'Mr Travelling-at-will Ted Doyle' Discourses in a multiliteracies classroom

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Abstract: This paper reports research findings of a critical ethnography concerning interactions between discourse, diversity and access to multiliteracies. The research was conducted in a culturally and linguistically diverse year six classroom. The findings concern the degree to which culturally non- dominant students drew from their existing cultural resources and conditions on the use of home discourses. This is contrasted with the way in which culturally dominant students were familiar with classroom discourses and the implications of this for the distribution of access to multiliteracies. The article concludes with a call for teachers to use cultural differences as a resource for multiliteracies.

> Teacher: This area will be completely out of bounds when filming is happening. And that includes, Mr Travelling-at-Will Ted Doyle, the sink [Teacher addresses Indigenous Australian student]. When a group is filming, you're not to be coming down here.

The beginnings of the twenty-first century are marked by dramatic shifts in the global communication environment and by the increasing plurality and multicultural nature of Australian society. No longer are class- rooms in the West comprised mostly of Anglo-Saxon, monolingual users of English who are being prepared for a predominantly monocultural workplace. In terms of demographic change, the clientele of schools is drawn from an increasing diversity of ethnic, community, and social class cultures with a diversity of texts, interests and group identities. Students today will enter a labour market that is fast becoming glob- alised, in which they will have to negotiate linguistic and cultural differences, and a profusion of networked and multimedia communications channels across a broadening range of meaning-making systems (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000b; Kalantzis & Cope, 2000b).

These changes in the current global and national context have given rise to the

term 'multiliteracies', coined by the New London Group (1996). Multiliteracies is the substantive focus of the research reported here, and addresses two key arguments. The first concerns the multiplicity of communications channels and media tied to the expansion of mass media, multimedia, and the Internet. The societal context today is characterised by an increasing array of communications

channels and multimodal, semiotic systems in society. Previous understandings of literacy that are associated exclusively with print are now inadequate. Successful participation in society involves textual practices such as interpreting environmental print, critiquing advertising, conducting Internet relay chats, using directories and maps, website construction, conducting internet transactions, using spreadsheets and databases, interpreting body language, and oral debating. Literacy pedagogy must account for the increase of emergent text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies, which draw upon multiple modes of communication (Kalantzis, Cope & Fehring, 2002).

The second is the increasing importance of cultural and linguistic diversity as a consequence of migration and globally marketed services (New London Group, 1996). While society is becoming more globally connected, diversity within local contexts is increasing. English is becoming a world language, yet it is breaking into multiple and increasingly differentiated 'Englishes', marked by accent, dialect or subcultural differences tied to membership in professional, recreational, sporting, or peer groups. Participation in community life now requires that we interact effectively using communication patterns that cross cultural and national boundaries (Lo Bianco, 2000; New London Group, 2000). These two key concepts of multiliteracies are related because the proliferation of texts is partially attributed to the diversity of cultures and subcultures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000b).

The most essential concept of multiliteracies is design, which draws attention to how learners are both inheritors of patterns and conventions for making meaning, and active designers of new meanings. Associated with design is a new metalanguage or multimodal grammar that overcomes the inadequacy of monolingual English grammar that restricted literacy learning to page-bound, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of the English language. The new metalanguage begins with six design elements in the meaning-making process: linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal patterns of meaning

which combine one or more of the other five modes. The new framework grafts multimodal and culturally diverse literacies onto existing theoretical foundations of language learning to incorporate a broader range of modes than linguistics alone (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000a; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000b; New London Group, 1996).

An indispensable contribution to the research reported here is the multiliteracies pedagogy in which four related components are continually revisited: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice (New London Group, 2000). Situated practice involves building on the lifeworld experiences of students that situate meaning-making in real world contexts. Overt instruction guides students to use an explicit metalanguage of Design.

Critical framing encourages students to interpret the social context and purpose of Designs of meaning. Transformed practice occurs when students transform existing meanings to design new meanings (New London Group, 1996). This critical ethnographic research investigated a teacher's enactment of the multiliteracies pedagogy in a culturally diverse classroom.

The New London Group makes normative claims about the multiliteracies pedagogy that are tested in this research. They describe pedagogy as 'a teaching and learning relationship that potentially builds learning conditions that lead to full and equitable social participation' (New London Group, 1996, p. 60). They propose a multiliteracies 'pedagogy that opens possibilities for greater access' (New London Group, 2000, p. 18). They claim that pluralism is the only way that the educational system can 'possibly be genuinely fair in its distribution of opportunity, as between one group and another' (New London Group, 2000, p. 125). Yet throughout the history of education there is evidence that schools have continually failed with minority and marginalised communities in literacy education, serving to reproduce the patterns of social inequity in wider society.

From the perspective of critical theory, access to multiliteracies is tied up in the politics and power relations of everyday life in literate cultures (Luke & Freebody, 1997). The selection of textual practices in schools is never accidental, random, natural or idiosyncratic. Rather, it is political, supportive of the stratified interests of the social institution of schooling, and has significant material consequences

for learners, communities and institutions (Luke & Freebody, 1997). Marginalised and minority com- munities have the most urgent stake in the efficacy of literacy education efforts, because they have the greatest distance to travel in terms of the match between their cultural and linguistic experiences and those of the dominant culture (Cope, 2000).

In light of these principles, the New London Group's ideals for pedagogy require empirical investigation in real classrooms. The multiliteracies pedagogy may indeed have the potential to 'provide access without children having to leave behind or erase their different subjectivities' (New London Group, 2000, p. 18). For example, its open-ended and flexible functional grammar designed to assist language learners to describe language differences and its emphasis on multiple channels of meaning, are positive responses to the changing shape of work, private and civic life (Lo Bianco, 2000). However, there is a need to evaluate, rather than simply assume, the potentials of the multiliteracies pedagogy in terms of its fairness in providing access.

Research question

The general aim of the critical ethnography was to empirically investigate the application of the multiliteracies pedagogy within a culturally diverse classroom in terms of its vision for access for all. The research question was oriented by the sociology of critical theory which begins with the assumption that certain groups in any society are privileged over others. Therefore, the research was used to uncover the working of power in society in order to challenge social injustice (Carspecken, 1996). The multiliteracies theory of the New London Group (1996), framed by the sociology of critical theory, provided the focus of the following informing question:

> What are the interactions between pedagogy, power and discourse, and students' access to multiliteracies among a culturally and linguistically diverse group?

The question was asked in relation to a teacher's enactment of the multiliteracies pedagogy in her culturally and linguistically diverse, year six classroom in Southeast Queensland, Australia. The question stimulated inquiry about the potentials of the multiliteracies pedagogy to provide (New London Group, 1996) all students with fair access to multiliteracies or designs for meaning-making. These designs refer to mature versions of print, multimodal, and culturally and

linguistically diverse textual practices that are used in contemporary society, mediated by technological (including writing) tools (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000c; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Luke, 1994). The analytic themes for classroom data – pedagogy, power and discourse – were drawn from the following theorists: a) New London Group's (1996) multiliteracies pedagogy and Kalantzis and Cope's (2005) Learning by Design model; b) Carspecken's (1996) typology of power relations in critical ethnography and McLaren's (1993) theory of resistance; c) Gee's (1996) social linguistic theory of discourse. For the purpose of this article, reported here are findings pertaining to the analytic theme of discourse and students access to multiliteracies, rather than addressing all three.

Research context

The research site was an upper primary classroom (students aged 11–12 years) in a suburban state school, preschool to Year 7, in Queensland, Australia. The school was situated in a low socio-economic area, and twenty-five nationalities were represented in the student cohort, from twenty-four suburbs. Eight percent of the school's clientele were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, which is significantly higher than the national figure from the most recent Australian Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). The principal of the school was informed about current policy developments and professional development opportunities in multiliteracies, and sought to broaden the range of multiliteracies taught in the school.

Teacher

A professional development coordinator in multiliteracies identified

potential teacher participants for this research through a multiliteracies project jointly funded by the Department of Education Queensland and a local learning and development centre. Participants were emailed to see if they were willing to be contacted by the researcher. A pilot study was conducted to trial the research and to identify a suitable teacher participant and a culturally diverse class cohort. The selected teacher participant had specialist knowledge and expertise in new, digitally-mediated textual practice. She had received professional development in multiliteracies through the *Learning by Design* project coordinated by original

members of the New London Group – Cope and Kalantzis (2005, p. 179). The teacher emphasised her belief in the significance of multiliteracies and the need for its application to the wider school locale.

Students

The observed grade six class was streamed by school administration on the basis of results in the standardised *Queensland Year Five Test in Aspects of Literacy and Numeracy* (Queensland Studies Authority, 2002). The class was comprised of twenty-three lowest ability students – eight females and fifteen males. Eight students whose literacy test scores were closer to average were withdrawn for literacy lessons with another teacher almost every day of the week. The twenty-three students were divided into six small groups to design a collaborative, clay animation movie. The eight average-literacy ability students were grouped together rather than integrated with the fifteen low-ability students because of the timetabling and streaming arrangements. The fifteen low-ability students were divided into male or mixed gender groups.

Research design

The overall design of the study was an adaptation of Carspecken's (1996; 2001; 2001) critical ethnography, which builds on the work of Habermas (1981; 1987). Stage One of this critical ethnography involved eighteen days of monological or observational data collection over the course of ten weeks in the multiliteracies classroom. The interactions in the collaborative groups operating simultaneously were recorded on multiple audiovisual and audio recording devices. Stage Two was the initial analysis of data, including verbatim transcribing, coding and applying analytic tools to the monological data. Stage Three triangulated observational data with dialogical data which involved 45 minute, semi-structured interviews with the principal, teacher, and group of four students of Anglo-Australian, Thai, Sudanese, and Aboriginal ethnicity. The criterion for student selection was cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. Richer data providing more points of comparison can be obtained from a diverse student cohort than population segments comprised exclusively of the dominant culture. Informal discussion with participants was also recorded. Dialogical data was transcribed and analysed using the analytic tools used in Stage Two, comparing observational and interview data. In Stage Four, the classroom data was

compared to macro-theories about society and extant literature about multiliteracies.

Data collection and analytic tools

The lessons applied the multiliteracies pedagogy involving situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice (New London Group, 1996). The aim was to enable learners to collaboratively design a claymation movie – an animation process in which static clay figurines are manipulated and digitally filmed to produce a sequence of images of lifelike movement. The process occurs by shooting a single frame, moving the object slightly, and then taking another photograph. When the film runs continuously, it appears that the objects move automatically. Famous claymation productions include *Wallace and Gromit* and *Chicken Run*. The movie-making technique involved planning a storyboard, sculpting plasticine characters, designing minia- ture, three-dimensional movie sets, filming using a digital camera, and combining music or recorded script. After filming, the students digitally edited the movies with teacher assistance using Clip Movie software. The movies were presented using Quick Time Pro software and a data projector. The students were required to effectively communicate an educational message to their 'buddies' in the preparatory year level (age 4–5). The movies were also presented at a school event for the parent community, having real, 'cultural purposes', and demonstrating the 'transformation of resources' to design original, 'hybrid texts' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000b).

Data collection tools used during these lesson observations included field notes to record verbatim speech, less rich journalistic notes to record information less obtrusively soon after the events, continuous audio cassette recording and audiovisual recording to replay action and speech events after leaving the field. Cultural artefacts were collected such as school policy documents, CD-ROMs of the claymation movies, and photographs. Data analytic tools included low and high inference coding. Low-level inferences were couched in in vivo terms, members' own terms, rather than the researcher's sociological terms. A list of raw codes and their reference details were compiled and later reorganised multiple times into progressively tighter hierarchical schemes. Carspecken's (1996) pragmatic horizon analysis, a detailed analytic tool that draws upon Habermas'

(1981; 1987) *Theory of Communicative Action*, was applied to relevant segment of the data.

Findings

The following sections describe the most important findings concerning the interactions between access to multiliteracies and discourses; namely, the socially accepted ways of displaying membership in particular social groups through words, actions, values, beliefs, gestures, and other representations of self (Gee, 1992). Considered here is the degree to which the ethnically dominant, Anglo-Australians and ethnically marginalised learners were able to draw from their existing cultural resources.

'Have you seen *Lord of the Rings*?' – Marginalised discourses

Ted, an Indigenous Australian, smiled at Julie as they filmed their claymation movie and asked, 'Have you see *Lord of the Rings*?' Overhearing from the other side of the room, the teacher reprimanded, 'Ted, that's got nothing to do with this!' This intertextual reference could have been recruited for an apprenticeship into hybrid, multimodal texts, with its potential for the discussion of creative visual and auditory text combinations. Ted used a different social language to engage in literacy practice – one that communicated solidarity with others. However, what counted was who he was and what he was required to do (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996).

Students were not always free to draw from the resources of their *primary discourses*; that is, the language patterns and social practices of their early socialisation or apprenticeship as a member of a community or socio-cultural setting (Gee, 1992). This was evident in the following lesson in which the teacher used a questioning sequence to draw attention to the visual design elements of a Big Book entitled, *Lester and Clyde* (Reece, 1976).

158   Teacher: What has the illustrator done here to show you that it's not a very nice pond? Ted?
159   Ted: Um, it looks like the rubbish has been chucked in there.
160   Teacher: But how did the illustrator show that. How did they do it?
161   Ted: Oh, by um, like, just chucking stuff in there.
162   Teacher: What? Did the illustrator throw things in there?
163   Ted: No.
164   Teacher: Or did they draw pictures?

165   Ted: Yeah.
166   Teacher: Well, then you need to explain it. Can you say, "They drew pictures of rubbish."
167   Ted: They drew pictures of rubbish.
168   Teacher: Bradley?
169   Bradley: They drew the pond and the leaves and that to make it look rotten.
170   Teacher: It looks a little bit rotten, but what tells you...I can even see that that smells. What has the illustrator done to show you that it smells.

The teacher drew attention to the Ted's 'inappropriate' primary discourse – 'chucking stuff' – in the context of this whole class interaction. Perhaps Ted had misunderstood the term 'illustrator', not realising that a designer of the book had drawn the rubbish. After the teacher's initial, incredulous response to Ted, 'What?' she challenged Ted's statement, asked him to clarify it, and elicited the correct response from him by rote. Ted submissively repeated the teacher's rephrasing of his statement when requested, copying the teacher's dominant discourse – norms for participation that identify insiders or outsiders to dominant cultures, including typical ways of speaking, writing, thinking, acting, valuing and writing (Gee, 1996). The teacher deferred the original question to Bradley, an Anglo-Australian student who answered 'successfully'. The important point is that Ted's primary discourse was corrected because it was not consistent with the *secondary discourses* of the classroom – language patterns to which people are socialised within various institutions, outside early home and peer group socialisation (Gee, 1992; Gee et al., 1996).

Ted had mastery of oral discourses to gain solidarity with others, both peers and adults. For example, he was the first student to confidently and amiably introduce himself to the researcher. On one occasion, the researcher met Ted by chance in a local suburban shopping centre during evening trading hours. He had almost sold a box of fundraising chocolate bars to idle cashiers at clothing boutiques, because he was successful in the persuasive discourse of marketisation (Fairclough, 2000, p. 163). However, Ted differed from the expected classroom norms with respect to his Indigenous Australian primary discourse. He speech was characterised by the use of bound morphemes, evident in phrases such as 'Watcha doin'?' or 'We've been wasting a whole million watchin' her doin' her shoes.'

The forms *doin'* and *watchin'* mean that the speaker is signaling greater solidarity with and less deference towards the hearer, treating the hearer more as a peer, intimate friend, or comrade. Speakers unconsciously mix and match various degrees of 'in' and 'ing' in a stretch of language to achieve just the right level of

solidarity and deference (Chambers, 1995; Gee, 1993; Labov, 1972; Milroy & Milroy, 1987). This language had meaning when used in Ted's community – a culture that has retained substantive ties with an oral cultural tradition. However, it was not part of the dominant discourses in the formal social context of the classroom. Rather than using Ted's oral language as a bridge to other forms of literacy, his primary discourses were frequently prohibited or misunderstood within the institution of schooling.

Ted continually violated the discursive patterns or rules by which discourses were formed and that governed what could be said or remain unsaid, and who could speak with authority or remain silent (McLaren, 1994). For example, Ted was frequently reprimanded for unsolicited replying – calling answers without being nominated by the teacher (Cazden, 1988). This occurred in the context of lessons in which the teacher controlled the topic and applied the three-part sequence of interactions – teacher Initiation, student Response, and teacher Evaluation (IRE) (Mehan, 1979). This common pattern of classroom discourse in Western schooling requires interactions by invitation of the teacher. According to Cazden (1988), unsolicited replying is a common Indigenous Australian discourse pattern. Ted had not adopted the 'identity kit' of dominant ways of acting, dressing and becoming a student (Gee, 1996). He would forget to take his hat off indoors and was unable to efficiently carry out tasks for the teacher. The teacher labelled him, 'Travelling-at-will Ted Doyle' because he frequently sought legitimate ways to subvert the boundaries of the secondary discourses of the class- room, such as by getting a drink, borrowing stationery, or going to the toilet block during lessons to remain in physical motion. During claymation movie-making, he would become frustrated when his more dominant peers frequently dismissed his suggestions. When asked by the researcher, 'What was the hardest thing in it [claymation] … for you?' he replied:

> Like, 'cause Julie and Darles just like, picked the stuff what they liked …'Cause when I start … tried to speak, she just buts in and she goes, 'Oh, yeah', um, 'Why don't we do this instead?' And I never get to speak.

At other times, ethnically marginalised learners 'failed' because the secondary discourses rendered them unable to draw from their existing cultural, semiotic resources for meaning making. Pawini, a Thai student, is the focus of the following transcript. She had only been in Australia for one year and spoke Thai at home to her mum and English at school. During storyboard designing – a

picture frame sequence for the movie – Pawini's group was requested by the teacher to explain their movie plans.

237   Sean: "Look right, Look left, look right" [infant voice]. And then the car's there, and they walk across, but they saw no car there, and the car was there - the car had just turned out and came out [picture provides external referents].

238   Teacher: Sounds to me like you two [points to Sean and David] are doing a lot of the thinking. What's Paweni done today?

239   Sean: She's...

240   David: She's just...

241   Rhonda: She's trying to...

242   Teacher: Ok. Paweni, can you tell me what you're doing today? What's your job?

243   Paweni: Mum.

244   Teacher: You're going to be the mum? [character in the movie plot]

245   Children: Yeah.

246   Teacher: And are any of these your ideas today? Have you got any suggestions? Have you thought about what we should use on the set? Are you going to have trees? Are you going to have hills?

247   Sean: That's what she's thinking.

248   David: Yeah.

249   Teacher: Can you make sure that Paweni has some suggestions?

The teacher praised Sean and David for their successful contribution to the storyboard, while using this to contrast Paweni's failure. The children attempt to advocate on Paweni's behalf, making incomplete defences that appeal to Paweni's effort (Lines 239–241). In doing so, they identify with her different life-world, cultural and language experiences. The teacher interrogated Paweni with five rapidly spoken, consecutive questions (Line 246), requiring Paweni to give an account of her contribution to the design. It should be noted here that during the lesson observations Pawini had never spoken more than two words in sequence, and these were generally common nouns or verbs.

Paweni lacked the linguistic resources to respond to the teacher's complex questioning and made no reply (Line 246). Sean moved to give an account in Paweni's defence, appealing to her thought processes – a subjective truth claim that was confirmed by her collaborative contribution to the visual aspects of the design. David also demonstrated cultural inclusiveness by supporting Sean's defence. Paweni's fluency with the dominant discourses was tested. The gate was open to fluent users of the dominant discourses, but closed to the non-native – the student who was not born to the dominant discourses, and who could not show some mastery on this occasion of use. There is a tension between the dominant, secondary discourses of the classroom and Paweni's primary discourses, identity and Thai culture with which she was most intimately connected (Gee,

1996).

Another example of learners' unfamiliarity with the dominant discourses and the restrictions placed upon marginalised discourses occurred in the context of digitally recording the script for the audio design of the claymation movies.

102   Paweni: Look out for cars! [deepened accent to sound older]
103   David: Ok. Mum. [baby voice for child role]
104   Paweni: Watch out – run! [staccato rhythm]
105   Teacher: *No!* Remember - we're just recording this bit – this snippet.
106   Teacher: Let's listen to how clear you were, and if there's background sound.
107   [replays]
108   Teacher: Could you hear Paweni?
109   David or Sean: Yes.
110   Teacher: Clearly? *No!* You need to speak clearly. I know English is a second language, so this is hard for you. "Look out for cars" ["cars"] said with two syllables, high to low intonation]
139   Paweni: Watch…out…Run [staccato style].
140   Teacher: *No!*
141   Teacher: Watchout – Run! [demonstrating smooth joins]
142   Paweni: Watch out – Run! [spoken in monotone]
143   Teacher: Doesn't sound like you're yelling. Try it again. "Watch Out – Run!"
144   Paweni: Watch out – Run! [drama in voice, but pronunciation still unclear].
153   Paweni: Watch out – [pause] Watch out - Run! [reading from script]
154   Teacher: *You've only got three words to remember!* [frustrated voice] "Watch out run." *You don't need to look at it!* [the script]

When the teacher asked the boys if they can hear Paweni clearly, Sean and David refused to criticise Paweni's speech (Line 105–106). The teacher corrected Paweni's early approximations of the linguistic speech text, later acknowledging overtly that English is a second language for Paweni (Line 107). After multiple unsuccessful rehearsals, the teacher implored that Paweni should be able to remember three words without referring to the script (Line 154). Paweni came to school with a marginalised language and dialect, and this affected the way she performed and was judged (Cook-Gumperz, 1986, p. 8). Marginalised learners like Paweni are expected to acquire mainstream discourses extremely late in their education. These students required explicitness or meta-knowledge to make them consciously aware of what they are being called upon to do (Gee, 1996).

Extant socio-cultural research has drawn attention to the need for literacy pedagogy to make use of students' existing competencies and familiarity with literacy events as a resource, moving them systematically toward capability with the powerful literate practices that are essential for community life, scholastic

achievement and occupational access (Anstey & Bull, 2004). For example, Paweni's peers recognised that she had a special ability to design two-dimensional visual elements to communicate meaning effectively. They began to give her a key role in movie backdrop designing to utilise her existing cultural resources for visual designing.

The following example highlights the inclusive way in which ethnically dominant peers were able to recruit Paweni's use of existing cultural resources during backdrop designing.

137	Paweni: Finished this one. Get another building? [questioning intonation] Get another building, Sean? [as if to say, "Do you want me to draw another building?" or "Do we need another building?"]
138	Sean: [looks confused at what she is asking]
139	Paweni: [turns to David] Get another building – here? [points to the other side of the backdrop where she is measuring up another building].
140	David: No - don't do another building.
141	Paweni: [Paweni understands and accepts David's response, moving the ruler away]

In this example, Paweni initially confused the comparative form of the adjective 'bigger' or 'too big' with 'more big' (Line 275). Her culturally dominant peers accepted Paweni's approximation. They understood Paweni's difficulty with English speech patterns and intentionally demonstrated three alternative comparative forms 'too big', 'very big', and 'way too big' to build her repertoire of linguistic resources (Lines 277–279).

275	Paweni: That's more big. [starts to erase] Here. Here. [Paweni gets a ruler and measures a wider, straighter road.]
276	Sean: Hey, I'll do the lines.
277	David: Paweni – that road's too big.
278	Sean: Very …big.
279	Rhonda: Way, way, way, way, way, too big!
280	Sean: Can we just turn it over? [to prevent erasing her work]
281	David: No [there is paint on the back of the cardboard].
282	Sean: Can we turn it over?
283	Paweni: Wait – too big! [rubs out the lines as the others watch].

Can we just turn it over? [to prevent erasing her work] No [there is paint on the back of the cardboard]. Can we turn it over? Wait – too big! [rubs out the lines as the others watch].

The peers succeeded in scaffolding her speech to enable her to gain access to the discourse in an inclusive way, demonstrated by Paweni's response. She chose a suitable comparative form, 'too big' (Line 283). Paweni's language was an invitation to other children to anticipate with her in sense making, to achieve solidarity with her – and they readily accepted this invitation.

Use of the dominant IRE pattern of discourse influenced the way in which Paweni was judged in the following whole class interaction (Mehan, 1979). This occurred in the context of the shared reading of the Big Book 'Lester and Clyde' (Reece, 1976).

102 Teacher: ---Tell me two things about Lester. I'm going to be asking Warren and Paweni this time [Paweni has not raised her hand to answer a question]. Paweni, tell me two things about Lester?
103 Paweni: [no response]
104 Ted: Old.
105 Teacher: Definitely not old. Clyde's old. Don't tell her. What's two things you can tell me about Lester the frog? [long pause]. I'll come back to you. Warren – two things?
106 Warren: He's smaller and cheeky.
107 Teacher: He's smaller and he's cheeky – Ok. Paweni, anything else you can tell me about Lester?
108 Paweni: [no response]
109 Teacher: Listen to the sentence. *Lester is smaller, and he's a lot of fun. A naughty, a cheeky, a mischievous one.* What can you tell me about Lester?
110 Paweni: [no response]
111 Teacher: Is he a good frog?
112 Paweni: Nǒ.
113 Teacher: So what tells you that he's not a good frog?
114 Joshua: Because he's…
115 Teacher: I'm asking Paweni, thankyou. Who can tell Paweni what words there tells us about Lester? [no response from Paweni] Ted?
116 Ted: [inaudible response]
117 Teacher: I can't hear you? Sit up, Ted.
118 Ted: He reckons that he has fun.
119 Teacher: He's full of fun, but I want to know, "What words there tell that that he is not a good frog? Shani?
120 Sean: mischievous
121 Teacher: mischievous…
122 Joshua: and naughty
123 Teacher: And naughty – thankyou. Did you hear that Paweni – naughty and mischievous? They're the words that we just read, and that's describing him.

Paweni was not 'successful' at this IRE discourse common in Western schooling, and did not gain access to the required multiliteracies (Mehan, 1979). She did not have sufficient linguistic resources in English to describe attributes of a character in the written narrative. Paweni's failure at question time was tied to difference – her culturally based social identity was constituted in her Thai language, which she was unable to use. The IRE discourse failed to apprentice Paweni to the sorts of language through which she could gain status in the classroom. Such an apprenticeship should have been based on an engagement with and recruitment of her existing meaning making resources, and the social identity it betokens (Gee, 1996).

'We've been working really hard' – Dominant discourses

The following transcript contrasts the previous examples with a successful IRE

discourse. The support teacher focused the attention of two Anglo-Australian, middle-class girls on the required script for their claymation movie entitled 'The Case of the Disappearing Pimples'.

927 Support Teacher: What are you saying? ---
928 Shani: She's…she's going to take the person who has pimples who is [acted by] Nalee… she's going to take her to the shops to buy all…stuff.
929 Tenneile: Yeah.
930 Support Teacher: Ok. And what are …what are you going to say? "Let's go to the shops."
931 Tenneile: Do you want to put something on to… um, to try this stuff on your face?
932 Shani: And um…
933 Support Teacher: Do you want to get some of this stuff on your face? Is that a nice job for the preppies?
934 Shani: The preppies?
935 Support Teacher: Well, I thought the prep school are the ones going to be…. watching this.
936 Tenneile: Yeah – they will be too! [looking at Shani, as if they had forgotten].
937 Support Teacher: Prep school are year five…ah, ah, are age five. Are you going to have them saying…? Are you going to have them listening to you saying, "Are you going to come and get this stuff?" No!
938 Shani: No, you would say, "Would you like… to come to the shops and buy some of the … cosmetics?"
939 Support Teacher: Some cosmetics! Good. Ok. And what else is going to be said?
940 Tenneile: Ah…then Nalee is going to come back to me. Nalee is going to say something back to me and ah …
941 Support Teacher: Well, you've asked a question. So you've said: "Would you like to come to the shop with me and buy some cosmetics?"
942 Ricki-Lee: "Yes".
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945 Support Teacher: "Look at some cosmetics" might be better.
946 Tenneile: And then, "Do you want to buy some fruit?"
947 Support Teacher: At the, at the…at… Oh, I see! [Suddenly understanding why the girls have designed a backdrop of a supermarket interior]
948 Ricki-Lea: We're also got a party…there's a big party…[smiling for first time]
949 Support Teacher: By gee! You're leaving your work extremely late.

The support teacher expected the girls to design a verbatim script for their movie, and began to model the required discourse (Line 930). The teacher initially questioned the 'appropriateness' of Tenneile's informal discourse in terms of its suitability for the instructive purpose of the text (Line 933). The girls demonstrated familiarity with the appropriate classroom discourse by constructing 'standard' English speech, which satisfied the support teacher (Lines 938–939).

The tension in this interaction was resolved when the girls used their knowledge of the dominant, secondary discourses of the classroom to appeal to the normative power of the teacher (Line 946). They also made recourse to values of Western schooling: 'We've got a lot of time', and 'We're working really hard' (Line 947). The girls were able to access the literacies required through their familiarity with the dominant discourses, and were successful in satisfying the expectations of the support teacher.

There is a sense in which the support teacher's interaction with the girls mirrored conversations between parent and child in Anglo-Australian homes. These interactive 'fill-in-the-blank' activities required building toward more descriptive and lexically explicit detail. The girls drew from the practices built in to their home-based culture – practices that resonated with a certain type of schooling. Shani and Tenneile were not overtly aware of the IRE scheme in school-based literacy practice, but they were experts in engaging in the sorts of adult-child verbal scaffolding expectations demonstrated in the above conversation. These culturally and linguistically dominant students were able to organise the required text within the parameters of the secondary discourses of the school. This is because they have a life-long history of apprenticeship in the social practice of schooling and ways of making sense of experience. This enculturation or apprenticeship has given them certain forms of language, ranging from linguistic resources to familiarity with the process of schooling. These forms of language encapsulate meanings shared and lived by the dominant social group (Bull & Anstey, 2003; Gee, 1992).

In contrast, Paweni, Ted, and their ethnically marginalised peers, did not have mastery of the school-based social practice, with its ways of interacting, talking, thinking, and valuing that the school and mainstream culture rewards (Gee, 1992). They did not yet have time to 'pick up' these skills as concomitant to the apprenticeship process, because they had not been socialised into the required ways of being in the classroom that were intimately connected to the socio-cultural identity of dominant culture. Dominant learners succeeded in this immersion environment because they knew the hidden rules of the game. Outsiders to the cultures of literacy and power did not. In this social and political context, access to the spectrum of multiliteracies was limited.

Discussion and recommendations

These findings indicate that when the teacher enacted her conceptions of the multiliteracies pedagogy, not all learners had access to all meanings. Rather, meanings were distributed, available, and accessible along over-lapping lines of the potent structuring principles of society such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and degree of familiarity with the dominant discourses (Kress, 1993a). This teacher's translation of the multiliteracies pedagogy to classroom practice was not exempt from being implicated in the reproduction of class relations, because

ethnically marginalised students were unable to draw from their existing cultural resources (Fairclough, 1989). In contrast, dominant students, who were familiar with the discourses of Western schooling, gained greater access to multiliteracies than their marginalised counterparts. This raises important issues for teachers who wish to avoid these pitfalls and who desire to enact the multiliteracies pedagogy as successfully as its proponents intended.

The New London Group theorises that equitable access requires the negotiation and respect of diverse cultures and prior experiences of students, and this may require that the dominant group or institution is itself transformed. Education must start with the recognition of life-world experience and use that experience as a basis for extending what children know and can do. The multiliteracies pedagogy was intended to 'provide access without children having to leave behind or erase their different subjectivities' (New London Group, 2000, p. 18). Regarding the conditions of equity, Kalantzis and Cope (2000a, p. 122) maintain that an educational system is required that does not favour or reward some life experiences over others.

Therefore, when implementing the multiliteracies pedagogy, teachers need to give as much attention to the inclusiveness of their classroom discourses as they do to their provision of multimodal textual experiences for students. The successful enactment of multiliteracies must begin with a very different set of assumptions about meaning making and culture. Instead of focussing on stability and regularity, there is a need to see meaning and culture as a matter of dynamic, hybrid design and change, forever open and undergoing transformation. Students need opportunities to recombine the many layers of their identities,

experiences, and discourses through designing in ways that are always unique and hybrid. The metalanguage of multiliteracies is not a narrow, univocal, authoritarian grammar that claims to describe one grammar for all social contexts. Rather, multiliteracies involves a new grammar that contrasts and accounts for different usages, not only between languages, but within English (Cope, 2000, p. 234). All students need access to versatile competences to contend with diverse modes for various social, community and cultural purposes, including those that cross national boundaries (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000c; New London Group, 1996).

The proximity of cultural and linguistic diversity today necessitates that the language of classrooms must change (New London Group, 1996). This requires a realisation that the lifeworlds of students are inherently diverse and multilayered, and that learners are capable of communicating though multiple senses and combinations of modes. Each student possesses, not one lifeworld, but a multiplicity of overlapping lifeworlds, always distinctive, yet always referenced in other ways to established patterns of representation and culture (New London Group, 2000, p. 207). For students of the dominant culture, their induction into specialist domains has been built via rich bridges to their lifeworlds in attenuated forms, such as bed time stories as a bridge to classroom interactions (Gee, 1996). However, these bridges must be constructed in schools for minority groups, who have mastered the codes and conventions of their own communities' language systems (New London Group, 1996).

The effective implementation of the multiliteracies pedagogy requires that teachers reflect on and critique the discourses of their own culture. The use of discourses is often unconscious, unreflective and uncritical. Discourses safeguard their users by performances that appear to be 'normal', 'natural' or 'right'. When teachers unconsciously and uncritically act within their discourses, they become compliant with a set of values that may unwittingly marginalise certain students. Thus, teachers who seek to enact the multiliteracies pedagogy successfully have an obligation to gain meta-knowledge about discourses in order to resist unreflexive, routine practices that limit the potentials of students. Students also need space to juxtapose diverse discourses and to understand them at a meta-level through a language of reflection. Through such an approach to multiliteracies, students can transform and vary their discourses, create new ones, and experience better, socially just ways of being in the world (Gee, 1996, pp. 190–191).

Ultimately, educators need to reassess selective traditions that are often implicit in the discourses that may persist when enacting a new pedagogy such as multiliteracies, transforming them in the interests of marginalised groups. The clientele of schools is increasingly varied, calling for the system-wide transformation of inequitable practices to enable the provision of access to

multiliteracies for all students. There is a need for the continued, informed revaluation of educational theories and practices in relation to the ever-changing

place and potential of literacies. The multiple discourses of students should be valued in multiliteracies classrooms that are characterised by a supportive cultural community. The challenge for educators is to create places for community where divergent worlds of individual experience can thrive and ultimately, where cultural differences are considered a resource rather than a hindrance for accessing multiliteracies (Cazden, 1988).

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