Editorial: English as identity formation

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Literate practices and identities matter, those of both students and their teachers. There is considerable research exploring the discursive construction of students' literacy practices and identities and the discursively mediated identities of literacy and English teachers. As Moje and Luke (2009) note, how identity is viewed influences and is influenced by the way literacy is viewed. Teachers' literate identities and conceptualisations of literacy shape what counts as literacy in their classrooms, but also frame, shape and often limit students' identities, both as readers and as writers (Hall, 2012).

Identity formation or subjectivity is always embedded in broader, dynamic and complex sociocultural contexts, constructed through difference and implicated in relations of power which often manifest themselves through issues of race, class, gender and sexuality (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Textual and embodied performances are significant in the ways we communicate meanings about our identities, including the construction of online identities and how these reflect, magnify or contradict offline lives (Ito et al, 2010) and classroom identities.

Subject English, with its porous and shifting boundaries, multifaceted disciplinary focus and different modes and pedagogic practices, is a key site for identity formation of teachers and students. Further, English language teaching in increasingly multilingual and culturally diverse contexts has implications for identity work. How these different enactments of English play themselves out in the discursively structured classroom space, and how they shape, and are shaped by, students' and teachers' subjectivities are of particular interest to educators?

This special issue of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* brings into the spotlight recent research which foregrounds the question of students' and teachers' identity formation in the context of the English and/or literacy classroom in a range of educational settings. Issues around English as identity formation are being challenged and enacted all around the world. As evident in many of these papers, researchers and teachers are attempting to resist English cultural norms while still making use of the English language on their own terms. The papers cover a variety of *teacher* and *student* identity clines from pre-service education to primary and secondary school classrooms, to further and community education programs.

The first paper by Li-Yi Wang and Tzu-Bin Lin explores the identity formation of pre-service Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in Taiwan. Using the lens of social relationality, the authors investigate the impact that Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) have on pre-service NNESTs' professional identities. Drawing on data gathered through questionnaires and interviews, they show that NNESTs' emerging professional identities are shaped by contradictory discourses

emanating from professional, policy and social contexts regarding what should constitute the practices of an ideal English teacher. The recommendation is made that teacher education programmes that view teachers' non-native speaker status as a resource are needed.

The next three papers investigate teacher identity in different contexts. Teresa Cremin and Sally Baker examine the multimodal, interactive discursive practices at play in the writing classroom of a teacher in the UK who, in order to support the pupils, consciously positions herself as a writer in this context, seeking to model engagement through demonstrating writing in whole class sessions and composing alongside pupils in groups. The paper contributes new understandings about the microscopic, fluid and conflictual dimensions of identity positioning in these particular practice contexts, and uses a new analytical tool to highlight the importance of the embodied discoursal voice of the pedagogue.

Elspeth Kempe and Yvonne Reed, writing out of the South African context, argue that on-going professional conversation is valuable for sustaining innovative teacher identities and practices. The authors present and discuss findings from a group of English teachers, who had been members of the same study group for the duration of their postgraduate studies. They show how the figured worlds and identities-in-practice of the teachers differed significantly according to whether or not they had remained in professional conversation with members of the affinity group. New recommendations are offered for professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Jennifer Alford, who conducted her research in an Australian context, explores how four English teachers position their English language learners for critical literacy within senior high school curriculum. She argues that English language learners' identity formation is often constrained by deficit views that can ultimately see limited kinds of literacy teaching offered to them. In this study, she uses critical discourse analysis to identify five competing discourses about English language learners evident in the data. The combination of discourses challenges monolithic deficit views of English language learners, and opens up generative discursive territory to position English language learners in ways other than "problematic".

The next two papers consider students' reading identities in English classes. Seyyeded Fahimeh Parsaiyan, Sue-San Ghahremani Ghajar, Soheila Salahimoghaddm and Fatemeh Janahmadi from Iran challenge the hegemony of British and American literary works in foreign language settings by using English translations of selected texts from classic Persian literature as reading texts for EFL students. Employing an action research design with university students doing a mandatory general English course, they explore the language events such translated texts generate, as well as the extent to which students identify with these texts. They argue that, given the Eurocentric bias of many of the conventionally prescribed EFL texts, capitalising on Iran's rich literary culture in this way not only makes the English language more accessible to EFL students but also enables them to have their own cultural identity validated.

Malayna Bernstein examines the intersections of students' and teachers' reading identities in a secondary English classroom in the USA. Taking as her focus one "veteran" teacher whose personal and pedagogical practices were deeply aligned,

Bernstein examines his reading identity on three planes and shows how his students, whose own life histories were markedly different from their teacher's, adopted many of his literacy practices. This opened up rich opportunities for students' meaning making and fostered an environment where students' personal connections to texts were promoted.

The development of identity through textual production is the focus of the following two papers. Mary Ryan reports on research that shows a clear influence of particular teaching strategies and contexts on the writing identities of students. She uses theories of reflexivity and discourse to analyse interviews and writing samples of culturally and linguistically diverse Australian primary students for evidence of particular kinds of writing identities. She argues that making students aware of their writing choices, the influences on, and the potential impact of those choices on themselves, their text and their audience, is a new imperative in the teaching of writing.

Jangho Lee and Heyoung Kim explore the digital identity formation of Korean university students by examining the extent to which they are engaging in the new media ecology, as well as the degree to which they may be using digital media to learn English as a foreign language. Through the use of questionnaire and interviews, they demonstrate that their student participants are technologically savvy and fully immersed in the new media ecology but prefer to keep a low profile in networked public cultures. Further, while these students do use new media for EFL learning, they are not fully engaged in globally networked language communities. The authors argue that there is a need for further research that would enable emerging identities and lifestyles of digital youth across the world to be compared.

The final two topical papers examine the social positioning of young people in high school English classes. Ana Ferreira explores the relationship between identity/subjectivity and pedagogy in a high-school, subject English classroom during a time of ongoing social change in South Africa. Using poststructuralist theories of discourse and subjectivity, she places under scrutiny the multiple subject positions that a selected student takes up in relation to a unit of work that invites students to historicise their identities. She argues that the student's ethnic affiliation with the Afrikaans-speaking community in South Africa produces shifting and contradictory positionings influenced by the repositioning of Afrikaner identity in the social and political landscape post-1994. She suggests that the discursive manoeuvres made by this student could offer insights into the ways in which marginal(ised) subjectivities operate in the discursively constructed classroom space.

Audra Slocum explores the social positioning of Appalachian adolescents in a high-school English class in rural USA and in so doing highlights that the Appalachian experience is a multiple rather than a singular one. The study explores how the available discourses on Appalachia and identity were taken up by adolescents in Appalachia, and how some students questioned their own, their communities' and non-Appalachian communities' positioning by authoritative discourses. The work suggests that attending to the negotiations Appalachian adolescents make in relation to cultural discourses can enhance support for critical, culturally-sustaining academic curricula.

Our Article in Dialogue, by Steve Goodman and Carolyn Cocca, investigates the possibilities for teaching political literacy to youth in the USA. Against a background of interconnected gaps in educational achievement, health and wealth, and political participation, this paper calls for a liberatory educational praxis that disrupts these reinforcing inequalities – a political literacy grounded in situated learning practices in what they call public "spaces of action", which may be in school or community settings. They explain how, through the process of investigating and telling stories about the social problems in their neighbourhoods, youth apply new literacies and develop identities as documentary journalists, media artists, and critical citizens affirming their voice and place in their community in solidarity with others struggling for more humane living conditions.

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