

GILL VALENTINE

INTERSTICE TWO. GLOBALISATION AND LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

Implications for the Enactment of Identities and Intercultural Relations

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary processes of globalisation have provoked social scientists to reflect critically on how mobility, identities and belonging are related as the global economy has accelerated patterns of migration, dramatically intensifying the connections among different peoples, cultures and spaces (Massey & Jess, 1995). One aspect of these new migration flows that has profound implications for the enactment of identities and development of intercultural relations is language use. Increased flows of people have facilitated the mobility of language, both transforming localities with the arrival of migrants raised in different linguistic communities and creating diasporas with multiple linguistic allegiances and perceptions of belonging that are no longer identified purely with territory. It is estimated that approximately 10% of pupils in English state schools are learning English as a second, third or even fourth language, and that over 300 languages are now spoken by pupils in the United Kingdom (Multiverse, 2004).

In this chapter I explore the role of language in the enactment of identities at school, focusing on its role in connecting or disconnecting young people from others and on the possibility that language can change the way that educational spaces are ordered. I am *not* concerned with linguistics – how words, dialects and the structure of language change when people speaking different languages come together. Rather my focus is on the role that language plays in how young people can enact their identities and make sense of their affiliations (cf. Hewitt, 1986; Rampton, 2006) within the context of the school. In doing so, I draw on evidence from research with Somali refugee and asylum seekers, aged 11 to 18, who now live in Sheffield, United Kingdom (Valentine, Sporton & Nielsen, 2008).

In adopting this approach, I understand language not as constructing identity, nor identity as determining language, but rather I recognise the two as mutually constituted. Butler (1990) theorised gender – one particular identity – as performative, arguing that gender emerges through a set of repeated acts that take place within a regulatory framework and that congeal over time to give the appearance of naturalness. Language or talk is one such element of performance (Cameron, 1998). Cameron (1998, p. 272) argues that 'people are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk'. Individuals' verbal repertoires contribute to the

K. Quinlivan, R. Boyack and B. Kaur (eds.), Educational Enactments in a Globalised World: Intercultural Conversations, 95–101.

© 2009 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

definition of the self and, as such, languages open up possibilities for different enactments of the self in different regulatory frameworks. The interactional nature of language means that it is a joint and negotiated performance rooted in what Wenger (1998) might dub 'communities of practice', produced in and through particular spaces. Languages are seen to be 'situated accomplishments', performed in and through different spaces (such as the home, the nation and the transnational diaspora), such that language may be used to define identities in specific spatial contexts and particular language practices may become salient or irrelevant in particular spaces. Here I think of space in geographical terms: it does not contain the social but is folded into social relations through practical activities. Space is both formed and transformed through endless practices and performances; yet at the same time space is not infinitely fluid – rather 'certain forms of space tend to recur, their repetition a sign of the power that saturates the social' (Rose, 1999).

Notably, language is one of the taken-for-granted norms that structure the everyday space of the school, in that educational environments have norms or rules about communicative behaviour that affect what children/adults can or cannot say or do, legitimising the enactment of some forms of behaviour and identities while constraining others. At the same time, minority communities can create themselves around practices such as language, building in effect particular solidarities, giving meaning to particular spaces and impacting on individuals' self-identities and relationships with others (cf. Valentine & Skelton, 2007). It is apparent that language, space and identities are being constituted constantly and mutually. Language contact, then, as a form of intercultural relationship, might facilitate the production of a more progressive sense of space in schools. By focusing on the construction and enactment of subjectivities through language, this chapter poses questions and raises challenges for educational practice and theory in regard to language rights, cultural connectivity and intercultural citizenship.

EDUCATION FOR ALL? MANAGING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

It may seem unremarkable to observe that English state schools are spaces produced through the English language. Yet in 1985 a UK government report *Education for All* was published into linguistic and ethnic diversity in national schools (Department for Education and Science, 1985). The Swann Report set out an educational strategy to overcome the linguistic and cultural disadvantages minority groups faced through the teaching of English as a second language (ESL). It argued that ESL and any additional language needs of minority ethnic children should be met within mainstream classrooms rather than developed through specialist linguistic resources that might unintentionally produce ethnic segregation within the state schooling system. (Comparable education policies were also developed in the USA, Canada and Australia.)

This policy remains largely in place today despite the fact that the Swann Report was primarily concerned with relatively stable, established working class ethnic communities (particularly those of Caribbean and South Asian descent) that were a product of post-war labour migration, whereas the contemporary twin forces of

globalisation & changes in the and consequently (2006). Technologically instantaneous that Swann, we seek to maintain there is an awful deal with minority UK schools.

Indeed, the linguistic resources of classrooms become the lessons. There is some support not qualified as in practice the English means classroom which feeling isolated.

The school classroom; and Within the form multilingualism emphasis on English themselves effort struggle with requirements. Language about position school may not has not yet been academic abilities may only specification difficult rather than the time their relationship contact change

Several student languages spoken to the relative particular, the to literacy practice class white children emphasis placed language skills

globalisation and neo-liberal market capitalism have subsequently produced major changes in the nature (official and unofficial), scale and patterns of migration and consequently the ethnic and linguistic diversity of UK pupils (Rampton, 2006). Technological change has also facilitated migrants' ability to maintain instantaneous links with other places and to manage diasporic identities in ways that Swann, who was largely dismissive of any connections minority groups may seek to maintain with other parts of the world, could not have anticipated. As such, there is an awkward disconnect between the dated educational strategy in place to deal with minority ethnic pupils and the contemporary realities of multilingualism in UK schools.

Indeed, the reality of mainstreaming ESL, and lack of provision of specialist linguistic resources, is that newly arrived migrants are placed into mainstream classrooms before they have the English language skills necessary to engage with the lessons. The superficial assumption is that exposure to English in this way, with some support from bilingual classroom assistants (who are usually low-paid and not qualified as teachers) will enable new arrivals to integrate (Bourne, 2001). Yet in practice the production of the school through the specific hegemonic language of English means that minority language speakers are defined as 'out of place' in the classroom which affects their sense of identification and belonging: leaving them feeling isolated 'outsiders'.

The school is made up of two spaces: the formal adult-controlled space of the classroom; and the informal peer spaces outside of lesson time (Valentine, 2000). Within the formal monolingual space of an English classroom, migrant children's multilingualism is rarely recognised as a skill or a resource. In contrast, the emphasis on English effectively dis-ables them because they are unable to express themselves effectively, and they may misunderstand important information and struggle with mundane tasks that they could complete in other linguistic environments. Language competence, then, is not about skill or potential per se, but rather about positioning in space. For example, a young migrant starting at an English school may not be able to communicate effectively with the teacher because he/she has not yet become fluent in English and so will probably be assumed to lack academic ability. Yet the child may speak other languages fluently while the teacher may only speak English. Because language is a situated practice, the communication difficulty between the child and the teacher is read in terms of the child's rather than the teacher's lack of linguistic competence. Yet, in a different place/time their relative competencies might be read differently as the space of language contact changes (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck, 2005, p. 211).

Several studies (e.g. Elbers & de Haan, 2004) suggest that differences between languages spoken at home and the majority language of the school may contribute to the relative underachievement of children from minority ethnic backgrounds. In particular, the language patterns within white middle class families are similar to literacy practices in the classroom thus facilitating the performance of middle class white children at school. In contrast, for Somali children, for example, the emphasis placed on speaking Somali within the home means that their English language skills are not developed within the family and there is also a disjuncture

between their literacy practices at school and at home. Literacy in Somali is not widespread among Somali speakers in the UK given that an agreed Somali script was only introduced in the 1970s and that the formal education system in Somalia has been severely disrupted by civil war (Arthur, 2004). Somali children have been consistently at the bottom of achievement tables suggesting potential problems of integration in the education system (Education Data Services, Sheffield, personal communication, February 10th, 2009).

Despite the obvious frustrations that Somali children encounter in the formal space of their UK classrooms they are not necessarily passive or compliant in the face of English hegemony. Rather, they take up different positions mobilising their linguistic abilities (many have arrived in the UK after living in other countries en route from Somalia and so are multi-lingual) in both positive and oppositional ways. Some of the children do not just switch into their preferred language (e.g. Somali or Dutch or Danish) for off-task chat but also draw on this language as part of everyday learning to seek help from peers or to advance their understanding; others describe 'slipping' unintentionally into thinking and writing in their first language.

Such language switching can be interpreted differently by different teachers according to the specific spatial contexts of particular classes. Some teachers can use such moments to open up an intercultural dialogue with the pupils about difference. However, many teachers regard such practices as conspiratorial or as a threat to their own fragile authority in the classroom.

LANGUAGE CONTACT: MAKING AND BREAKING BOUNDARIES

In informal peer group spaces beyond the classroom, language contact plays an important role in both making and breaking boundaries between different groups of pupils. As Somali households are concentrated in particular city neighbourhoods the catchment areas of the schools in which Somali children are placed commonly include significant numbers of Somalis as well as other minority ethnic pupils. Not surprisingly children tend to form friendship groups based on shared languages (e.g. Somali or Dutch), sometimes using these strategically to exclude or gain an advantage over monolingual children.

Yet peer groups are not always linguistically exclusive and can operate bilingually (e.g. English and Somali) or even trilingually (e.g. English, Somali and a third language such as Dutch). These communication practices in turn can lead to the creative blending of languages (and identities) with little regard for grammatical and syntactical order. There are some parallels with Hewitt's (1986) study of the role of language as a medium in the relationship between white British young people and black British young people of Afro-Caribbean descent in London, which found that white young people adopted elements of creole speech used by their black friends.

Although monolingual societies like the UK tend to assume that monolingualism is a natural state of affairs, and to stigmatise second language users and to perceive bilingualism as exotic or unusual, young people appear to perceive language

diversity as a norm
hint at the potent
communication mi
rather in multiple
communicative fra

Talking is central t
position of languag
linguistics. The im
to become progres
intensify cultural
both local and glo
the relationships a
identities, and imp

Kloss (1971) an
promotion-orientec
afforded to indivi
choose to use at h
communities. Pro
use a particular la
Kymlicka (2003) n
ways of accommc
One approach is to
those who lack th
accommodation m
communicate with
and rights to whi
minority language
cultural identities
of approach is nec
giving its users rig
official languages
In other words, th
who use the minori

Most nation si
multilingualism as
(Kymlicka, 2003).
acknowledge and
state is not just th
citizens (Kymlicka
ledge historical inj
institutions for bias
cultural groups rel

diversity as a normal part of everyday life (Bourne, 2001). These everyday practices hint at the potential for a future globalisation of language to emerge in which communication might no longer be necessarily embedded in national languages but rather in multiple practices composed of mixed codes, words and simultaneous communicative frames (Appadurai, 1996).

CONCLUSION: LANGUAGE MATTERS

Talking is central to the production of most everyday spaces yet despite this pivotal position of language it has received relatively little academic consideration beyond linguistics. The importance of language in socio-spatial relations is, however, likely to become progressively more apparent as contemporary processes of globalisation intensify cultural contact such that linguistic diversity increasingly characterises both local and global contexts. This both challenges traditional assumptions about the relationships among linguistic uniformity, cultural homogeneity and national identities, and impacts on self-identities (Appadurai, 1996).

Kloss (1971 and 1977) identifies a difference between tolerance-oriented and promotion-oriented language rights. Tolerance-oriented rights are the protections afforded to individuals against government interference in what language they choose to use at home or in other 'private' associations such as within their own communities. Promotion-oriented rights are the rights that individuals have to use a particular language in public institutions (e.g. school). In the latter context, Kymlicka (2003) makes a further distinction between limited and more constructive ways of accommodating speakers of particular languages in public institutions. One approach is to provide an interpreter or make other such special provision for those who lack the proficiency to use the dominant language. This norm-and-accommodation model may facilitate communication by enabling individuals to communicate with(in) public institutions, such as schools, and so to access benefits and rights to which they are entitled. However, it does not give speakers of minority languages more profound rights in terms of the recognition of their cultural identities (Kymlicka, 2003). To achieve such recognition, a second kind of approach is needed, involving designating a language as an official language and giving its users rights that provide a degree of equality with the dominant/other official languages regardless of their cultural proficiency in the majority language. In other words, this approach involves recognising the cultural identity of those who use the minority language within public institutions.

Most nation states, however, are reluctant to recognise bilingualism or multilingualism as rights, regarding them instead as pragmatic accommodations (Kymlicka, 2003). For a state to officially recognise a language it must also acknowledge and accept that it is a multicultural state. It must recognise that the state is not just the possession of the dominant group but belongs equally to all citizens (Kymlicka, 2003). If it is to attain this point of view, a state must acknowledge historical injustices to different cultural groups, examine public policies and institutions for bias/discrimination and address the way that different linguistic and cultural groups relate to the state. Kymlicka (2003) argues that a truly multicultural

state must accept that 'individuals should be able to access state institutions and act as full and equal citizens without having to deny their own identities'. The evidence from the Somali research indicates that some children may intuitively recognise the importance of language diversity in moving beyond accommodating difference through the ways in which they blend languages in their everyday practices in the informal spaces of the school and in the process enact new forms of identification and create new intercultural affiliations.

The children's everyday practices demonstrate the need for language to take centre stage in debates about cultural connectivity in schools. To develop 'inter-cultural citizens' (Kymlicka, 2003) who, far from being fearful or resentful of other cultures, have positive attitudes to diversity, we need to reconsider education policy in the light of the contemporary realities of globalisation and population mobility. Appropriate policy might include the promotion of intercultural knowledge and skills through the recognition of minority languages within the education system and the provision of more opportunities and incentives for schools to: broaden the curriculum to incorporate more non-European language teaching; develop the monolingual skills of teachers; recognise the increasingly diverse range of linguistic needs and competencies of their pupils and parents/families; and promote multilingualism. Through fostering a more diverse range of language practices as part of wider social and economic processes of cultural hybridity, we might also, over time, produce a more progressive sense of national identity and belonging.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The argument in this essay was developed through collaborative research with Deborah Sporton on the experiences of Somali children who are refugees and asylum seekers. I wish to acknowledge the support of the Economic and Social Research Council in funding this research. Elements of this essay have previously been published in Valentine, Sporton and Nielsen (2008).

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arthur, J. (2004). Language at the margins, *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 28, 217–240.
- Blommaert, J., Collins, J., & Slembrouck, S. (2005). Spaces of multilingualism. *Language & Communication*, 25, 197–216.
- Bourne, J. (2001). Discourses and identities in a multi-lingual primary classroom. *Oxford Review of Education*, 27, 103–114.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (1998). Performing gender identity: young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual of masculinity. In J. Coates (Ed.), *Language and gender: A reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Department for Education and Science. (1985). *Education for all: The report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* (the Swann report). London: HMSO.
- Elbers, E., & de Haan, M. (2004). Dialogic learning in the multi-ethnic classroom: cultural resources and modes of collaboration. In J. Van der Linden & P. Renshaw (eds.) *Dialogical perspectives on learning, teaching and instruction*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Hewitt, R. (1986). *W*. Cambridge: Caml.
- Kloss, H. (1971). *Lai*.
- Kloss, H. (1977). *The*.
- Kymlicka, W. (2003). 1, 147–169.
- Massey, D., & Jess, *A place in the wo*.
- Multiverse. (2004). *Ei* viewarticle2.aspx
- Rampton, B. (2006).
- Rose, G. (1999). *Per*.
- Cambridge: Polit
- Valentine, G. (2000).
- Valentine, G., & Ske 26, 121–140.
- Valentine, G., Sport identities and bel
- Wenger, E. (1998). *University Press*.

Gill Valentine
School of Geogr
University of Le

- Hewitt, R. (1986). *White talk, black talk: Interracial friendship and communication amongst adolescents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kloss, H. (1971). Language rights of immigrant groups. *International Migration Review*, 5, 250–268.
- Kloss, H. (1977). *The American bilingual tradition*. Rowley MA: Newbury House.
- Kymlicka, W. (2003). Multicultural states and intercultural citizens. *Theory and Research in Education*, 1, 147–169.
- Massey, D., & Jess, P. (1995). Places and cultures in an uneven world. In D. Massey and P. Jess (Eds.) *A place in the world? Places, cultures and globalization*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Multiverse. (2004). English as an additional language. Retrieved 12 May 2009 from www.multiverse.ac.uk/viewarticle2.aspx?contentId=381
- Rampton, B. (2006). *Language in late modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, G. (1999). Performing space. In D. Massey, J. Allen & P. Sarre (Eds.), *Human Geography Today*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Valentine, G. (2000). Exploring children and young people's narrative of identity. *Geoforum*, 31, 257–267.
- Valentine, G., & Skelton, T. (2007). The right to be heard: citizenship and language. *Political Geography*, 26, 121–140.
- Valentine, G., Sporton, D., & Nielsen, K.B. (2008). Language use of the move: sites of encounter, identities and belonging. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33, 376–387.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gill Valentine
School of Geography
University of Leeds