RESEARCHING MULTIPLE LITERACIES IN HERITAGE LANGUAGE CONTEXTS: FINDING THAT THIRD SPACE

Mary H. Maguire[1]
McGill University
Ann J. Beer
McGill University

1. Mapping multiple literacies: Facing the challenge

This paper focuses on our heritage language project on multiliteracies and multilingualism in Montreal, Quebec. Quebec is an officially unilingual French province that provides a unique context for exploring multilingual literacies. Indeed, in a province where French is spoken by a large majority of the population and in a city where communities speak in languages from all over the world, interacting contexts offer a diversity of sites in which we can examine multilingual students' expressions of self and negotiations of identity. Students' developing identities are both enabled and constrained by their appropriation of multiple literacy practices. In addition, the mediational means –the tools of self-expression and communication– that are accessible and valued vary from one language and cultural context to another. From early childhood onward, Montreal students, in dialogic relationships with friends, teachers, family and community members, make daily choices about the development of their multilingual literacies.

Canadian literacy research can be located within the context of power relations between majority and minority language groups and a complex politics of recognition (Taylor, 1985; Bourhis, 2001). A crucial aspect of power relations between dominant schools and minority-language families and communities relates to the interconnections between cultural identity and multiple, multilingual literacy learning in diverse contexts.

---

[1] With Hourig Attarian, Diane Baygin, Xiao-Lan Curdt-Christiansen, Heekyeong Lee, Arminée Yaghejian, Reiko Yoshida. Authors: Mary H. Maguire and Ann J. Beer, Department of Integrated Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, McGill University, 3700 McTavish, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3A 1Y2. Phones: (514) 398-2183, (514) 398-5135, fax (514) 398-1527, emails: mary.maguire@mcgill.ca, ann.beer@mcgill.ca

Ethnographic research on literacy began in Canada in the early 1980's, but it was not until the mid-1990's that work of this type began to be undertaken in multilingual contexts (Maguire, 1995), and more recently in heritage language settings (Maguire & Beer, 2002; Attarian, 2001; Baygin, 2001; Curdt-Christiansen, 2001a, 2001b; Yoshida, 2001).

We locate our project within the nested contexts of relations of power and what Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor describes as a 'politics of recognition' between majority and minority language groups and conflicting political discourses in Canada and Quebec. We describe our multilingual research team, present our methodological assumptions about language and literacy in general and explore the nuanced complexities of the heritage language contexts in which we are working. Lastly, we discuss the implications of our project for policymakers, educators and heritage language communities. Although there may be, to a more or lesser degree, a wide-spread belief that literacy is desirable for all, the recognition of a plurality of literacies problematizes the questions of whose literacy practices should be adopted and what literacy practices children value, can access, and need to succeed. We are committed to a comparative case study methodology that is integral to an anthropological approach that permits cross-cultural inquiries. Participants' evaluative orientations towards linguistic diversity and cultural differences need to be voiced, understood, recognized and respected.

We begin with the fundamental assumption that becoming and being biliterate, triliterate or multiliterate is a complex, context-specific and dynamic relational process. Take, for example, a map drawn by six year old Karine, one of the trilingual children Diane Baygin is following as she observes Karine learning English, French and Armenian in her home and school contexts. (Diane, a member of our research group, is also trilingual in these three languages).

At the age of six, Diane explains, "Karine has already demonstrated an awareness of her cultural and historical positioning" (Baygin, 2001).

> When I was a baby and I started to speak. I started to speak like my mother, in Armenian. When she was born, she was in Lebanon. But when I was born, we were already in Canada, because there was a war in Lebanon and my mother was afraid to have me there. When we came from Lebanon, we looked for a house, but we could not find one. So we went to Deguire. It's an apartment building. So we went there and when someone left from a house in Montreal, we went to take their house… we celebrated my five year old and six year old birthdays.

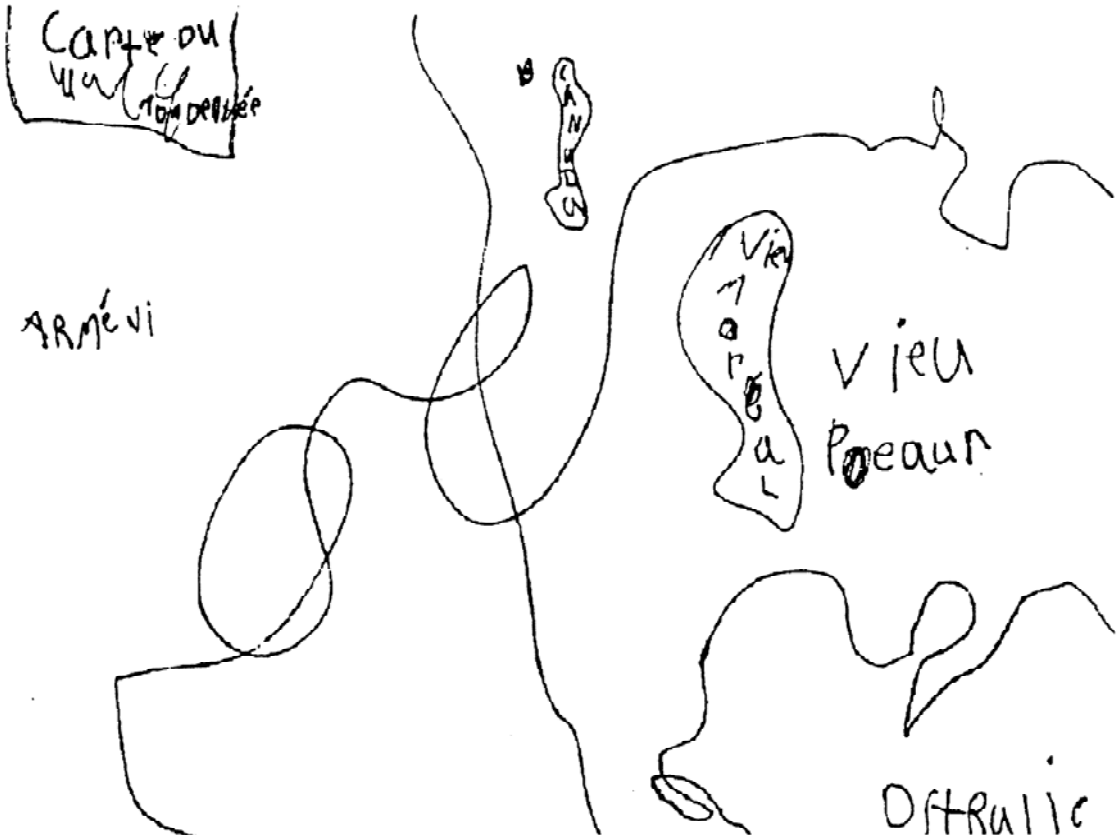


Figure 1. Le monde entier (The entire world).

Words on drawing, clockwise from top left: Carte du mond(e) entier (Map of the entire world); Canada; Vieu(x) Montreal (Old Montreal); Vieu(x) Port (Old Port); Ostralie (Australia); Arméni(e) (Armenia).

The section of her personal narrative and her map illustrate many characteristics of the histories and experiences of many other Armenians and other cultural groups who have immigrated to Canada and Quebec. Historically, Armenians have often found themselves living in Diasporan communities, especially after the Armenian Genocide in 1915 that forced most of the survivors to scatter to the four corners of the globe. In mapping her environment, Karine demonstrates her ability to bring together her different literacies, the territories she knows and her knowledge of language to express her own view of the world. Karine entitles her map 'Le monde entier'. She has included Australia, Armenia, Canada, Old Montreal and the Montreal old port. She has included all the geographical sites that have been important to her in the last year. Diane's visit with Karine's family revealed that the family had received a tablecloth with a map of Australia painted on it and which Karine had taken great pleasure in reading and

discovering. Armenia is her home country and Canada is where she locates herself now in her everyday activities.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958) argues that although we think we are tracing the nature of the thing, we are really only tracing the frame through which we view it. That the Canadian social fabric is woven in a multicultural mosaic is a common theme in Canadian political discourses. Current Canadian urban populations include an increasingly large number of multilingual immigrant students who experience multiple school experiences and multiple literacies. Montreal provides interesting sites for mapping and understanding the life worlds of multilingual learners and their weaving of multiples literacies in their ordinary day-to-day living. The maintenance of minority languages and cultures may be encouraged in many Canadian provinces, but we know very little about multilingual children's experiences and identity constructions within the complex political discourses of Canada and Quebec; Quebec is, as we have said, an officially unilingual French province that governs who has access to English and French schools and refers to three language groups as francophones, anglophones and allophones ("allophones" being all those whose home language is neither English nor French).

> If I don't speak French at the Zhonguo school, the other children will think that I am stupid or "xin yimin" (new imigrant). It is very bad if they think I am a "xin yimin" because it means that I am poor and don't know anything and don't understand anything. I would try to use my broken French to communicate with other children at (Shonguo) school although I speak Chinese much better than some kids, but I was afraid to be an outsider, and I didn't want to be an outsider and I didn't want the others to think I was stupid. (Xiao Lan Interview with Yoyo, 10 year old Chinese Student)
>
> Daichi has two names. His mother and everybody else around him (except the people at the language centre) call him Antoine. So, at the beginning, he did not respond to my calling Dachi-kun. (Reiko's observation about one student in her three year old class at the Japanese Language Centre)
>
> I like English more. Nobody knows Korean. People know only English. I know that I won't be able to become as pretty as white girls like Elizabeth. Because I am Asian I cannot become pretty as Elizabeth. (Heekyeong's interview with Young-A and her family, newly immigrated from Korea)

In these excerpts, we see the dilemmas some of the allophone children in our Heritage Language project –those who are new arrivals, new immigrants or refugees– face as they negotiate language use and multiple social spaces even within the contexts of their heritage language schools. Since some of the children may attend an English school and others a French school during the week, establishing a sense of belonging in their Saturday school context means not only finding a social space and establishing

friends but also negotiating a third or fourth language for play and participation on the playground and socializing. In picking up the multiliteracy challenge a number of questions emerge: At what points do children attach symbolic meanings and affiliations to languages and language use in particular contexts? How do multilingual children take hold of their multiple literacies and how do multiple discursive literacy practices in schooling, family and community define their personhood? We use discursive here to mean "particular ways of talking and writing about or performing one's practices that are coupled with particular social settings in which those ways of talking are recognized as more or less valuable" (Maguire & Graves, 2001)

2. Engaging in self-reflexivity within a politics of difference and recognition

Just as writing is not only a set of technical skills, researching is not a set of technical methodological undertakings. In reflecting on our work in multiple heritage language contexts over the past two years, we agree with Sheridan, Street and Bloom in their Mass Observation inquiry "Writing Ourselves and Writing Britain" about the "importance of looking at the ordinary… and understanding that the ordinary is contingent and changing… to try to pin it down in consistent ways distorts the truth". "Writing and literacy are social and cultural processes related to people's cultural identity, their sense of self, their knowledge and world view, their epistemology" (Sheridan, Street & Bloom, 2000: 238). When we see languages as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990) and resourceful funds of knowledge (Moll & Dworin, 1996), the notion of a third space, in which multilingual children can live critically between and among language differences and multiple discourses, presents many interpretive puzzles and epistemological uncertainties about our own identities as researchers. Understanding the relationships between individuals, social practices and political discourses is critical for those in periods of rapid transition. It is especially important for children when different languages and cultures intersect in their classrooms and playground worlds and when these differences go unrecognized and cause disjunctures or even ruptures in their life worlds.

A recurrent leitmotif in our dialogic encounters in research team meetings has been the concept of recognition mentioned in our introduction and its links to identity and multiple literacies (Beer *et al*., 2001). Charles Taylor argues that the "demand for

recognition… is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being" (Taylor, 1994: 25). A key reflective understanding that has emerged from our group's self-reflexivity about our research process within a politics of difference and recognition is the following: "Literacy practices are deeply rooted in socio-cultural, historical, economic and cultural forces that are sometimes visible, sometimes invisible".

Accepting this epistemological assumption then necessitates contextualized, situated, socio-cultural perspectives. We read social events, actions, and utterances interpretively through our various lenses, perspectives, and angles, positions of power and privilege and location in time, space and place. As do the New Literacy Theorists, who have shifted our attention from literacy events to literacy practices (Street, 1995), we distinguish between life worlds and worlds of literacy. "Life worlds" refer to "space(s) for community life where local and specific meanings can be made". "Worlds of literacy" refers to the distinct literacies which exist alongside each other in complex societies today –each world having its own literacy practices and events, historical moments and key literacy instances which are sometimes taken for granted. For example, the next excerpt from a team meeting in June 2002 points to how we have been taking the multiple literacies, social histories and life worlds of our members for granted. Arminée recalls a memorable event when several members were crossing the border to attend the 4th annual National Council of Organization of Less commonly Taught Languages in Arlington, Virginia in April 2001.

> What happened was we went in and we had to fill out all these forms because they asked for our passports. Here we go giving them all kinds of passports, so the officer said we would have to go into the office. So we all went in with our colorful passports… and we started counting our languages.

Revisiting this incident in one of our team meetings in June 2002 brought our own multilingualism to our consciousness, both as a heritage language research group and as individual members within this collective. We discovered that among us are fluent speakers of ten languages. Thus, understandably, an overarching theme that emerges from our work is that languages are viewed as cultural capital and resourceful funds of knowledge. The Montreal and Quebec contexts provide a valuable place to explore the notion of a third space in which multilingual learners can live critically between and among cultural and language differences (Taylor, 1985; Bourhis, 2001).

3. Nested contexts and political discourses: Conflictual voices and creative tensions

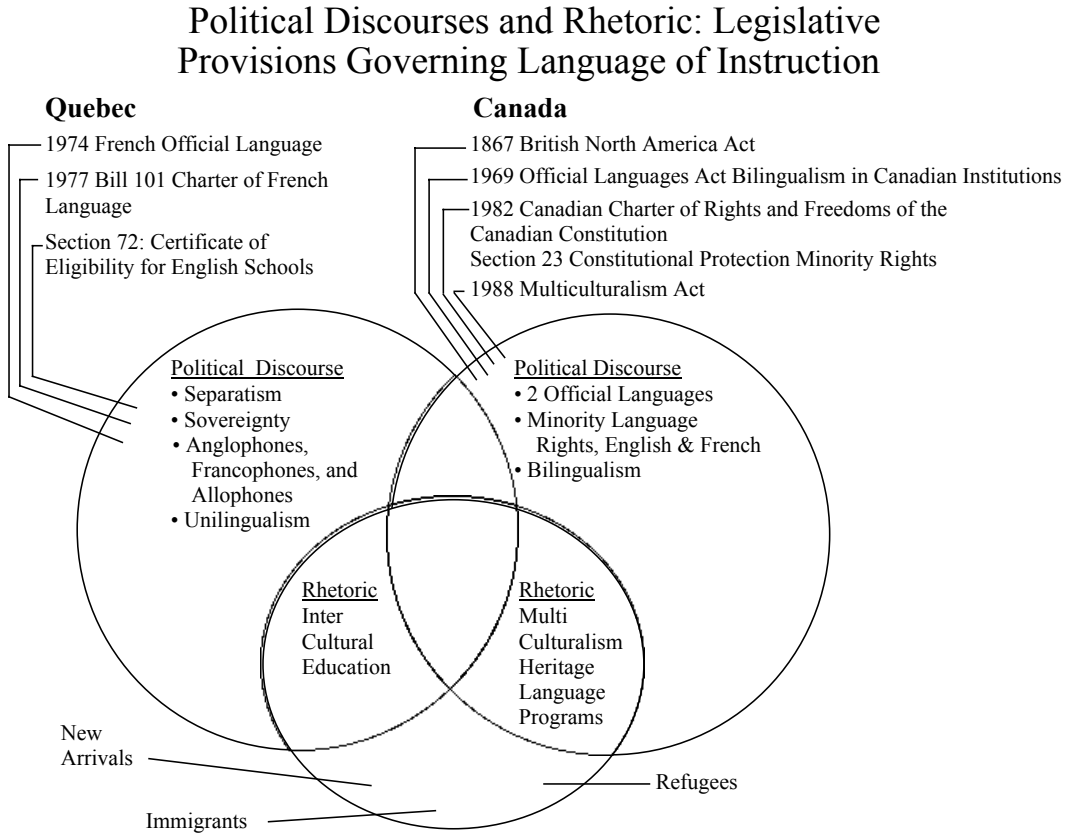
> We have to face the reality. In Quebec, what are you going to do without French? Everyone is bilingual; even if you work at MacDonald's, you have to be bilingual. What can you do? Knowing two languages is a bonus, right? (Chinese parent in Montreal)

Noteworthy are the complex aspects of identity that are related to ideologies of knowledge making and positioning within competing political discourses in Canada and Quebec. Our project is situated within the conflictual socio-historical and political discourses of language legislation in a linguistically sensitive part of the world. Canada is a country, which supports two official languages, English and French, based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Official Languages Act. In Canada, we usually talk about majority and minority language contexts within an English and French discourse of linguistic and cultural duality. In Quebec, the official language is French, based on Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language. Quebec school boards are linguistically organized as either English or French. In the English school systems, immersion programs are extremely common: in these some or all content areas may be taught in French for a period of years. In others, extensive time in the school day is given to French as a second language. In the French system in Quebec, English is taught as a second language from grade 3 (formerly grade 4). Figure 2 summarizes some of the key legislation and public discourses pertaining to the language of instruction in Quebec and Canada.

Researchers (Heath, 1983; Gregory, 1997; Moll & Dworin, 1996) have documented that children have different "ways of taking" from different literacy traditions. However contextualized socio-cultural historical research into how multilingual children in heritage language contexts appropriate diverse literacy practices and construct their identities is scant and only recent (Curdt-Christiansen, 2001b; Yoshida, 2001). Particularly striking is the lack of research on immigrant children's and their parent's language affiliations, evaluative orientations towards language learning and options in language education within the context of a global economy and increasingly diverse and mobile social worlds. Knowledge about how immigrant families situate themselves within the conflictual political discourses about languages and make choices about their children's schooling is also scarce. Access to English schools is limited and parents must apply for a Certificate of Eligibility for English

Schools if they want their children to attend an English school. Many of the parents in this study see the learning of multiple languages as social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990) to move across and within more than one language or cultural community or imagined community of practices (Wenger, 1998). For example, Curdt-Christiansen (2001b) has documented in her study of Chinese parents that as newcomers who may not speak French, the official language of Quebec, they provide French literacy resources in their homes for their children to access.

Figure 2. Provisions governing language of instruction in Quebec and Canada.



4. Our multilingual group: Multiple literacies, multiple voices and multiple languages

Our multilingual research group is a microcosm of the very phenomena – multiliteracies and multilingualism– we are trying to understand. It contains within itself portraits of multilingual learners, their families, schools and communities like those we are attempting to see and draw. Part of the complexity of the socio-cultural language contexts in which we are working is that our research team and our participants are continually pulling contexts into each other and crossing borders. In our

dialogic encounters in team meetings, we have become very interested in issues of identity, social positioning, personhood and power, and the different meanings of literacies. One methodological dilemma we continually face is that the heritage language contexts themselves keep changing as we watch and attempt to draw or define them. In our team meetings we frequently engage in discussions of nuanced meanings of literacy, becoming and being literate, as illustrated in these excerpts from our dialogues.

> The word literate in Armenian is a very interesting concept. It is only referred to established writers and authors. … There was a political reasoning behind the creation of the alphabet and it really had to do with the preservation of the cultural heritage. (Hourig)
>
> I'll give you a perfect example, when you were my teacher, you came from Armenia and you wrote in a script I couldn't … it was like I could not decipher it. I had to sit down with my grandmother and she read it to me. (Diane)
>
> We don't refer to Japanese as a heritage language. (Reiko)
>
> Chinese literacy must be understood within its historical context and ties to Confucianism and the Chinese revolution… Pinyin is now used in Chinese Heritage language school. (Xiao Lan)

In the first excerpt, Hourig is referring to the historical evolution of literacy within the Armenian context while Diane refers to the differences between Eastern and Western Armenian styles of handwriting. Reiko comments that within the Japanese Saturday school context, the concept of heritage language does not resonate. Xiao Lan, who grew up during the Chinese Revolution, insists that the meanings of Chinese literacy must be understood within this political context and its historical ties to Confucianism.

Heekyeong Lee, Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen and Hourig Attarian are doctoral students. Diane Baygin and Arminée Yaghejian are Masters' students and classroom teachers in one of three Armenian day schools in Montreal. Reiko graduated with an MA in Anthropology and is presently teaching preschoolers in the Japanese Language Centre. She conducted a study of Japanese students at the Hoshuko Saturday school. The six group members other than the two professors, Ann Beer and Mary Maguire, therefore represent a range of experience in terms of graduate work. They constantly act as mentors, critical friends, and informants for each other. They also position themselves as "insiders" (Bresler, 2001), in each case, in the language and culture they are researching. They speak this language and have a personal and family allegiance to this culture: Xiao Lan is working in one of the eight Chinese Heritage Language

Schools in Montreal. Reiko explores two very different Japanese contexts; the supplementary school for returnee children and the Japanese Language centre which provides language and cultural support for local Japanese and their families. Heekyeong examines the context of Korean students in a regular English-language school setting and is looking at the identity construct of two teenagers who are brother and sister. Diane, Arminée, and Hourig are working in different ways in the Armenian setting.

We pick up one of the propositions from Barton & Hamilton's (1998) local literacies –literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others. We are looking at how we can see power work in a positive way to bring about human potential and harness creative energy. As a collective, we became interested in heritage languages almost by serendipity –through informal conversations. In reflecting back over the past two years, we have at times been uncertain about our direction, questioned our ethical assumptions, examined our own social positionings as insiders and outsiders, experienced shifting epistemologies about what we believe about multiple literacies and multilingualism, made a number of social turns in our methodology and methods and confronted ethical dilemmas and political challenges. The coming together of ten bilingual and in some cases trilingual or multilingual women has forged a researching of not only the identities of our participants but also ourselves as researchers. We have had to confront what we value and understand about finding that third space –the middle space of cultural crossovers and our own personhoods as researchers.

Thus, we are engaged in discussions of local literacies alongside historically nuanced meanings of literacy in these different heritage language contexts. Much of the discourse on multiple literacies and multilingualism speaks about the multimodel iconographic nature of our world, the complex, contextualized situated interplay between the visual and verbal aspects of literacies and texts as part of both global and local landscapes. A multiliteracies focus is on the multiple ways people draw on and combine the multiple systems and codes in their communicative repertoires to make meaning as they negotiate and construct identities and social relationships. Reflecting on the politics of difference, Charles Taylor (1994) views identity as connecting to a complex politics of recognition. Who is seen? What is visible? Who is made visible? Who is made invisible? Who is recognized? Who is not recognized? And how are those who are not recognized then oppressed, excluded, marginalized and silenced?

Gee (2001: 99) argues that in "today's fast changing and interconnected global world, researchers in a variety of areas have come to see identity as an important analytical tool for understanding schools and society". And we might add families and communities. He suggests that a focus on contextually specific ways in which people act out and recognize identities allows a "more dynamic approach than the sometimes overly general approach of the static trio of race, class and gender". Certainly, Taylor argues that the kind of person one is recognized as being at a given time, and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction and can change from context to context.

For example, in her case study "Identity, Language and Imagination, Japanese Canadian students in the Montreal Hoshuko", Reiko documents how the experiences of contemporary young Japanese Canadians in Montreal are quite different from those who experienced internment camps decades ago. Due to the increasing scale of globalization and transnationalism, the experience of Montreal Japanese Canadians has changed. Through her conversations, the students reveal that their self-identification as Japanese is derived from the "recognition" that they perceive they receive from their classmates at their local regular school. Reiko, attributes this positive self-image to the expansion of cultural marketing; Japanese popular culture and cultural commodities are easily available in Montreal. However, this is not the case we see in every heritage language context. For example, even though Chinese cultural commodities are similarly available, Bee reflects on her own identity as Asian-looking and in relation to other minority language children in her culturally diverse school:

> I have two schools, one is French and English everyday school Hillrose Academy and the other school is every Saturday Chinese school, Zhonguo school. At my everyday school a boy and I are the only Asian looking people. The rest of them are mainly from Italy or Greece. They look differently from me they look like Canadians. There are Greek, Italian, Hebrew and English heritage language classes in the school, but no Chinese or Japanese classes. I do not like my school very much because people make fun of me and call me chinese girl instead of my name. I try to ignore them. I do not make fun of Italian people because Chloe is my best friend and she is Italian... I don't have as many friends in Shonguo as in Hillrose, but they are very nice to me. Everybody is Chinese looking with brown eyes and black hair except Xiao An. She is totally blond with very blue eyes. My parents say that they can't believe she is half Chinese. Anyway, she is my best friend in Shonguo. (Bee, 9)

In this excerpt, Bee reflects on her every day school experiences at Hillrose Academy (an English school using a French immersion program) and her every Saturday Chinese School, Zhonguo school. Although Hillrose Academy is culturally

diverse, Bee comments on her outsider status "as Asian looking" in this school. We hear the intertwined voices of the children and her interactions with them. Ironically, her best friend at Shonguo school is Chinese but not Asian looking. She was born in Canada; her mother is Chinese and her father is an English speaking Canadian. During the week, Xiao An attends a French public school. We have many instances of children's self portraits as they reflect on their sense of self and others, their insider and outsider status, sense of belonging, race and ethnicity.

Identities are tied to the nuanced multidimensional workings of historical and institutional forces and political discourses that in turn influence what Bakhtin calls one's ideological becoming. Understanding our own social positioning and personhoods and those of our participants is certainly a leitmotif that runs throughout our dialogic encounters in researching in heritage language contexts. We deliberately use the phrase researching "in" rather than "on" as it reflects our present living, tracing and drawing of the uneasy terrains between powerful forms of authority and individual resistance and creativity in human discourse. We certainly find ourselves crossing and crisscrossing borderland discourses in different times, spaces and places and sometimes at the outer edges of the heritage language canvases we try to draw.

Evoking Bakhtin's concept of art and answerability as interpretive lens for understanding the diversity of the heritage language contexts in Montreal, we take the position that utterances and texts are always dialogic because they are answerable to others' words in a particular context, time, space and place. However, that dialogue entails a form of answerability that is morally responsive to unique others and particular relationships. Such literacy portraits are not very visible within the hegemonic discourse of second language acquisition research (Beer & Maguire, 2001). Likewise, although the phenomenon of Saturday heritage language schools has long been commonplace knowledge, the schools themselves have largely remained invisible within the public and even private discourse of schooling. Theories of social reflectivity assume that socio-cultural forms or structures are not objective facts independent of individual activity. Certainly, the literacies of the children, teachers, families and communities in our project are rooted in oral and written forms that are interwoven with religion, gender, race, culture, identity, ideology, power and privilege. This provides us with methodological, theoretical and practical challenges in drawing the portraits of heritage

language schools, the children's literate actions and life worlds within these contexts and the questions that emerge.

5. Research questions:

Our starting point questions were:

• How do these multilingual students negotiate multiple literacies in heritage language contexts and how do their negotiations influence their construction of identity or hybrid identities?

• How do power relations at classroom, school, community and government levels mediate, recognize, or give access to literacy for students from these backgrounds?

• How do the students express and recognize their experiences as multiliterate individuals?

• How do they evaluate their experiences as multiliterate individuals in different school contexts and familial configurations?

• How do they position, conceal or reveal themselves in relation to their three or more languages, cultures and communities?

6. Methodology and methods: Portraits and portraiture

We focus on what we can learn from multilingual learners' cultural positioning within a politics of difference and recognition. In order to do this, we draw on Lightfoot's work (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) on portraits and portraiture. We see the power of portraits and portraiture as a methodology in their humanistic impulse. What does it mean to see? What does it mean to draw something, someone? When we think of portraits, whether photographs, drawings, or painting, we think of the picture and the subject. However, drawing demands the effort to see what is unseen, to see in a context and from multiple angles and open apertures. How do we draw portraits that can serve as resonating reference points for future portraits or portraitures? Lightfoot argues that portraits are designed to capture the richness and complexity and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural contexts and to provide perspectives on human experiences for those that are negotiating these encounters. Portraits are shaped through dialogue between portraitist and subject, each one participating in the drawing of the

image. Lightfoot sees the purpose and values of portraiture in its ability to link the private intimate storytelling at the center with the public discourse that it hopes to influence. She sees the power of portraiture in its humanistic impulse for analytical rigor –a perspective that is distant, discerning and skeptical but that builds community through acts of intimacy and connection.

We see the power to frame and name, to draw, trace and define as crucial to real literacy practices, to policymaking and to the design of educational programs that include children as architects of their own social futures. Learning literacies is imbued with power and ideology, with deep cultural meanings about identity, both personal and collective. As such literacy learning will always have a chameleon character (Maguire, 2002). Just when you think your can make the claim about what you see before you, something else may come up with more nuanced textured layers of meanings. Hourig's personal observation about the meanings of the word "literacy" in Armenian is a good example of these multi-textured meanings of literacy:

> The word "literacy" in Armenian is not used in the same sense as the English one. It is meant to only signify the elementary deciphering/decoding of the language, nothing more. I thought of all the instances I've heard the word in the context of illiteracy, [rather] than the other way around! Interestingly the word "literate" in Armenian refers specifically to established writers/authors. However, the words "language" and "culture" are always used to talk about the preservation and continuity of the heritage. They are the two ingredients especially important for conserving the Armenian identity, most essentially in the diasporan contexts. Lately, a new word is put more and more into circulation, to indicate the active role of creating and constructing identity, as opposed to the more passive conserving aspect.

Recall that within the politics of schooling in Quebec some of these children must learn to function in a French school as well as a heritage language school. Others may attend a regular school and a Saturday heritage school. Others may find themselves in a trilingual school context that teaches English and French as second or third languages in addition to the heritage language. The Heritage language schools differ in their goals and approaches to the heritage language and thus become observable spaces and sites for understanding research as a relational process and an expansion of interpretive spaces. We began this project with the assumption that children experience multiliteracy through an evaluative lens and that their engagement with the world involves their negotiation of (an) evaluative perspective(s) (Maguire, 1997, 1999). However, the family and community discursive literacy practices we are seeing in these heritage language contexts have been largely invisible to the mainstream society and

dominant discourses and communities in Montreal, Quebec and even to ourselves when we were designing this project.

7. Methodological coming together: Interpreting what matters

In interpreting what matters, we use a contextualized, socio-cultural research approach in multilingual settings (Curdt-Christiansen, 2001a; Dagenais, 1999; Feuerverger, 1991; Maguire, 1999; Beer & Maguire, 2001; Maguire & Graves, 2001). We view a qualitative, ethnographic anthropological approach as most appropriate to answer our research questions and to examine the complex relationships between multilingual learners and their social worlds. We based our research design on previous comparative-contrastive embedded case studies by Maguire (1999; Maguire & Graves 2001), and Curdt-Christiansen (2001a). We have moved beyond that work in the sense that the development of our research team led to a rich and complex set of possibilities for inquiry. An important aspect of interpretive inquiry is the perspective that researchers bring to research sites and contexts. We have multiple perspectives by virtue of the nature of our multilingual research group and the multiple perspectives being constructed and co-constructed. Our coming together occurred naturally out of a common shared interest in the experiences of multilingual students and our backgrounds in language and literacy. Each researcher has brought different trajectories to our group with respect to perspectives on literacies and languages. However, there are also some common features of each case:

- Research occurs over extended time periods.
- Research is conducted in each case by a researcher from the same language community.
- Research interviews are conducted in the heritage language.
- Research tools include interviews, document analysis, participant observations.

Through such observations, analysis of texts, interviews, and a close attention to multiple aspects of school and home contexts conducted in the relevant heritage language itself, we have been able to move beyond the common problem of researchers working in the dominant (or a dominant) language and not having a deep insight into culture-specific norms of the other culture. In this case, each researcher is herself a member of that language and culture group and became the expert informant and mediator for the rest of us. Our access to the schools and family contexts arose naturally

out of the researchers' already existing connections with the community or school, or out of contacts developed through prior research. Over the first year of development of our group, many connections and bonds were made across languages and cultures. Our group is like a microcosm, in fact, of the very multilingualism under consideration; at least half of our members are people who were multilingual from earliest childhood, and the others are all at least bilingual through education, residency, and language experience. Both Ann and Mary are bilingual in English and French and trace some of their roots back to the Welsh and Gaelic cultures and languages. In the case of the Armenian context, we glean insight from the individual backgrounds of three members of our group, because these three, although all Armenian, were educated in three different linguistic and cultural settings: Hourig in Beirut in Armenian, Arabic, and English, Diane in the French language school system in Montreal, Arminée in the Armenian Heritage language day school in Montreal. Thus a fascinating aspect of our inquiry has been our coming together as a cohesive unit, across and within language and cultural differences, in the shared medium of English but with frequent references to the various languages spoken by the group members.

These features of our heritage language group contribute greatly to our working assumptions about language and the reflective understandings we have constructed to date.

We have relied on some working assumptions about language :

• Language is not passively assimilated by individuals.
• Language is a dynamic process that exists dynamically in the socio-historical arena.
• Language for the individual consciousness lies in the borderline between one self and the other.
• A dialogic view of language embraces the idea that the other cannot be silenced or excluded.

We also have some reflective understandings about multiple literacies and establishing cultural dialogues:

• Multiliteracy development is deeply rooted in socio-cultural historical, economic and political forces.
• Becoming and being biliterate or multiliterate is a complex, dynamic relational process.
• The act of finding one's voice can only occur in contexts of equity, justice and mutual respect and trust.

• What children experience as literacy practices in communities, classrooms, families and schools are not neutral, cultural, social, political phenomena.

Another unexpected result has been the constant and vivid evidence of the complexity of identity construction and knowledge construction within the group itself. Researcher positioning and self-study have become a central part of our conversations. A dialogic approach (Bakhtin, 1990) has provided us with opportunities to engage in self-reflectivity about our inquiry process. We tape and keep minutes of all meetings. The data collection methods provide an audit trail of our evidence and the different entry points for new ideas. We have become used to the notion of a third space in which to live critically between and among cultural and language differences and multiple discourses. The third space emerges as an overarching theme for understanding the coming together of the many "I"s the self embodies in this interpretive inquiry.

We have engaged in a variety of activities in our work over the last year and a half in order to record and reflect on our interactions and construction of a very strong collective identity. This has involved exploring the contexts and associations of members of the group in relation to the terms and concepts of education that are constantly in question in our sessions. Much has emerged from this, both methodologically and in terms of research insights. The need for constant linguistic, conceptual and methodological awareness, for example, has been shown in the contrasting notions and associations our group has had with key features of traditional classroom pedagogy in some, but not all, of the Heritage language school settings we are exploring. While the sharing of experiences has served to make our collective more cohesive it has also become crucial to our interpretation of terms and insights that are being constructed in a series of case studies. One constant concern has been to recognize the uniqueness and complexity of identity construction and literacy practices not only for each setting but also for each individual student (McKay & Wong, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 1967; Norton, 1997; Ricoeur, 1992).

Methodologically speaking, the comparative-contrastive embedded cases we are attempting to draw of the schools, communities and family settings become a reasoning heuristic in understanding and drawing our portraits of what we see. We see these cases as reasoning tools for understanding the nested contexts and political discourse and the multiple literacies embedded in our project. They serve multiple functions to help us confront ambiguities, contradictions and constraints, to make heritage language schools

visible in the public/private discourse of schooling and to recognize the ways in which power relations in schools and communities constitute a site's discursive literacy practices and construction of individual and /or hybrid identities.

8. Reflections on researching in heritage language contexts: Shifting contexts and meanings of literacy

We return to the contexts of Montreal and Quebec as ideal places to explore the complex, nunaced meanings of heritage languages, multiliteracies, identity construction and cultural positionings. What is a Heritage Language? Who is responsible for preserving a Heritage language? Several things must be taken into account when researching in multilingual contexts.

First, that there are shifting contexts within each heritage language school and that some linguistic minority populations are more heterogenous than others must be considered when planning ethnographic inquiries in multilingual contexts. This requires taking a broader approach that includes historical perspectives as well as local literacy practices. The phrase Heritage Language School normally refers to the Saturday day schools that multilingual children attend to maintain their language and culture. However, the Armenian community has a Saturday school and three "regular" five-day a week schools that teach Armenian, English, and French. The socio-historical institutional context varies from one heritage language context to another. The Armenian day schools and Armenian Saturday school are accredited as mediators of Heritage language; other schools involved in our research are privately funded. The Japanese Saturday school does not see itself as a heritage language school but characterizes itself as a supplemental school. The languages that are taught in the eight Chinese Heritage Language schools in Montreal are varied and closely tied to different patterns of immigration; the one linked to our group is unique in its priorities and development but so are all the others.

Our dialogues have led us to examine the meanings and definitions of heritage language. For example, within the United States, Heritage language refers to non-English languages spoken in the United States, which we find to be a rather negative definition. A Heritage Language Speaker is defined this way: "A speaker of a non-English language who has been raised in a home where the language is spoken, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Valdés, 2000/2001) The

Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act provides the following definition: "Heritage language means a language, other than one of the two official languages of Canada that contributes to the linguistic heritage of Canada". Thus, even defining what others or we mean by heritage language and heritage language literacies is challenging. In addition, understanding the physical spaces, locations and historical roots of each school, language and community equally challenged our own assumptions about multiples literacies and meanings of literacy in these contexts. Just handling the different dialects and scripts in the different languages has challenged our linguistic assumptions, let alone competencies. Consider the Armenian context to which Hourig referred where we see the following definitions (Variant Eastern and Western Armenian forms are given).

> The Armenian Context
> gragitutyun – krakidutyun: literacy
> graget – kraked: literate
> lezu: language
> mshakuyt – mshaguyt: culture/heritage
> hayapahpanum – hayabahbanum: conserving Armenianness
> hayakertum – hayagerdum: constructing/creating Armenianness

As our portraits of the three Heritage Language schools are emerging, we see how each context has a complex and unique history and development that relate to historical, economic and political issues in the country or culture of origin. Thus, some literacy practices are preserved in the new country and others may be lost. This complexity indicates the importance of adopting a micro and macro genetic approach and voice centered relational method to investigate multilingual children's speaking personalities and their understanding of daily interactions with others in specific contexts (Maguire, 1999). Such an approach requires, at the macro level, close contextualized observations of children's patterns of language use over time, their individualistic styles of using multiple languages, and their evaluative orientations towards triliteracy and multiliteracy (Merleau-Ponty, 1967; Wertsch, 1991).

We have attempted to move beyond surface organizational features of classroom- based research to the values that underline teachers' beliefs about, perceptions of and interactions with multilingual children. Although classrooms may share common organizational patterns with other classrooms, each classroom offers particular constraints or opportunities for social interaction and construction of different ways of being, knowing and valuing (Maguire, 1987, 1994). The emphasis is on

examining the individual stylistic preferences among the teachers and socio-historical and systemic influences that may govern their stances towards the teaching/learning of multilingual children's evaluative orientations towards literacy and cultural differences. These differences may or may not be connected to local communities with links to historical diaspora or immigration patterns.

Mainstream schools and teacher education programs have failed to prepare teachers to grasp the multilingual and multicultural complexity of children's identity construction and cultural positionings in their classrooms. This has been a particular shortcoming in teacher education programs which until recently have largely ignored the cultural and linguistic diversity of student populations and have been guided by the large quantitative studies of language proficiency as measured by narrow tasks and tests. While the children see the power and potential of their multiliterate abilities, their teachers do not seem to tap or recognize this knowledge.

A very wide definition of literacies has become essential to our inquiry: talk, e-mail, computer games, web-sites, cartoons, drawing, photos, and music have all emerged as important aspects of expression for case study participants as well as reading and writing in more than one language and script. The children themselves frequently reflect on their own sense of self, their insider and outsider status, their sense of belonging, race and ethnicity as they weave their multiple literacies into their day-to-day activities and construct their identities. The children in this study would be better served if policy makers, community leaders and teachers could more fully appreciate and draw on their literacy potential and multiple language resilience. A hugely increased dialogue among policy makers, schools, homes and communities is urgently needed. Equally, the cultural and language backgrounds of researchers must be visible and recognized in dynamic interaction with the contexts they are researching.

Bibliographical references

Attarian, H. (2001). "A tapestry of webs: Online education, cultural identity and development". Paper presentation at conference: Immigration, identités, citoyenneté et pluralisme. Centre d'études ethniques de l'Université de Montréal, Québec. Troisième Colloque pour Étudiants et Jeunes Diplômés.

Baygin, D. (2001). "Thinking, speaking and learning in French literacy development in kindergarten: the case of a heritage language setting". Paper presentation at conference: Immigration, identités, citoyenneté et pluralisme. Centre d'études

ethniques de l'Université de Montréal, Québec. Troisième Colloque pour Etudiants et Jeunes Diplômés.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1990). "Art and answerability." In M. Holquist & V. Viapunov (eds.), *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (eds.) (1998). *Local literacies*: *Reading and writing in one community*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Beer, A., M.H. Maguire, R. Yoshida, H. Attarian, D. Baygin, X.L. Curdt-Christiansen, H. Lee & A. Yaghejian (2001). "The 'dictee' in multilingual contexts: Exploring literacy practices in Quebec Heritage Language Schools". Paper presented at Second International Symposium on Genre, Oslo, Norway.

Beer, A. & M.H. Maguire (2001). "Who speaks? and How? In what context? Understanding the construction of knowledge in international social science research journals". In L. Corriveau & W. Tulasiewicz (eds.), *Mondialisation, politiques et pratiques de recherche*, Les Éditions du CRP de l'Université de Sherbrooke. Conference Proceedings of the 2000 conference World Association of Education Research. Université de Sherbrooke QC, 125-147.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *In other words*: *Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourhis, R.Y. (2001). "Reviewing language shift in Quebec." In J. A. Fishman (ed.), *Can threatened languages be saved?* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1001-141.

Bresler, L. (2001). "The interpretive zone in international qualitative research". In L. Bresler & A. Ardichivili (eds.), *Multiple paradigms for international research in education*: *Experience, theory and practice*. New York: Peter Lang.

Curdt-Christiansen, X.L. (2001a). "A socio-cultural constructivist approach to patterns of language use in a Chinese Heritage Language School in Montreal". Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Association of Applied Linguistics St. Louis, Missouri.

Curdt-Christiansen, X.L. (2001b). "Chinese parents' reflections on and involvement in their children's triliteracy practices". In L. Corriveau & W. Tulasewicz (eds.), *Mondialisation, politiques et pratiques de recherche*. Les Éditions du CRO de l'Université de Sherbrooke. Conference Proceedings of the 2000 conference World Association of Education Research, Université de Sherbrooke, 95-115.

Dagenais, D. (1999). "Children of immigrant families in Canadian immersion programs". Paper presented at the 12th World Congress of Applied Linguistics, AILA'99, Tokyo, Japan.

Gee, J. (2001). "Identity as an analytic lens for research in education". *Review of Research in Education* 25, 99-126

Gregory, E. (1997). *One child/many worlds*: *Early learning in multicultural communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Heath, S.B. (1983). *Ways with words*: *Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. & J.H. Davis (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher.

Maguire, M.H. (1987). "Is writing a story that more complex in a second language than in a first language?: Children's perceptions". *Carleton Papers in Applied Language Study* 4, 17-65.

Maguire, M.H. (1994). "Cultural stances of two Quebec bilingual children informing storytelling". *Comparative Education Review* 38(1), 144-155.

Maguire, M.H. (1995). "The many faces of literacy". In Wason-Ellam, Blunt & Robinson (eds), *Horizons of literacy*. The Canadian Council of Teachers of English.

Maguire, M.H. (1997). "Shared and negotiated territories: The socio-cultural embeddedness of children's acts of meaning". In A. Pollard, D. Thiessen & A. Filer (eds.), *Children and their curriculum*: *The perspectives of primary and elementary school children*. London: Falmer Press, 51-80.

Maguire, M.H. (1999). "A bilingual child's choices and voices: Lesson in listening noticing and understanding". In B. Franklin (ed.), *Reading and writing in more than one language*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, 115-149.

Maguire, M.H. (2002). "The Chameleon Character of Literacy Portraits". Invited Plenary Paper Portraits of Literacy Conference. Vancouver, B.C: University of British Columbia.

Maguire, M.H. & B. Graves (2001). "Speaking personalities in primary children's second writing". *TESOL Quarterly* 35(4), 561-593.

Maguire, M.H. & A. Beer (2002). "Children's negotiation of literacy practices and cultural positioning in heritage language contexts". Paper presented at the Research Symposium sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English Research Assembly, New York.

McKay, S.L. & S.C. Wong (1996). "Multiple discourses, multiple identities: Investment and agency in second-language learning among Chinese adolescent immigrant students". *Harvard Educational Review* 66(3), 577-608.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1967). *Phenomenology of perception*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.

Moll, L.C. & J. Dworin (1996). "Biliteracy development in classrooms: Social dynamics and cultural possibilities". In D. Hicks (ed.), *Discourse, learning and schooling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 221-45.

Norton, B. (1997). "Language, identity, and the ownership of English". *TESOL Quarterly* 31(3), 409-29.

Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as another*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.

Sheridan, D., B. Street & D. Bloom (2000). *Writing ourselves*: *Mass observation and literacy practices*. New Jersey: Cresskill.

Street, B. (1995). *Social literacies*: *Critical approaches to literacy in development, ethnography and education*. London: Longman.

Taylor, C. (1985). *Human agency and language*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C. (1994). *Multiculturalism*: *Examining the politics of recognition*. Princeton University Press.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Community of practice*: *Learning, meaning and identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Wertsch, J. (1991). *Voices of the mind*: *A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1958). *Philosophical investigations*. Oxford University Press.

Yoshida, R. (2001). *Political economy, transnationalism, and identity. Students at the Montreal Hoshuko*. Unpublished thesis, Department of Anthropology, McGill University.

Bilingual Socialization and Bilingual Language Acquisition

Proceedings from the Second International Symposium on Bilingualism

Socialización bilingüe e Adquisición lingüística bilingüe

Actas do Segundo Simposio Internacional sobre o Bilingüismo

(UNIVERSITY OF VIGO, GALICIA-SPAIN, *OCTOBER* 23-26, 2002)

Edited by / *Editadas por*:

ANXO M. LORENZO SUÁREZ
FERNANDO RAMALLO
XOÁN PAULO RODRÍGUEZ-YÁÑEZ

Editorial assistants / *Asistentes editoriais*:

VIRGINIA ACUÑA FERREIRA
ELOI GESTIDO DE LA TORRE

SEMINAR OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS & BILINGUALISM

WEBPAGES:

http://www.uvigo.es/webs/ssl/sib2002

http://www.sociolinguistica.uvigo.es

VIGO
SERVIZO DE PUBLICACIÓNS DA UNIVERSIDADE DE VIGO
2004