakistani English language textbooks—proof that English can be appropriated and decolonized to serve local needs and interests. Still, the global reach of English and the dominant values and power relations that align with its expansion are likely to put increased pressure on less powerful faiths and structures of feeling, resulting in the kinds of hyperbolized practices of identity maintenance noted by Fader (2006) in her study of the language socialization of young Hasidic girls in New York. As we forecast the future of identity in SLE, the global expansion of neoliberalism—with English as its default language—poses a particular threat to all understandings of self and community outside the calculation of their utility and instrumentality. We now turn to that discussion.

Neoliberalism and Regimes of Accountability

Neoliberalism³ has been a powerful force for homogenization and of creating/inventing systems of equivalency by which the relative value of all things and practices can be established—i.e. commoditized—for sale and exchange (cf. language as commodity, Tan & Rubdy, 2008). As Wendy Brown (2005) points out, the neoliberal state is not focused on the economy as an end in itself; rather it seeks to extend and disseminate market values to all institutions and social actions, thereby (re)constructing *identities* as entrepreneurial agents, solely and wholly responsible for their own success or failure. This assumption of individual responsibility is nonetheless carefully monitored by the state on the grounds that “in an age of universal welfare, the perceived possibilities of slothful indolence create necessities for new forms of vigilance, surveillance and ‘performance appraisal’ and forms of control generally” (Olssen, 2003, p. 200).

With the expansion of global media networks, neoliberal values have become hegemonic in respect to the lifestyles and aspirations people imagine for themselves and their families. Luke, Luke

and Graham (2007) aptly describe this development as “a planetary ‘newspeak’ that lines the pages of newspapers, blogs, and screens with the language of the ‘market’, and with its images and discourses of competitive and possessive individualism” (Luke, Luke & Graham, 2007, p. 4)—which has led to the ascendancy of business and market ideologies in education generally (Luke, 2006; Marginson, 2006; Sleeter, 2007), as well as in teacher education and professional development (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Day, 2007), and, of particular concern for this chapter, language education (Chun, 2009; Corson, 2002; Harvey, 2006; Holborow, 2007; Jordao, 2009; Phillipson, 2008). However, neoliberalism is not only a matter of ideology and discourse, but also expands its reach through material practices such as global modes of production and divisions of labour. Here, English increasingly takes on a key instrumental and value-adding function, a most prominent example being the outsourcing of the call-centre industry (e.g. special issue on Language Policies and International Call Centers, in the journal *Language Policy*, 2009, 8(1), edited by Kendal King). Newly globalized divisions of labour have also precipitated transformations of language policies and practices in major immigration-receiving nations such as Canada, where provisions for a “knowledge economy” have resulted in shifts from settlement ESL curricula to those more closely aligned with sector-specific language skills, a provision Gibb (2008) sees as consistent with “human capital theory”.

In a similar vein, technocratic discourses of management and finance have come to justify the predominance of excolonial languages as compulsory subjects *and* as preferred media for learning and teaching other subjects (Rassool, 2007), most visibly the promotion of English. This has led to debates about the opportunities and perils of justifying language education programmes in the materialist, cost-benefit terms of the contemporary economics-dominated political climate, and the problems of “collusion” (McGroarty, 2006; Petrovic, 2005). The neoliberal hegemony has also prompted debates about what constitutes appropriate and effective critical language education, about how to ensure that this is more than just “an uncritical education in technocratic English as globalized and globalizing *lingua franca*, in ‘financial literacy’, ‘entrepreneurial literacy’, ‘information literacy’ and so forth” (Luke et al., 2007, p. 12). As one example of what such critical work might look like, Chun (2009) describes his pedagogical interventions in the EAP classroom, challenging neoliberalism’s preferred subjectivities by encouraging students to interrogate and critique neoliberal assumptions about the self as a project whereby individuals are behooved to engage in a lifelong quest for “success”. Jordao describes a dialogic pedagogy, underpinned, like Chun’s, by poststructuralist notions about the power of discourse and the contested nature of truth claims, in which students and teachers engage in “conceptual questioning in open spaces”, about, for example, “different views on the role of English in local and global contexts” or about “appreciating elements other than exclusive improvement of linguistic competence as signs of effective educational processes” (2009, p. 100, p. 103). Whether or not we view such pedagogies as insignificant or hopelessly out-of-touch, the fact is that a growing number of SLE professionals recognize an urgent need, in Phillipson’s (2008) words, for language policies based on “ethical human rights principles” as a means to “counteract neoliberal imperialism” (pp. 38–39).

Conclusions: The Future Politics of Identity

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do.

(Foucault, 1983, pp. 231–232)

As we have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, identity has become a major conceptual lens for understanding theory and pedagogy in SLE, where through processes we call *conceptual vernacularization*, SLE specialists have contributed unique interdisciplinary insights across the social

sciences. But here too we need to be continually mindful of the politics of identity. In this vein, it is reassuring to note a number of insightful critiques regarding identity's ideological and discursive underpinnings. For Cameron and Kulich (2003), our current fascination with identity obscures the significance and power in language education of emotional factors such as desire. Such gaps, as we note above, are partially addressed through the emergence of more poststructural and psychoanalytic approaches to affective domains and emotional understanding in SLE (cf. Granger, 2004; McNamara, 2009; Pavlenko, 2006).

From Skeggs (2008), another future concern regards the ways that “identity reproduces the tradition of possessive individualism ... [and] the Western obsession with visibility as the major way of knowing” (pp. 26–27), an inherently conservative politics available only to elites capable of creating and mobilizing their visibility in ways officially acknowledged by the nation-state (cf. a politics of recognition, Fraser, 1997). Still, for SLE, the visibility and agency of the individual language learner have been welcome correctives in a field whose structuralist and positivistic roots have resulted in “the consistent anonymising, if not the actual eclipsing, of the learner” (Candlin, 2000, p. xiii). In this respect, we would argue that identity continues to be a tremendously illuminating and productive notion for SLE; yet we would also want to highlight some of its risks, not so as to replace it with another, less dangerous concept, but as part of an ongoing critical vigilance in the spirit of Foucault's comment that introduces this section.

As we look forward, one area of potential concern may lie in the growing interest in compiling and assessing evidence of the inner thoughts and motivations of teachers and learners through various forms of journal writing, narrative inquiry, auto-ethnography, counter storytelling, etc., all of which are useful tools for learning yet always potentially “dangerous”, we would argue. The preoccupation with identity tends to promote a “confessional” obligation, as students are exhorted to reveal and share their personal narratives and their innermost selves and desires that many may find obtrusive (e.g. Sharkey, 2004). In SLE settings, this obligation can also engender resentment when “inauthentic” stories are committed to text, as Harklau's (2003) discussion reveals. The compulsion for second language writers to produce an “Ellis Island” discourse of gratitude, as Harklau's study shows, reveals a discursive urgency for the newcomer's voice to affirm the voice and values of the teacher—and of all longstanding citizens—particularly when the legitimacy and central organizing myths of the imagined nation are in doubt (Honig, 2001).

One final “danger” to consider is the extent to which identity loses its “cutting-edge” lustre in the future, becoming an exhausted footnote in the history of SLE research. We suggest that identity will remain a prominent concern for years to come, in large part because of its salience as liberal democratic states re-organize themselves in ways described by Nancy Fraser (1997) as the “post-socialist condition”, a pronounced shift from a *politics of redistribution* (e.g. increased unionization, higher wages and pensions, universal health care) to a *politics of recognition* (e.g. the provision of rights and resources in support of ethno-linguistic vitality). For SLE, this new political imperative works on the identity/subjectivity of language learners in ways similar to the performative experiences Ibrahim (2003) observed in his research participants' *becoming* Black upon entry into Canada's already racialized polity. For all newcomers, a politics of recognition demands that they negotiate/perform the hyphenated identities that already precede them and that embody unfamiliar historical grievances to which they must add their voices in demanding recognition and/or restitution from the nation-state. Such identity-based grievances are often first voiced or discovered in SLE settings and through curricular content, placing issues of self and collective understanding at the centre of what it means to learn or teach a second/additional language. Maintaining critical awareness of such challenges and resisting the dangers of conceptual complacency is essential if identity is to continue to be employed productively in the SLE field. As Foucault would say, “we will always have something to do”.

Notes

1. Hall (2004) argues that the term subjectivity implies a self-conscious reflection on the self, whereas the term identity lacks this self-reflexivity. We see both terms as potentially, but not necessarily, entailing self-awareness and will use the two terms interchangeably.
2. The notion of performativity originated with Austin's "performative" speech acts, utterances that created that which they named in language (e.g. "Let the games begin"). Butler (1990) adopted the performative as a way of reconceptualizing gender. She argued that gender was something that must be continually re-established, or iteratively *performed*—in large part through language—rather than being something that is merely given or a priori, thus opening up spaces for slippage, dissonance, contradiction or subversion.
3. See Olssen (2003) for a discussion of key differences between liberalism and neoliberalism.

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