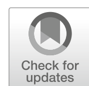

Imagined Communities, Identity, and English Language Learning in a Multilingual World

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the construct of "imagined communities" as a way to better understand the relationship between second language learning and identity. It is argued that language learners' actual and desired memberships in "imagined communities" (Anderson B, Imagined communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism. Verso, London, 1991) affect their learning trajectories, influencing their agency, motivation, investment, and resistance in the learning of English. These influences are exemplified with regard to five identity clusters: postcolonial, global, ethnic, multilingual, and gendered

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identities. We discuss the relevance of "imagined communities" for classroom practice in English education and conclude with a reflection on the future of English language teaching in our increasingly multilingual global community.

Keywords
Imagined communities · Imagination · Identity · English language teaching · Investment · Poststructuralism

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses ways in which language learners' actual and desired memberships in "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) affect their learning trajectories. We will begin by explaining the notion of "imagined communities" with reference to language and identity. Then we will show how the process of imagining and re-imagining one's multiple memberships may influence agency, investment, and resistance in the learning of English in terms of five identity clusters: postcolonial, global, ethnic, multilingual, and gendered identities. We will argue that the notion of "imagined communities" has great potential for bridging theory and praxis in English language education and for informing critical and transformative language pedagogy.

The theoretical framework adopted in the present chapter is best viewed as poststructuralist (Norton and Morgan 2013). While the terms poststructuralism, postmodernism, or critical inquiry serve as an umbrella for a variety of theoretical approaches adopted by different researchers (McNamara 2012), in the present chapter we will use the terms interchangeably emphasizing similarities that they all share. Of particular importance to us is the postmodernist focus on *language* as the locus of social organization, power, and individual consciousness, and as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991). *Learning*, in turn, will be seen as a situated process of participation in particular communities of practice, which may entail the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context (Wenger 1998). Thus, "because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity" (Wenger 1998, p. 215), a process of becoming, or avoiding becoming a certain person, rather than a simple accumulation of skills and knowledge. While the situated view of learning as socialization has been productive in the second language acquisition (SLA) literature, so far it has focused predominantly on learning that takes place as a result of the learners' direct engagement in face-to-face communities. Learning that is connected to learner participation in a wider world is now receiving greater attention (Lam and Warriner 2012; Warriner 2008). Yet we humans are capable, through our imagination, of perceiving a connection with people beyond our immediate social networks. Our orientation toward such imagined communities might have just as much impact on our current identities and learning as direct involvement in communities of our everyday life. We argue that the notion of *imagination* as a way to appropriate meanings and create new identities, developed by Anderson (1991) and Wenger

(1998), allows us to transcend the focus on the learners' immediate environment, as the learning of another language, perhaps more than any other educational activity, reflects the learners' desire to expand their range of identities and to reach out to wider worlds (Barkhuizen 2016; Darvin and Norton 2015; Kramsch 2009; Motha and Lin 2014; Xu 2012).

Our discussion of the role of imagination in second language learning draws on three complementary sources: Anderson's (1991) view of nation-states as imagined communities, Wenger's (1998) view of imagination as a form of engagement with communities of practice, and Markus and Nurius' (1986) view of possible selves as the link between motivation and behavior. In his work on the role of language in the creation of nation-states, Anderson (1991) traces ways in which the invention of printing technology in the capitalist world gave new fixity to language and created languages-of-power, different from older vernaculars. The nation-states, in turn, were conceived around these languages, as imagined communities "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991, p. 6). Anderson's (1991) analysis presents imagination as a social process, emphasizing the fact that those in power oftentimes do the imagining for the rest of their fellow citizens offering them certain identity options and leaving other options "unimaginable."

Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory provides a complementary perspective to that of Anderson, presenting imagination as both an individual and social process. In his view, imagination is a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice and a way in which "we can locate ourselves in the world and history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives" (Wenger 1998, p. 178). In this, Wenger's (1998) insights converge with the well-known psychological theory of *possible selves* (Markus and Nurius 1986) which represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, thus linking cognition, behavior, and motivation. For both Wenger (1998) and Markus and Nurius (1986), possible selves, linked to memberships in imagined communities, shape individuals' present and future decisions and behaviors and provide an evaluative and interpretive context for such decisions, behaviors, and their outcomes.

Norton (2001) has incorporated Wenger's (1998) views into the study of second language learning and education, suggesting that learners have different investments in different members of the target language community, and that the people in whom the learners have the greatest investment may be the very people who provide (or limit) access to the imagined community of a given learner. Kanno and Norton (2003) have extended with work in a special issue of the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, with the title, "Imagined communities and educational possibilities." Kanno (2008) makes the case that it is not only individuals, but schools, which have imagined communities. In her study of four schools in Japan, which serve large numbers of bilingual students, she examined the relationship between the schools' visions for their students' future, their current policies and practices, and their students' identities. She found that it is

the least privileged bilingual students who are socialized into the most restricted imagined communities, when it is precisely this group that would benefit from an education that promotes a wider set of options for the future.

Most recently, Darvin and Norton (2015) demonstrate that students' participation in specific language practices can be explained through their investment in particular imagined communities and through their access (or lack thereof) to these communities. With reference to their model of investment, incorporating identity, capital, and ideology, they compare the case of a female language learner, Henrietta, in a poorly resourced Ugandan village, with the case of a male language learner, Ayrton, in a wealthy neighborhood in urban Canada. Their findings suggest that the imagined identity of each learner was inextricably linked to the levels of capital (social, economic, and cultural) available to them and the ideologies with which their participants' learning experiences were associated. While Ayrton's learning was supported by access to high levels of capital in the context of neoliberal ideological practices that sustained his imagined cosmopolitan identity, Henrietta's dreams of assuming an imagined identity of a knowledgeable global citizen were challenged by limited access to capital and a hegemonic ideology that reproduces the global North/South divide.

The goal of the present chapter is to build on the previous arguments demonstrating how nation-states may shape the imagination of their citizens and how actual and desired memberships in various imagined communities mediate the learning of – or resistance to – English around the world.

Imagined Communities and Identities

In what follows, we will discuss the membership in imagined communities in terms of five identity clusters that have relevance to English as an international language: (1) postcolonial, (2) global, (3) ethnic, (4) multilingual, and (5) gendered identities. While separating the identities into these five subcategories for purposes of clarity and better focus, we acknowledge that much of the time these multiple facets of learners' selves, what Higgins calls "millennial identities," are inseparable (Higgins 2015). Thus, for example, postcolonial identities are centrally concerned with questions of ethnicity, while ethnicity may be implicated in the construction of multilingual identities. Our survey does not aim to be comprehensive or all-inclusive; rather, with a choice of one or two examples from diverse contexts, we aim to illustrate how languages – and identities linked to them – lose and acquire value in the linguistic marketplace through the work of imagination.

Postcolonial Englishes

Anderson's (1991) lucid analysis makes it clear that in the modern era, nations are no longer created in blood but imagined in language. Hebrew offers an extraordinary example of a language that served to unify Jews from all over the

world who otherwise had little if anything in common, sometimes not even religion. At present, postcolonial contexts offer a particularly fertile area for examination, since newly imagined national identities and futures are often tied to language. Due to British colonial history and, more recently, to American cultural and linguistic imperialism, English is implicated in this process of re-imagination more than any other language (Phillipson 2009). In the era of globalization, postcolonial nations and subjects are required to take a stance with regard to the role that English as a global language will play in their future.

Even a brief look at these decisions demonstrates that English – and identities that can be fashioned out of it – is imagined differently in different contexts. One of the key issues in Africa, for instance, is the language of the literature and thus of the national narrative, and numerous African writers have expressed their views on this issue in press and at the conferences on the role of English in African literature (Miller 1996). This attention to the written word is not surprising, since, according to Anderson (1991, p.134), nationalism is conceived in the print-language, not a language per se. What is surprising is the opposing stances taken by individuals in seemingly similar contexts. Thus, in 1977 a well-known Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, publicly refused writing in English, after having published four successful novels as well as numerous essays, plays, and short stories in that language. In doing so, Ngugi decried his allegiance with the language of Kenya's colonial past, in which the poorest and most oppressed citizens of the country could neither read nor communicate. Instead, to transcend the "colonial alienation" of the African intelligentsia from its own people, he chose to write in the local language Gikuyu, which at the time had not developed traditions of written narrative. In contrast, another famous African writer, Chinua Achebe, argues that while English is a "world language which history has forced down our throats" (Achebe 1965, p. 29), it is also the language that made it possible for Africans to talk to one another and to create national rather than ethnic literatures.

Miller's (1996) insightful analysis indicates that these diametrically opposed visions of African national identities and English are not incidental for they carry with them different visions of the future of African nation-states. While Ngugi imagines Kenyan future as a revolutionary change within the country, Achebe's vision encourages African unity and places Africa on a par with other countries in a global community. Notably, Achebe's view does not entail an uncritical appropriation of English as spoken and written by some imaginary native speakers; rather, Achebe intends to indigenize the language declaring: "...let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English for we intend to do unheard of things with it" (1988, p. 50). Instead of re-imagining themselves, Achebe and other like-minded writers re-imagine English and refashion their relationship to it, creating hybrid work that, like Nuyorican bilingual poetry, can no longer claim allegiance to one language only and draws on multiple languages and literary traditions (Miller 1996; for an in-depth discussion of the tensions between English and indigenous languages in postcolonial Africa, see Obondo's chapter in this volume).

Scholars in other postcolonial contexts are also grappling with the social and cultural power of English in their nation-states. In Brazil, for example, Carazzai

(2013) and Sanches Silva (2013) studied the construction of teacher identity in the states of Santa Catarina and Mato Grasso du Sul, focusing on investments in learning and teaching English in a context where Portuguese is the dominant language. They found that investments in the English language and the teaching of English are best explained in terms of student teachers' imagined identities, as well as the opportunities afforded to them for both face-to-face and virtual interaction with English speakers internationally.

English and the Global Marketplace

In contrast to postcolonial contexts, in which developing countries are seeking to address their ambivalent relationship to English, other countries for whom English is not a postcolonial language aim to promote Standard English in order to align themselves with the Western powers and gain an entry into the global market. A striking example of foreign language education as a mirror of national allegiances is seen in Eastern Europe where, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly emerged countries aim to refashion themselves as democratic and capitalist. An important aspect of this social and economic change involves language education reform, which has eliminated or severely limited Russian as a primary foreign or second language, and established English (followed by German and French) as key to national prosperity and global cooperation. While prior to 1989, international contacts of Eastern European and Soviet citizens were restrained and supervised, and the opportunity to use the foreign languages rather limited, the dissolution of communist regimes offered unlimited possibilities for international collaboration – and a pressing need to engage in them in view of the breakdown of the Soviet economy. New political and economic futures involve new national identity options – in particular those of "citizens of the world" – and, as a result, lead to a significant increase in foreign language learning motivation. While Russian, the language of the Big Brother, was often resisted in Eastern Europe, English is now receiving a warm welcome, and former teachers of Russian are being retrained as teachers of English (Dovchin 2018).

Hungary provides an excellent example of this trend towards English and other European languages. The country's re-alignment with the West has resulted in a marked increase in numbers of those enrolled in foreign language public and private schools, as well as those who take certification exams in these languages. In 1996, three times as many people took foreign language proficiency exams as in 1987; this trend documents both the growing interest in foreign language education and realization of the importance of certified knowledge (Medgyes and Miklosy 2000). The growing preoccupation with foreign language competence is continuously in the public eye as the one and only issue on which three different Hungarian governments elected since 1990 came to an agreement. The media frequently discusses the insufficient language competence of the average Hungarian, employers publish increasing numbers of job advertisements in English to filter out the "linguistically deficient," the book store windows are adorned

by language books and dictionaries, and the streets of major Hungarian towns display "Learn English Fast and Easy" language school ads (Medgyes and Miklosy 2000). It is not surprising then that even Hungarians who previously did not see the relevance of English – or any other foreign language – to their personal and professional future, are reconsidering their attitudes and re-imagining themselves as sophisticated multilinguals, engaged members of the European Union. On the other hand, as citizens of any small nation, they also exhibit ambivalence as to the possible involvement with NATO and the West and fears that English may come to contaminate and displace their own language (Medgyes and Miklosy 2000).

Research in Israel provides another example of the increased symbolic value of English within the global marketplace, and the communities that are imagined by English language learners. Kheimets and Epstein's (2001) study suggests that English is crucial in the professional and social integration of scientists from the former Soviet Union in Israel. As more and more professional meetings, Internet communication, and publications take place in English, it is English, rather than only Hebrew, that is instrumental for successful transformation of the Soviet scientists into Israeli ones. Quantitative results of the study revealed significant differences between those who studied English and those who studied either German or French regarding feelings of personal self-actualization and job satisfaction, and both statistical tests and personal interviews demonstrated that command of English was the determining factor for risk of losing a job. For example, a successful physicist the authors interviewed for their study said that he pities Russian scientists who do not speak English as they have no professional future ahead of them, and advised all Russians who would like to continue being scientists in Israel to study English as intensively as they can.

Ethnicity and the Ownership of English

Even in countries in which English is the dominant mother tongue, research suggests that there exists much ambivalence about who constitutes a "legitimate" speaker of English (Norton 2018). An American writer David Mura (1991, p. 77), a third generation Japanese-American, once remarked in despair that "in the world of the tradition, [he] was unimagined." The utter invisibility of second and third generation Asian-Americans in the media led his classmates and later co-workers to constantly challenge his "ownership" of English which clashed, in their mind, with his Asian features. To researchers in language education, this practice does not come as a surprise: in many English-speaking contexts, the "ownership" of English by white immigrants is contested to a significantly lesser degree than that by racialized newcomers.

Miller's (2000) ethnographic study of ESL students' socialization into the mainstream in an Australian high school demonstrates that white and fair-haired Bosnian students assimilate quickly, establishing friendships with the English-speaking students and appropriating a range of discourses in English, while the dark-haired Chinese students remain isolated from the mainstream. The Chinese

students in her study stated that they had felt discriminated against, because neither their peers nor teachers acknowledged their legitimacy as L2 users of English in the same way they acknowledged the legitimacy of their European immigrant classmates who resemble Australians physically. Similarly, Norton's (2013) research with immigrant women in Canada documents the case of the Vietnamese woman, Mai, who perceived a "perfect Canadian" as one who was both white and English speaking. During the study, Mai described the alienation that her nephews experienced as Chinese/Vietnamese people in Canada and explained how the eldest child, Trong, had chosen to change his name from a Vietnamese one to an Anglicized one. Mai had objected to this practice, and had said to her nephews that they should not reject their heritage, explaining, "With your hair, your nose, your skin, you will never be perfect Canadians" (Norton 2013, p. 186). Like Mura and the Chinese students in Miller's study, Trong would remain unimaginable as a mainstream Canadian.

It would be highly erroneous, however, to posit that all newcomers in Australia, Canada, USA, or Britain aim to speak standard English and emulate its white middle-class speakers. Ibrahim (1999) points out that African students in a high school in Toronto are learning to re-imagine themselves as Black, rather than Sudanese or Nigerian, and, by speaking what he calls Black Stylized English (BSE), position themselves with regard to the racial divide constructed by the North American society around them. Similar arguments are brought up by Bailey (2000) with regard to Dominican American students in the USA who adopt African American English vernacular as a language of solidarity with their African American peers while simultaneously using Spanish to differentiate themselves from the same peers. This and other work suggests that in order to understand the learners' investments, we need to examine their multiple communities and understand who can and who cannot be imagined as a legitimate speaker of a particular language variety in a specific context.

The extent to which identity options are seen to be publicly visible and politically valued is implicated in the kinds of communities that language learners imagine and desire for themselves. In this regard, the media is central in the shaping of ethnic and racial identities, in particular with regard to language: while powerfully presenting and endorsing some identity options, the media can also make some identity options "invisible" or, at least, devalue and delegitimize them (Dovchin 2018). The work of Stuart Hall (1992) has been particularly influential in documenting the ways in which the media reproduces a limited range of identities for minority citizens. With respect to questions of race, he notes that it is the "silences" that are highly meaningful; what "isn't there" says a great deal about what is or is not valued in a given society. In short, as supported by the more recent work of Motha (2014), it appears that ethnicity and race play an important role in institutional and individual imagined communities of "legitimate" speakers of English.

As English language learners re-imagine their futures in a changing world, the question, "Who owns English?" is becoming more strident and contested. Cheung et al. (2015) volume on language teacher identity examines, for example, how the disempowering discourses of native speaker superiority can shape

feelings of inadequacy and professional illegitimacy among non-native speakers of English. On a more promising note, however, Yu-Jung Chang (2011) has examined the graduate student population in the USA, focusing on two nonnative English-speaking international students in an English-speaking graduate school. Through the lens of investment and imagined communities, Chang argues that the students were able to exert their own agency "to fight their academic battle" (p. 228) and selectively invest in areas that would increase their market value in their current and imagined communities. Such research supports the views of Moussu and Llurda (2008), who make a powerful case that every language user is a native speaker of a language, and that NNEST, the non-native English speaker label, itself reflects Anglo-centrism.

English Language Learner or Multilingual Speaker?

Complementary to debates over who may be considered a "legitimate" speaker of English are debates over the framing and positioning of English language learners. Given the power of English within the larger global community, English language learners, the "marked" case, are often positioned within a deficit framework that limits the kinds of identities and communities that can be imagined by and for these learners. In English-speaking countries, in particular, those who have learned English as a second, third, or fourth language are often seen as non-native speakers, limited English proficiency students, interlanguage speakers, or language learners. As English language learners grow up, they become ever more sensitive to the label "ESL" (Toohey 2018).

Several scholars have challenged the "deficit" model, pointing out that in the world where more than a half of the population is bi- and multilingual, to be monolingual rather than bilingual is in fact the marked case (Cook 2002; Pavlenko 2003; Selvi 2014). Instead of reproducing the native/non-native speaker dichotomy, these scholars proposed to bridge the fields of bilingualism and SLA and see previous "non-native speakers" as bilinguals and as legitimate L2 users (Cook 2002; Ortega 2013). However, while scholars continue battling against the monolingual bias on the pages of learned journals, the researchers' plight remains ignored by the general public, which typically does not read scholarly disquisitions. Thus, the monumental task of "imagining" diverse – but nevertheless legitimate – "owners" and users of English falls on the shoulders of public individuals: politicians, media personalities, and in particular writers.

The theme of re-imagining of language ownership dominates the pages of cross-cultural memoirs and fiction published in the United States, from Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory* and Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, to Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (Pavlenko 2001). This is not surprising since in 1999 alone, the US National Book Award in Fiction for an English language novel went to Ha Jin, a native of China, who had begun learning English at the age of 21, and four out of eight Guggenheim fellowships for fiction went to foreign-born non-native speakers of English (Novakovich and Shapard 2000). Award-winning prose and

poetry by bilingual writers, such as Julia Alvarez, Andrei Codrescu, Jerzy Kosinski, Kyoko Mori, or Bharati Mukherjee, have completely changed the landscape of North American literature, redefining what it means to be an American writer.

The re-imagining of linguistic membership and ownership takes place in the work of these and other bilingual writers in two ways. On the one hand, by composing their work in English the authors appropriate the language, implicitly claiming their right to it. On the other, some also proclaim their linguistic rights and allegiances explicitly, stating, like Eva Hoffman (1989), that English is the language of their inner self. The written medium is ideal for this discursive battle over legitimate ownership: while in spoken interactions, opinions of some L2 users may be discounted by others due to their physical appearance or traces of accent in their speech, published texts constitute excellent equalizers and unique arenas where accents are erased and voices imbued with sufficient authority. Consequently, many contemporary bi- and multilingual authors and scholars explore the links between their multiple languages and selves in ways that were previously non-existent and/or impossible: challenging the essentialist notions of self, deconstructing various ethnic, national, colonial, and gender identities, creating new discourses of hybridity and multiplicity, and imagining new ways of "being American" – and bilingual in the postmodern world. We can only hope that these hybrid and multilingual identities will find their way into the public media, so that new generations can learn to imagine themselves as members of a linguistically diverse world, rather than one dominated by standard English.

English and Gendered Identities

Cutting across postcolonial, global, and ethnic identities in relation to the learning of English is gender as a system of social and discursive relations (Appleby 2014; Cameron 2006; Higgins 2010; Pavlenko et al. 2001). Their conception of gender, which extends beyond female-male divides, is understood to be a system of social relationships and discursive practices that may lead to systemic inequality among particular groups of learners, including women, minorities, elderly, and disabled. Research demonstrates that in different contexts English may offer language learners the possibility of imagining different gendered identity options for themselves. On the one hand, many women around the globe see learning English as a way of liberating themselves from the confines of gender patriarchy (Haghighi and Norton 2017; Kobayashi 2002; McMahill 2001). A survey of 555 high school students in Japan found that female Japanese students are significantly more positive toward – and more interested in – learning English, training for English-language-related professions, and traveling to English-speaking countries, than their male counterparts (Kobayashi 2002). As a result, in 1998, according to the Japanese Ministry of Education, 67% of foreign language majors among the university students were female, with English being the most popular choice. This trend is not surprising, since young women continue to be marginalized in mainstream Japanese society, and English teaching and translation offer them a socially sanctioned occupational

choice, a profession that is "lady-like" – although not well paid. Further, McMahill (2001) argues that many young Japanese women consider English to be intrinsically linked to feminism and thus are motivated to learn it as a language of empowerment. Such findings are consistent with more recent research. For example, Haghighi and Norton's (2017) study of English Language Institutes (ELI) in Iran found that the number of female students at ELIs was far greater than that of male students, partly because ELI's represented the opportunity to provide "gender equity" for Iranian women.

On the other hand, Norton (2013) suggests that immigrant women in Canada do not necessarily consider English to be the only key to social mobility and enhanced opportunity. At times, and in particular workplaces, a greater mastery of English may lead to decrease in productivity and lack of support from colleagues if the dominant language of the workplace is not English (Norton 2013). In other contexts, immigrant women may choose not to attend English classes because of cultural constraints that require them to prioritize their roles as housekeepers, mothers, wives, and caretakers. Still others may choose not to attend English classes if they feel that the English curriculum is not consistent with their desires for the future. Norton (2001) makes that case for two immigrant women who removed themselves from their English classes because their teachers did not appear sympathetic towards their investments in particular imagined communities. While Felicia from Peru was heavily invested in the local Peruvian community, Katarina from Poland was anxious for validation by a community of professionals. The central point, Norton argues, is that an imagined community presupposes an imagined identity – one which offers an enhanced range of possibilities for the future.

Another important theme related to issues of gender concerns the emerging body of work on sexuality, sexual orientation, and identity in the field of English language teaching. The work of scholars such as King (2008), Moffatt and Norton (2008), Moore (2016), and Nelson (2009) explores the extent to which sexual orientation might be an important identity category in the language classroom. Of central interest is the way in which a teacher can create a supportive environment for learners who might be gay, lesbian, or transgendered. Nelson, for example, contrasts a pedagogy of inquiry, which asks how linguistic and cultural practices naturalize certain sexual identities, most notably heterosexuality, with a pedagogy of inclusion which aims to introduce images as well as experiences of gays and lesbians into curriculum materials. The implications for the imagined identities and imagined communities of LGBTQ students and teachers are profound.

Re-imagining English Teaching

The discussion above raises the question of the implications of "imagined communities" for language classrooms. Drawing on the Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of identity and investment, Darvin notes that teachers need to reflect on the extent to which classroom events and practices are indexical of more

systemic ideological practices and suggests the following questions for research on language teaching (Darvin 2015, p. 597):

(i) To what extent do teachers recognize and respond to the material, unequal lived realities of learners and their multiple identities?
(ii) What dominant ideologies and systemic patterns of control circumscribe the realities and experiences of language learners and teachers? How does the worldview of teachers position learners?
(iii) To what extent and in what ways do teachers recognize the linguistic and cultural capital that language learners bring to class?

Scholars internationally are responding to the kinds of questions raised by Darvin (2015). In Hong Kong, for example, Hafner (2014) describes a compelling study in which university students incorporated digital literacy into their learning of scientific English, and created imagined identities for themselves as they sought to engage non-specialists in their course projects. Students were required to develop a project in which they conducted a simple scientific experiment and then reported their findings in two formats – one as a multimodal scientific documentary shared on YouTube for an audience of non-specialists, and another as a written lab report for an audience of specialists. Hafner describes ways in which the students combined a range of modes to develop the appropriate identities with which to engage the general, non-specialist audience. Drawing on Ivaniç, Hafner describes the "discoursal identities" of the students, which ranged from that of scientist and investigative journalist to that of curious traveler. Each of these identities indexed different purposes, from educating the audience to entertaining it, and the students needed to harness diverse semiotic modes, including image and sound, to achieve the desired effects.

Turning to teachers of English in the Mexican context, Sayer (2012) provides a vivid account of the practices adopted by three non-native English teachers in Oaxaca, who sought greater legitimacy in their classrooms and communities. One teacher, Carlos, for example, made highly innovative use of role-play in the classroom, providing students with the opportunity to experiment with a variety of English speaker identities in the classroom's "Black Horse Restaurant." Although the students struggled with some grammatical expressions, Carlos noted that the students sought to apply in practice what they had learnt in theory. Sayer notes that the three teachers' engagements with English did not simply comprise their competence at manipulating the linguistic forms of English, but rather evoked "their whole biographical history with the language" (p. 79), such as opportunities to travel outside Mexico. The teachers' knowledge of English as both a linguistic system and a social practice was implicated in their identities as legitimate English teachers in the Mexican nation-state.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between imagined communities, identity, and English language teaching in terms of postcolonial, global, ethnic, multilingual, and gendered identity clusters. We have argued that recent explorations

in language policy and sociolinguistics indicate that in postcolonial contexts, national identities are often fashioned in relation to English as a global language. While some countries may renounce English as a language of colonialism, others may take a neutral stance, neither privileging nor discouraging English, and yet others may choose to appropriate and indigenize English, constructing national identities simultaneously through and in opposition to English. The link between national identities and imagined communities plays an important role in language and educational policies, thus confirming Anderson's (1991) thesis about public media playing a key role in shaping the public imagination and creating identities for public consumption. Such research also suggests that in the global marketplace national – and individual – identities are often constructed in relation to English as the language of world economy. Some countries, like Hungary, may encourage a greater role of English as a way to enter the global marketplace and create a more visible national identity, while individual citizens in non-English speaking countries may invest in English for career advancement purposes.

Despite the resilience of English in the field of language education, there has in recent years been increasing interest in the relationship between English, multilingualism, and transnationalism (Douglas Fir Group 2016; May 2014; Ortega 2013), and scholars like Selvi (2014) note that the label NNEST may in fact promote "native speakerism." Other scholars like Makoni and Pennycook (2005) have challenged the very concept that languages have "fixed" boundaries, anticipating the vibrant contemporary debates on translanguaging (García and Li 2014; Li and Zhu 2013). Nevertheless, there are powerful language testing and publishing industries, for whom the standard English of native speakers is often considered the most desirable form of English, and whose practices determine the life chances of millions of English speakers, both native and non-native, worldwide. We conclude with the hope that English language teachers in different parts of the globe may consider the ways in which our own multilingual classrooms can be re-imagined as places of possibility for students with a wide range of histories, investments, and desires for the future.

Cross-References

► Creating a Motivating Classroom Environment
► Critical Research in English Language Teaching
► Language Ideologies, Language Policies, and English-Language Teaching in Russia

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