

Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes

Carolyn McKinney

Introduction

While a key topic for consideration in English language studies, Literacy in English is not a field as such. The term could refer to pedagogy for developing literacy in English in different global contexts, although there is indeed no unified approach to English literacy pedagogy. This chapter will address the questions ‘what is literacy?’ as well as ‘what counts as literacy in English?’ It will argue for a pluralisation of literacies, acknowledging the diverse, socially situated practices that constitute literacy in different contexts and the ways in which these are ideologically and politically defined. The construct of ‘English’ as a single, unitary, named language will also be problematized (see also Bolton, and Seargeant this volume). Engaging with the teaching of literacy in English, across a range of levels (primary and secondary schooling and higher education), this review argues that ‘Literacy in English’ is a contested space, where the English literacy classroom commonly functions as a ‘contact zone’ (cf Pratt, 1991, Canagarajah, 2015). Pratt’s oft-cited definition of contact zones refers to:

social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today (1991, 34).

Pedagogy for English literacy is equally contested, historically indexed by references to ‘the literacy wars’ (Prinsloo and Baynham, 2013) between advocates of meaning-focused versus decoding and synthetic phonics-focused approaches to early literacy, as well as by debates between advocates of creative expression versus proponents of explicit, norm-oriented pedagogies such as genre. Current imperatives towards decoloniality ask us to question what literacy in English might mean when perceived and theorised from the position of the subaltern (Mignolo, 2007).

In many parts of the world, being literate in English is synonymous with being literate and with being educated. Alongside this, what counts as literacy in English, and what kinds of English are recognised is a key concern. While what counts as high status English and high status literacy practices will change in different contexts, domains and spaces, high status language and literacy resources are always unequally distributed. Thus this chapter will explore how the semiotic resources associated with literacies in English are stratified and unequally distributed, though not always in predictable ways. At the same time, such privileged or powerful English literacy practices are themselves being contested, and shifting in high status domains such as published academic writing (Alim and Smitherman, 2012). The chapter will show how, given the position of English/es globally, the study of literacy/ies in English and English literacy pedagogies provides a window onto the increasingly heteroglossic/multilingual and multimodal as well as highly political nature of what constitutes literacy and literacy pedagogy more broadly.

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

Historical perspectives: From Literacy in English to ‘literacies in Englishes’

What is literacy?

Since the early 1980s, understandings of literacy have changed substantially. Early approaches emphasised universal, and individual, cognitive effects as a result of becoming literate, pitting literate cultures against oral cultures, literacy against orality. This became associated with ‘Great Divide’ theories of societies which suggested that modes of thinking in literate and non-literate societies was fundamentally different (e.g. Goody, 1969, Ong, 1982 cited in Prinsloo and Baynham, 2013). However, a number of scholars contested the idea that becoming literate itself led to particular kinds of cognitive development, or social development, with Graff labelling this position as ‘the literacy myth’ (Graff, 1979, Scribner and Cole, 1981, Street, 1984). For example, Scribner and Cole’s (1981) research in Liberia identified different kinds of literacy that people were engaged in, including school literacy in English; religious literacy in Arabic, and literacy using an indigenous local language for record-keeping and letter writing. They were able to separate effects of schooling from effects that had been earlier attributed to literacy and, as Prinsloo and Baynham (2013) point out, argued ‘that literacy is not a general technology that is the same thing with the same consequences regardless of what the contexts of its acquisition might be.’ Rather, ‘literacy was always constituted within socially organised practices’. (xxvii).

In line with Scribner and Cole’s findings, Heath’s (1983) ethnographic study of the language and literacy socialisation practices of three communities in the Piedmont Carolinas in the USA foregrounded the ways in which different communities socialised children into literacy in distinct ways. Heath demonstrated how these different ‘ways with words’ had negative consequences for children of non-dominant groups whose literacy practices most differed from the middle-class practices privileged in schooling. A further influential study unsettling Great Divide approaches as well as assumptions regarding the universal consequences of literacy as a singular, context-independent technology was Brian Street’s (1984) research in Iran. In particular, Street’s research challenged the idea of an automatic causal relationship between literacy and social development, and argued that literacy practices needed to be studied ethnographically, as embedded in their social contexts, in order for us to understand how literacy is differentially constituted through different practices and social activities.

Taking a pedagogical perspective on literacies, Freebody and Luke (1990) outlined four central components of successful literacy (particularly with regard to reading) as demanded by Australian society in 1990. In what has become known as the four resources model, Freebody and Luke argued for four roles that successful reading required: ‘code-breaker’ (able to successfully decode letter-sound relationships); ‘text-participant’ (able to make sense of or comprehend the text); ‘text-user’ (knowing how to use and work with a text appropriately e.g. reading a graphic representation to extract factual information versus reading a literary text in order to produce a character analysis); and ‘text-analyst’ (critical reading of a text in order to determine the choices that have been made in ideologies, positioning and representation).

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

Freebody and Luke argued that the integration of all four of these roles was necessary for reading in formal education at any level, whether in early literacy, or in higher/college education. In recent years the study of literacy has also drawn attention to changing modalities showing that literacy rarely involves exclusively script-based and print-based engagement with texts. Rather, literacy in English is increasingly multimodal (see Ravelli this volume), an aspect of digital literacy practices (Spilioti this volume) and multilingual practices (Garcia and Lin this volume). The work of the New London Group (2000) introduced the idea of ‘multiliteracies’ arguing that an exclusive focus on verbal texts in literacy pedagogy was out of step with the increasingly visual semiotic landscape and the shift to multimodal representation in textbooks and media in daily life.

Given that literacies in English are most often accomplished through formal education, the predominant focus in this chapter will be on literacies in English in educational contexts, and pedagogies for literacies in English. The approach to literacy in this chapter is that alongside the development of particular print-based skills which will differ depending on specific literacy practices, literacy can be “conceived as participation in a range of valued meaning-making practices (...) themselves nested within particular activity structures” (Hull & Moje, 2012, 1). It is important to note that both print-based skills and practices will differ, depending on the kind and purpose of literacy activity; consider the different skills and practices involved in reading a graph to infer weather patterns, reading a poem to conduct literary analysis, writing a poem as a birthday gift, decoding Arabic script to recite the Quran, or writing in a local language to produce a record of a meeting. While literacy in English is more likely to be an outcome of formal schooling and education, the understanding of literacy as a context-embedded, social practice emphasises that there is no such single thing as ‘literacy in English’ or any other language.

Within the field of (New) Literacy Studies (Prinsloo and Baynham, 2013), Academic Literacies (Lillis and Scott, 2007, Thesen and van Pletzen, 2006) has developed with the specific goal of understanding the ways in which writing (in English) mediates participation in the academy, and to make visible obstacles to participation for both students and academics as writers (Lillis, McKinney and Thesen, 2016). For some researchers and teachers within the field of Academic Literacies, understanding literacies *in English* is central to understanding how students and academics are both constrained and enabled to participate in knowledge making in the academy. See, for example, Thesen (1997) on the positioning of first generation university students in post-apartheid South Africa in relation to their English literacy resources, and Lillis and Curry (2010) on how the specific ideologies of English filter processes of production and evaluation in writing for publication.

English and Englishes

Like literacy, the named language ‘English’ is also often (mis)treated as a stable and unified phenomenon, in applied linguistics generally and specifically in language and literacy pedagogy, standardised assessment and academic publishing. Lillis and Curry challenge this notion of ‘English’ “as a single stable semiotic resource over

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

which the ‘native’ speaker is attributed a privileged evaluative position” (Lillis and Curry, 2015, p127) and Pennycook (1994, 2006) has argued that the notion of ‘English’ is a fiction. The World Englishes paradigm (Bolton this volume) and Kachru’s well known three circles model of Englishes¹ has for some time emphasised the idea of multiple Englishes. But it has also been critiqued more recently for failing to take account of the unequal power relations entangled with World Englishes, as well as the significant variation that occurs *within* national borders. John Trimbur argues that

English does not branch off into the indigenized national varieties found in Kachru’s system of World Englishes (1990) so much as it shatters, fragmenting into local enactments of English, off the grid, in the unequal spaces of the splintered metropolis (2013, 468).

While such ‘local enactments of English’ may count as literacy in English in their local or micro-context, what Blommaert (2010) has called a lower scale level, these resources are often not recognised as such outside of their micro-contexts, in Blommaert’s terms at a higher scale level.

Within historically English dominant national contexts such as the UK and USA, there are also debates about literacy in English and its relationship to standard English, sometimes called standard written English (Snell and Andrews, 2016) or, in the US, Mainstream United States English (MUSE, Lippi-Green, 1997). In the UK, Snell and Andrews draw attention to the ways in which regional accents and dialects of children are perceived by some to negatively affect their ability to produce standard written English, i.e. high status literacy in English. They show how regional accents and dialect variation in English are problematised in the schooling system, despite the fact that most UK children will arrive at school with what is considered a ‘regional accent’. The National Curriculum explicitly states that children are expected to learn to speak ‘standard English’. Snell and Andrews show that there is ‘no straightforward relationship between children’s language background and their achievement in school literacy’, and that specific difficulties cannot commonly be attributed to regional accents or dialects. This is despite the common assumption that regional varieties of English will compromise children’s ability to write standard English.

Showing the complexity of attempting to characterise a standard spoken English, Snell and Andrews argue that the notion of standard should be confined to standard written English. Like UK students characterised as having regional dialects and accents and therefore problems with literacy, in the USA bilingual Spanish/English Latinos and speakers of African American English are frequently also positioned in deficit ways (Alim, 2010, Dyson & Smitherman, 2009). While systematic linguistic variation and the principle of linguistic equality are well-established tenets of linguistics, standardised assessments of literacy in English impose a monolingual mainstream standard (e.g. MUSE) that has profoundly negative consequences for bilinguals and users of so-called ‘non-standard’ varieties of English (Garcia and Menken, 2006; Dyson and Smitherman, 2009, Wiley and Lukes, 1996). In South Africa, racialised uses of English are differently valued (McKinney, 2013), with a UK

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

derived exogenous variety of English that travelled to the South with British settlers most highly valued (Makalela, 2004).

Critical Issues

At least two issues have historically been, and are currently, of critical concern in the research and teaching of literacies in English. First is what I will call the ‘politics of literacy in English’ and the language ideologies that accompany this. I will explore this in relation to the role of English literacy in education in post-colonial contexts as well as in global practices of writing for publication. Second, and related to the former, is the positioning of English as a colonial language and carrier of master narratives as well as the literary canon. This positioning of ‘English literacy’ as conduit of high culture is often imposed on English home language speakers and speakers of ‘other(ed)’ languages alike. In contrast to this is the positioning of English literacy as a space for political conscientisation, and the development of critical language awareness or critical literacy (Janks, 2010, López-Gopar, 2016, McKinney, 2004, Norton Peirce, 1989). This latter positioning I will take further in a discussion of debates on pedagogies for English literacy later in the chapter.

The imposition of literacy in English

Prevalent in many parts of the world and growing is the disturbing fact that literacy itself, and being positioned as literate, is exclusively linked to literacy in English. In other words literacy in English is seen as equivalent to being literate, or even to being educated (McKinney, 2017, Ngugi wa Thingo, 1986). A well-rehearsed debate in post-colonial English studies is that between the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe and Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiongo. Whereas Ngugi argued that African experience could only be rendered through African languages and committed himself to writing in Gikuyu, Achebe argued for the appropriation and adaptation of English by African writers: ‘I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings’ (Achebe, 1965, 30). Ngugi’s autobiographical narrative of the imposition of English medium schooling in Kenya by the colonial regime and his punishment for deviating from speaking English at school is notorious:

one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. (...).

The attitude to English was the opposite; any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause, the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child’s progress up the ladder of formal education...(Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986, 11-12)

Ngugi's disturbing account illustrates the language ideologies exclusively valuing "spoken or written English" in schooling practice, and the power of such ideologies in determining the kinds of literacy practices that count in schooling. Elsewhere I have described such ideologies with the term *Anglonormativity*, referring to the expectation that people will be and should be proficient in English, and are deficient, even deviant, if they are not. Anglonormativity supports the compulsory or expected command of English, valuing literacy in standard written English alone (McKinney, 2017). More recently we find new generation Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie explaining how Anglonormative ideologies that exclusively valued literacy in English during Ngugi's colonial schooling continue to flourish. In response to an interview question regarding why she has chosen to write in English, Adichie explains:

I'm not sure my writing in English is a choice. If a Nigerian Igbo like myself is educated exclusively in English, discouraged from speaking Igbo in a school in which Igbo was just one more subject of study (and one that was considered 'uncool' by students and did not receive much support from the administration), then perhaps writing in English is not a choice, because the idea of choice assumes equal alternatives (in Azodo interview, 2008: 2).

For many people in the world, literacy in English is not a choice but is imposed through formal schooling, and becomes equivalent to being educated. Driven by the power of literacy in English, pedagogy and reading materials for local languages are often not made available, and not valued. In Anglophone post-colonial contexts, literacy in high status forms of standard written English provides students from *elite* communities with opportunities for mobility e.g. further study in the 'centre' and writing for publication for international English reading audiences. On the darker side however, many researchers have shown how for non-elite children in post-colonial contexts, the imposition of literacy in English results in their exclusion from meaningful participation in schooling (Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012, McKinney, 2017); Williams (1996) has referred to 'reading-like' behaviour where school children in Malawi chant (rather than read) English texts written on the chalkboard.

Appropriation of English

The history of the global spread and use of literacy in English however is highly complex and often contradictory, such that the imposition of literacy in English and its exclusionary effects is only part of the story. Alongside discourses of the imposition of English and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), are accounts of the appropriation of literacy in English for local, and sometimes liberatory, purposes. As mentioned earlier, Achebe argued for the appropriation of English, and the shaping of the resources of written English in ways that would carry his 'African experience' (1965). During the anti-apartheid struggle in 1980s South Africa, Norton Peirce (1989) drew attention to the 'People's English' movement where the teaching of English in a way that 'expose[d] (...) inequalities and (...) help[ed] students explore alternative possibilities for themselves and their societies' was advocated (Norton Peirce, 1989, 407). 'People's English' offered a counterdiscourse to English as a colonial language. Here we see how literacy in English can be severed from the

cultural baggage to which it had historically been tied. As Norton Pierce argued in relation to People's English in South Africa, "English like all other languages, is thus a site of struggle over meaning, access and power" (1989, 405). The extent to which literacy in English can be appropriated for liberatory and empowering purposes, for widening participation in quality schooling and higher education, rather than for domestication or gate-keeping purposes both in post-colonial and English dominant countries is centrally tied to pedagogy and curricula for literacy in English. Such pedagogies have historically been, and continue to be, a site of contestation.

Current Debates

I foreground three current areas of debate in relation to literacy in English. Firstly, what kinds of English literacy resources are made accessible, or are distributed through schooling systems in different parts of the world? This is captured by what some authors have referred to as the semiotics of mobility, i.e. whose English literacy resources can 'travel', and 'count' in different local and global contexts (Blommaert, 2008, 2010, Canagarajah, 2015)? Secondly, I consider the ways in which what counts as literacy in English has become prescribed by national and international standardised assessments, such as the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS²). Finally, I outline some of the debates regarding pedagogies for literacy in English, showing how this pedagogical space has been used for conflicting purposes: as a site of assimilation into a unitary, homogenous use of language, access to dominant genres and the traditional literary canon versus a site for transformative pedagogies and political conscientisation.

The (im)mobility of English literacy resources

Semiotic mobility, or the relative mobility of literacy resources in English developed in peripheral contexts has recently been the focus of debate. Using a poorly resourced school on the South African Cape Flats as an example, Blommaert (2010) has argued that while the majority of students in peripheral contexts aspire to master English literacy to improve their economic mobility, the English resources that are available to and acquired by such students are organised by norms generated in the periphery that have limited mobility. That is, while these norms are valued at the relatively low scale level of the local school, or local community, they do not count as 'proper English' outside of this local context, i.e. at a higher scale level. Linking it to work on 'grassroots literacy' in Central Africa, Blommaert labels this kind of 'sub-elite literacy' in English that has limited mobility as 'peripheral normativity'. He defines this as the 'systemic, normal and hence normative' use of 'orthographic, syntactic, lexical and pragmatic peculiarities'; from a standard language perspective, what would be considered as 'errors' (Blommaert et al. 2005, 378; Blommaert, 2008).

Prinsloo and Stroud (2014) and Canagarajah (2015) take issue with the use of Blommaert's scales theory, that is, the notion of lower and higher scale levels operating across local and global sites, to describe the lack of mobility of students' English literacy repertoires beyond their local site. They argue that Blommaert's analysis bypasses the particular meanings of learners' English literacy practices

within their local contexts, and neglects to pay attention to the potential ability of learners to deploy different (and differently valued) resources and practices at different times. Canagarajah argues that rather than be ‘locked’ into one scale level, ‘people could be shuttling between different scale levels in the same location’ (2015, 36). However, what seems to be left out of this debate is the way in which students’ English literacy practices are enabled or curtailed as a consequence of extremely restricted literacy pedagogies in most South African schools. Such students have limited opportunities to read and write English texts in classrooms where discourses and practices are primarily oral (Dornbrack and Dixon, 2014, Kapp, 2004). These students are also subjected to a very early transition to English as a medium of instruction in their fourth year of schooling, and have thus had extremely limited opportunities to develop literacy resources in English before having to use it as their sole linguistic tool for learning. It is often restricted pedagogies and harmful language policy decisions that result in the kind of ‘sub-elite literacy’ or peripheral normativity that Blommaert (2010) describes.

Outside of educational contexts, Trimbur (2013) draws our attention to some of the consequences of grassroots literacy using the resources of English in the political activism of the Asbestos Interest Group (AIG) in the Northern Cape of South Africa. The AIG is a non-governmental organization that was established to access compensation for victims of asbestos-related disease. Analysing both the ‘local economy in which they were produced’ as well as their ‘translocal’ uptake (Blommaert, 2008), Trimbur shows how the AIG’s “grassroots literacy negotiates the paperwork of officialdom” (2013, 463). In one example he examines how minutes of a meeting recorded in English were not taken seriously on account of their deviations from conventionally accepted norms of standard written English. This example draws attention to the significant consequences of literacies in Englishes as unequally valued (and distributed) sets of semiotic resources.

Standardized assessment and literacy in English

Scholars in the UK (Jewitt et al, 2005, Maybin, 2013) and the USA (Garcia and Menken, 2006, Menken, 2008) have drawn attention to the powerful effects of standardised assessments (national and international) both on what counts as literacy in English in educational settings, as well as on pedagogies for English literacy. In the analysis of a primary English class in England, Maybin (2013) argues that standardised assessments such as the international PIRLS and the National Key Stage 2 Standard Achievement Tests (SATs) have a narrowing effect on the teaching of literacy in English. In the literacy classrooms she observed, affective engagement, debate, and pleasure were stripped away with literacy defined as a narrow set of skills that can be reliably assessed. Assessments then impose a restricted set of literacy practices onto teachers, learners and pedagogy. Similarly, in high school English classrooms, Kress et al (2005) observed teachers’ relentless focus on teaching students to tie their interpretations of literary texts to evidence from the text, which was driven by the requirements of the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) examination. In parallel with Maybin’s research, affect and ‘text to life connections’ were ignored in this singular goal to achieve well on the GCSE.

In the USA, researchers have drawn attention to the negative consequences of standardized testing of literacy and language for students speaking non-mainstream varieties of English such as African-American English (Dyson and Smitherman, 2009) and Latino students who are Spanish dominant or speakers of Chicano English (Garcia and Menken, 2006, Menken, 2008). As Garcia and Menken point out, most Latinos in the United States are English speakers but not users of 'standard English' or MUSE. They are better described as 'moving along a *bilingual and bidialectal continuum*, using linguistic resources from the other language [English or Spanish] or from other English varieties or Spanish varieties when needed and possible' (2006, 172). Menken gives an example of the exclusionary effects of standardized testing for Latinos with the English Regents examination required for graduation from New York City High Schools. The 2002 cohort had only a 41.1% graduation rate for Latino students with an accompanying 26% drop-out rate. The emphasis on the production of standard written English in the heavily weighted essay requirement of this examination is a particular challenge for Latino students. The systemic exclusion of Latino/a children from US education is clearly evident in national throughput rates: 'for every 100 Latina/o children who enter school, a mere 53% will actually graduate from high school and only 11 per cent will graduate from college' (Huber et al 2006 in Pacheco, 2010:76). Literacy in English as defined and imposed by standardised assessments has powerful exclusionary effects.

Pedagogies for literacies in English

Different conceptions of literacy, and different conceptions of English, inevitably lead to different pedagogical approaches. The pedagogical space for the development of literacy in general, and of literacy in English in particular, is a contested one. This is the case whether the context is one of early literacy (cf the reading or literacy wars, Gooch and Lambirth, 2011), high school English, academic literacies in higher education, and whether the students are monolingual English speakers, or bilinguals and emergent bilinguals (also called English language learners). Much of the contestation is captured in the opposition between pedagogies which focus on discrete skills (such as phonics and decoding in early literacy) and dominant textual conventions versus pedagogies which privilege meaning-making and work with 'authentic texts' (such as whole language approaches to early literacy). At the upper primary and secondary school levels, genre approaches have been pitted against those that privilege creative expression and/or the production of transformative texts (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993). There is also tension between the goals of literacy in English as assimilationist, where the aim is for students to conform to a single standardised written English and to the rules of 'powerful genres', as against the idea of using the pedagogical space to enable students to resist norms and to produce transformative or transgressive texts. The latter tension is echoed in higher education where traditional English for Academic Purposes as well as Systemic Functional Linguistics-inspired Genre approaches aim to induct students into disciplinary registers and genres while academic literacies approaches aim to engage critically with dominant registers, genres and monoglot notions of a single standard English (see Coffin and Donohue, 2012 for an overview).

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

Synthesis models of literacy pedagogy, such as Janks' (2010) critical literacy model and the New London Group's (2000) multiliteracies framework, explicitly aim at bringing together the seemingly incompatible goals of access to powerful forms of language and literacy, with the recognition of diverse language and literacy resources. In her four dimensional critical literacy model, Janks (2010) highlights access, diversity, domination and design. She argues for a literacy pedagogy that

- gives students access to powerful uses of language and literate genres (access)
- recognises marginalized resources and works to expand what counts as powerful language and literacy use (diversity)
- develops students' critical ability to interrogate relations of power (domination)
- enables students to design new texts and transform language and literacy resources (design).

The multiliteracies framework operates with a similar logic, advocating situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed designs (New London Group, 2000). It should be recognised that critical approaches to literacy in English remain on the margins of officially sanctioned curricula and materials. Currently, as discussed above, standardised testing works against the goals of critical literacy approaches and critical literacies have been subject to government restrictions. This was the case with the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project for English teacher education led by Ronald Carter in 1989-1992 in England and Wales. The LINC project was a UK government funded response to shortcomings identified in two earlier reports on the state of English teaching in England and Wales (the Cox and Kingman reports). The LINC project was reviewed in 1991 by the Conservative government of that time leading to the withdrawal of formal government support. Significantly, a decision not to publish the materials that had been generated and positively received by teachers was taken (Carter, 1996).

Finally, within debates on pedagogy for literacy in English, there are also differing perspectives on the affordances of digital literacies in English and the consequences of digital resources for the teaching of English. A number of studies emphasise the creative potential of tapping into young people's digital literacy practices such as blogging, texting, fanfiction writing and general use of social media (Mills, 2010).

Mills (2010) highlights the finding that studies in North America, the UK and Australia "consistently show that broadening literacy curricula to include multimodal and digital forms of representation results in significant English language learning gains for multilingual students" (261). In Uganda, Kendrick et al's research shows how the use of digital and multimodal literacies in an after-school English journalism club built learners' confidence as well as their literacy in English (Kendrick et al, 2013). However there are also studies in the global South (e.g. Prinsloo and Sasman, 2015) showing that when multimedia is brought into the pedagogical space of English literacy, traditional, restricted pedagogies that were previously used can be merely transferred to the screen. Classrooms can also become silent theatre where students consume images without engaging interactively or critically with these. In line with an understanding of literacy as context-embedded social practice, digital literacies are recognised as having a range of affordances which can be taken hold of in many

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

different ways with a range of different effects, depending on their context and specific use.

Future directions

Despite synthesis models of literacy pedagogy (such as multiliteracies) that aim to provide both access to dominant literacy practices and textual genres, as well as to challenge and expand this repertoire, we have not taken seriously enough the need to critique what *counts* as powerful literacies in English. In other words, whose English language and literacy resources are dominant and whose language and literacy practices are effectively denied the status of resource, has not been sufficiently interrogated. Some scholars are drawing attention to the racialised implications of what are considered powerful literacies (e.g. in USA, Dyson and Smitherman, 2009, Flores and Rosa, 2015, and, in South Africa, McKinney, 2017). Increasingly, scholars are concerned with the limitations for global citizenship of people who are monolingual in one variety of English (Garcia and Sylvan, 2011). As Garcia and Sylvan put it “monolingual education is no longer relevant in our globalised world” (2011, 398). Alim and Smitherman provide a convincing analysis of how Barack Obama’s ability to style-shift across Dominant American English and African American English, as well as his strategic use of Spanish at certain moments, gave him the competitive edge in his 2008 election campaign (Alim and Smitherman, 2012). Attention has also been drawn to the range of varieties and increasing multilingualism of literacies in English in digital spaces (Deumert, 2014, Lankshear and Knobel 2014, Black 2008).

There are at least two responses emerging from the recognition that literacy in English cannot be understood and/or taught as literacy in a single mainstream variety. Firstly, there are teacher-researchers who are using the English literacy pedagogical space for a particular kind of critical literacy work that enables students to become critically aware of language ideologies and of how they and their language and literacy resources are positioned by these. Such pedagogies encourage learners to use literacies in different registers, styles and varieties of English to challenge and resist deficit positioning. Alim’s (2010) work with high school students in the San Francisco Bay area of California conducting their own ethnographic research into African American language in their communities is an excellent example of this. Alim draws attention to the dominant language ideologies in the school which positioned Black language as deficient, inappropriate and abnormal. Drawing on Critical Language Awareness (CLA), Alim designed a series of projects to disrupt this deficit positioning of African American students’ linguistic resources. CLA enables one to show students “that it is the language and communicative norms of those in power” that are privileged (Alim, 2010, 209). Alongside CLA, Alim capitalized on the students’ interest in Hip Hop culture, music and language.

In the first student project introduced, Alim aims to develop the students’ awareness of sociolinguistic variation as well as their research skills. He also raises the status of Black language and Hip Hop language by making these legitimate objects of study in the language arts classroom. In the second project, ‘Language in my life’, students are introduced to Hymes’ ethnography of speaking framework, and to the

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

accompanying sociolinguistics concepts of speech situation (e.g. a music concert), speech event (e.g. an interview backstage at the concert), and speech act (e.g. a joke told during an interview). An audio-recorded interview with a hip hop artist is used to guide students through an ethnography of speaking analysis (see Alim and Smitherman, 2012, 181, Table 6.1). Students are then tasked with researching their own language use, using an ethnography of communication approach and creating journal entries which account for specific events in their daily lives. Through this project, students develop metalinguistic awareness of their own language use, and of themselves as ‘style-shifters’; the activity also validates students’ out of class and out of school language practices. Students continue to apply and extend their newly developing sociolinguistic research skills in the third project in which they focus on language use in their peer group and peer culture, beginning with a focus on “lexical innovations within hip hop culture” (Alim, 2010, 218).

With its explicit focus on the relationships between language and power and the working of ideology through language practices, Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough, 1992) is an ideal approach for transgressive literacy education. Alim’s use of Hip Hop culture enables him to reposition Black Language as a significant resource in the classroom while at the same time engaging his students in challenging research activities and academic discourse. His own translanguaging across academic language, MUSE and Black language, models for students powerful examples of languaging. Following in the footsteps of Smitherman, Alim continuously pushes the boundaries of academic language in his own published writing, regularly drawing on resources of Black language and moving seamlessly between BL and MUSE as the following paragraph from his article in *Educational Researcher* shows:

While the media and public discourse attacked Black Language (BL) and Black people for so-called ‘deficiencies’, a generation of young Hip Hop Headz (including me) spent hours crafting linguistic skillz and pushin the boundaries of the English language in rhyme ciphers, battles and freestyles. Wasn’t no way in the world you could get me to see Black Language as deficient! (Alim, 2005, 24).

Alim’s translanguaging flies in the face of critics who argue that students need to be socialized into the exclusive use of ‘standard written English’ or MUSE, as these are the only resources with power and that are accepted in high stakes writing. His own literacy pedagogy and literacy practices are thus transgressive, designed to produce students as creative and powerful languagers, adept style-shifters with the potential not just to play the game but to change it (Alim and Smitherman, 2012, 193).

Secondly, research on literacies in English in educational contexts, whether at school level (e.g Newfield and Maungedzo’s 2006 work with high school students in Soweto South Africa; Patrick Manyak’s (2008) work on young Spanish/English bilingual learners in the USA) or in higher education (Canagarajah, 2013) show that pedagogies are becoming increasingly multilingual. López-Gopar’s (2016) work on decolonising Primary English Language Teaching (PELT) with indigenous and mestizo children in Oaxaca, Mexico is an inspirational example of this. López-Gopar describes a project which uses PELT to intervene in a situation where indigenous children are struggling and discriminated against in the schooling system, and have become ashamed of their indigenous languages and cultures. Working together with a

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

group of student teachers, López-Gopar describes English classes where the lives and socio-cultural context of children drive the curriculum and where children are involved in the co-creation of multilingual identity texts. Enabling children to work with indigenous languages, Spanish and English simultaneously has made the PELT space a liberating one which challenges monolingualism and monolingual literacies in English particularly. Multilingual and heteroglossic approaches are also a recent focus in English composition studies in the USA with scholars calling for a 'translingual' approach (e.g Horner, Lu, Royster and Trimbur, 2011; Canagarajah, 2014). Conceiving of literacy as translingual means recognising that heterogeneity is the norm rather than the exception, and designing pedagogies that 'foreground strategies of production and reception of texts' rather than 'codes and norms' (Canagrajah, 2014, 4).

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that a narrow and homogenous understanding of both what counts as 'literacy' and of what counts as 'English' is a highly contested product of coloniality that has had negative consequences in many parts of the world. This is especially the case for education in post-colonial contexts where being educated has become synonymous with being literate in a narrow repertoire of standard written English. However, examples such as the liberatory appropriation of English in 'People's English', the decolonising of English language and literacy teaching with indigenous children in Mexico and critical language awareness with varieties of English as well as translingual composition in the US provide wonderful contrasts to the imposition of literacy in English as a narrowly defined "representational repertoire of the invaders" (Pratt, 1991, 36). These examples draw attention to the unique responsibilities and opportunities of teachers of literacies in Englishes in a wide range of contexts and levels to challenge asymmetrical relations of power by giving students access both to what counts in a particular context as powerful use of literacy in English, as well as to critique and expand restricted notions of literacy in English.

Further reading

Canagarajah, A.S. (Ed) 2013. *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms*. London and New York: Routledge.

This edited collection conceptualises writing in higher education through a multi or translingual lens challenging monolingualist approaches to writing pedagogy.

Janks, H. 2010. *Literacy and Power*. New York and London: Routledge.

Janks explores the relationships between literacy and power in educational settings and draws attention to the opportunities for developing critical language awareness or critical literacy in pedagogies for English literacy.

Dyson, A.H and Smitherman, G. 2009. The Right (Write) Start: African American Language and the Discourse of Sounding Right. *Teachers College Record*, 111(4), 973-998.

Dyson and Smitherman present research on the relationship between African American children's language resources and their writing in English highlighting the myths about African American language that negatively shape writing pedagogy for these children.

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

Newfield, D. and Maungedzo, R. 2006. Mobilising and modalising poetry in a Soweto Classroom. *English Studies in Africa* 49(1): 71-93.

This paper provides insights into an innovative multilingual and multimodal pedagogical approach to literacy in English with marginalised youth.

References

Achebe, C. 1965. English and the African Writer. *Transition* No. 18, 27-30.

Alim, H.S. 2005. Critical Language Awareness in the United States: Revisiting Issues and Revising Pedagogies in a Resegregated society. *Educational Researcher*. October, 24-31.

Alim, H. S. 2010. Critical language awareness. In Hornberger, N. H. and McKay, S. L (Eds) *Sociolinguistics and language education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. (205-231)

Alim, H.S and Smitherman, G. 2012. *Articulate while Black: Barack Obama, Language and Race in the U.S.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Azodo, A.U. 2008. Interview with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Creative Writing and Literary Activism. 1-5.

www.iun.edu/~minaua/interviews/interview_chimamanda_ngozi_adichie.pdf (accessed March 2016).

Black, R. 2008. *Adolescents and Online Fiction*. New York: Peter Lang

Blommaert, J. 2008. *Grassroots Literacy, Writing and Identity: Voice in Central Africa*. London and New York: Routledge.

Blommaert, J. 2010. *The Sociolinguistics of Globalisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blommaert, J., Muylaert, N., Huysmans, M. and Dyers, C. Peripheral Normativity: Literacy and the production of locality in a South African Township School. *Linguistics and Education*. 16, 378-403.

Canagarajah, A.S. (Ed) 2013. *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms*. London and New York: Routledge.

Canagarajah, A.S. 2015. Negotiating mobile codes and literacies at the contact zone: Another perspective on South African Township Schools. In Stroud, C. and Prinsloo, M. (eds) *Language, Literacy and Diversity: Moving Words*. London and New York: Routledge. 34-54.

Carter, R (1996) 'Politics and Knowledge About Language: The LINC Project' in Hasan, R and Williams, G (eds) *Literacy and Society*. London: Longman, 1-21

Coffin, C. and Donohue, J. 2012. Academic Literacies and Systemic Functional Linguistics How do they relate? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 11, 64-75.

Cope, B. and Kalantzis, M. 1993. *The Powers of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing*. London: Falmer Press.

- Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)
- Deumert, A. 2014. *Sociolinguistics and Mobile Communication*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Dornbrack, J. and Dixon, K. 2014. Towards a more explicit writing pedagogy: The complexity of teaching argumentative writing. *Reading and Writing*. 5(1) <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/rw.v5i1.40>.
- Dyson, A.H and Smitherman, G. 2009. The Right (Write) Start: African American Language and the Discourse of Sounding Right. *Teachers College Record*, 111(4), 973-998.
- Fairclough, N. (Ed). 1992. *Critical Language Awareness*. London: Longman
- Flores, N. and Rosa, J. 2015. Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education. *Harvard Education Review*, 85(2) 149-171.
- Freebody, P. and Luke, A. 1990. Literacies programs: Debates and demands in cultural context. *Prospect: An Australian Journal of TESOL* 5(3), 7-16.
- Garcia, O and Menken, K. 2006. The English of Latinos from a Plurilingual Transcultural Angle: Implications for assessment and schools. In S. Nero (Ed.), *Dialects, Englishes, creoles, and education* (pp. 167-184). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Garcia, P. and Sylvan, C. 2011. Pedagogies and Practices in Multilingual Classrooms Singularity in pluralities. *Modern Language Journal* 95(3), 385-400.
- Graff, H. 1979. *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century City*. New York: Academic Press.
- Heath, S.B. 1983. *Ways with Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heugh, K. and Skutnabb-Kangas, T. 2012. *Multilingual Education and Sustainable diversity work: from periphery to centre*. New York: Routledge.
- Horner, B., Lu, M.-Z., Royster, J.J and Trimbur, J. 2011. Language Difference in Writing: Towards a Translingual Approach. *College English* 73(3) 303-320.
- Hull, G. A. & Moje, E.B. 2012. What is the development of literacy the development of? [Stanford Understanding Language: Language, Literacy and learning in the content areas] (<http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/academic-papers/05-Hull%20%26%20Moje%20CC%20Paper%20FINAL.pdf>)
- Janks, H. 2010. *Literacy and Power*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Janks, H., with Dixon, K., Ferreira, A., Granville, S., and Newfield, D. 2014. *Doing Critical Literacy Texts and Activities for Students and Teachers*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jewitt, C., Jones, R. and Kress, G. 2005. English in Classrooms: Only write down what you need to know: annotation for what? *English in Education* 39(1) 5-18.
- Kachru, B. 1990. World Englishes and Applied Linguistics. *World Englishes* 9(1) 3-20.
- Kapp, R. 2004. 'Reading on the line': An analysis of literacy practices in ESL classes in a South African Township school. *Language and Education* 18(3) 246-263.

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

Kendrick, M. Early, M. and Chemjor, W. 2013. Integrated Literacy in a Rural Kenyan Girl's Secondary School Journalism Club. *Research in the Teaching of English* 47(4) 391-419.

Lankshear, C. and Knobel, M. 2014. Englishes and Digital Literacy Practices. In Leung, C. and Street, B.V. (Eds) *The Routledge Companion to English Studies*. 977-1002. New York: Routledge.

Lillis, T. and Curry, M.J. 2010. *Academic Writing in a Global Context*. London: Routledge.

Lillis, T. and Curry, M.J. 2015. The politics of English, language and uptake: The case of international academic journal article reviews. *AILA Review* 28: 127-150.

Lillis, T. and Scott, M. 2007. Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 4(1) 5-23.

Lillis, T., McKinney, C. and Thesen, L. 2016. Academic Literacies as a Transformative Project: re-imagining English, language and knowledge. Colloquium presentation, *Sociolinguistics Symposium, Murcia, Spain*.

Lippi-Green, R. 1997. *English with an accent: language, ideology and discrimination in the United States*. London: Routledge.

López-Gopar, M. E. 2016. *Decolonising Primary English Language Teaching*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Makalela, L. 2004. Making Sense of BSAE for linguistic democracy in South Africa. *World Englishes*. 23(3) 355-366.

Manyak, P. 2008. What's your news? Portraits of a Rich Language and Literacy Activity for English Language Learners. *The Reading Teacher* 61(6), 450-458.

Maybin, J. 2013. What counts as reading? PIRLS, EastEnders and The Man on the Flying Trapeze. *Literacy*. 47(2) 59- 66.

McKinney, C. 2004. 'A little hard piece of grass in your shoe': understanding student resistance to critical literacy in post-apartheid South Africa, *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 22: 1&2 (63-73)

McKinney, C. 2013. Orientations to English in post-apartheid schooling, *English Today* 29:1 (22-27)

McKinney, C. 2017. *Language and Power in Post-Colonial Schooling: Ideologies in Practice*. New York and London: Routledge.

Menken, K. 2008. *English learners left behind: Standardised testing as language policy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Mignolo, W. 2007. Introduction. *Cultural Studies*, 21, 2-3, 155-167.

Mills, K.A. 2010. A Review of the 'Digital Turn' in the New Literacy Studies. *Review of Educational Research* 80(2) 246-271.

- Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)
- Newfield, D. and Maungedzo, R. 2006. Mobilising and modalising poetry in a Soweto Classroom. *English Studies in Africa* 49(1): 71-93.
- New London Group. 2000. A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures. In B. Cope and M.Kalantzis (eds) *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London: Routledge (9-37).
- Ngugi wa Thiongo. 1986. *Decolonising the mind: the Language of African literature*. London: James Currey.
- Norton Peirce, B. 1989. Toward a Pedagogy of Possibility in the Teaching of English Internationally: People's English in South Africa. *TESOL Quarterly* 23(3) 401-420.
- Pacheco, M. 2010. Performativity in the Bilingual Classroom: The Plight of English learners in the current reform context. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 41(1) 75-93.
- Pennycook, A. 1994. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. London: Longman.
- Pennycook, A. 2006. The Myth of English as International Language. In S.Makoni and A.Pennycook (Eds) *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. (90-115).
- Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pratt, M. 1991. Arts of the contact zone. *Profession*, 33-40.
- Prinsloo, M. and Stroud. C. (Eds). 2014. Introduction. *Educating for Language and Literacy Diversity: Mobile Selves*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (1-19).
- Prinsloo, M. and Baynham, M. Eds. 2013. *Literacy Studies Volume 1: Great Divides and Situated Literacies*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Prinsloo, M. and Sasman, F. 2015. Literacy and Language Teaching and Learning with Interactive Whiteboards in Early Schooling. *TESOL Quarterly* 49(3), 533-554.
- Scribner, S. and Cole, M. 1981. *The Psychology of Literacy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Snell, J. and Andrews, R. 2016. To what extent does a regional dialect and accent impact on the development of reading and writing skills. *Cambridge Journal of Education* DOI: 10.1080/0305764X.2016.1159660
- Street, B. 1984. *Literacy in Theory and in Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thesen, L. 1997. Voices, Discourse and Transition: In Search of New Categories in EAP. *TESOL Quarterly* 31(3): 487-511.
- Thesen, L. and van Pletzen, E. 2006. *Academic Literacy and the Languages of Change*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Trimbur, J. 2013. Grassroots Literacy and the Written Record: Asbestos Activism in South Africa. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 17(4): 460-487.

Published as McKinney, C. 2018. Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes. In P. Seargeant., A.Hewings and S.Pihlaja. (Eds) *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. (168-182)

Wiley, T. and Lukes, M. 1996. English-Only and Standard English Ideologies in the U.S. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(3), 511-535.

Williams, E. (1996) *Bridges and Barriers: language in African education and Development*. Manchester and Kinderhook: St Jerome Publishing.

¹ The inner circle of Native English speaking countries that are norm providing; the outer circle of countries with English as an official language and additional language speakers developing new norms for English; and the expanding circle of norm-dependent speakers in countries where English was characterized as a 'foreign language' (Kachru, 1990). Dynamics of globalization and interaction over the www has complicated this model substantially.

² For more information on the international literacy assessment PIRLS, please see <http://timss.bc.edu/>