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Multiliteracies and Multilingualism

Joseph Lo Bianco

Multiliteracies

The Multiliteracies Project aims to develop a pluralistic educational response to trends in the economic, civic and personal spheres of life which impact on meaning-making and therefore on literacy. These changes call for a new foundational literacy which imparts the ability to understand increasingly complex language and literacy codes; the ability to use the multiple modes in which those codes are transmitted and put to use; and the capacity to understand and generate the richer and more elaborate meanings they convey (Lo Bianco and Freebody 1997).

To develop a pedagogy that is effective in imparting to learners confident control over the codes, modes and meanings of the new literacies is, for this reason, an important part of the Multiliteracies Project. In this way, Multiliteracies aims to make salient those notions of literacy competence which are actively pluralist. It seeks, therefore, to chart an original path, different from the skills family of thought which emphasises the perceptual and technical procedures of decoding and encoding written language; different from the growth and heritage family of thought about literacy which emphasise the private, personal, individual relationships with written language; and different again from critical-cultural schools which emphasise variability in literacy practices and how variation correlates with social and ideological categories (Christie *et al.* 1991; Gilbert 1989).

The challenge I want to consider here is whether Multiliteracies can address the more substantive diversity of cultural and language differences while accommodating diversity of modality such as e-mail and visual literacy alongside the book and the letter. For in the transformed work, civic and private domains which have stimulated the Multiliteracies Project, competent functioning requires not only a Multiliteracies pedagogy but also multilingual and multicultural policies.

Personal bilingualism and societal multilingualism are inevitable and insistent consequences of the same globalisation which generates the multiple modalities of communication within single languages. Perversely, the same almost total globalisation of the last decade of the twentieth century gives rise to a homogenising imperative that threatens to contract linguistic and cultural diversity in a dramatically escalating way and make the multilingualism of modern nations a transitional stage towards a vastly reduced linguistic repertoire.

Globalisation's effects

Processes of international integration have accelerated in recent years to the point where almost complete globalisation is imminent. Three principal forces generate this seemingly inexorable emergence of a unified world system. The first is the almost universal phenomenon of market deregulation; the second is the advanced integration of international financial markets; and the third is the critical facilitating force of instantaneous communications.

A linguistic consequence of this is intra-lingual diversification and cultural tension. As English assumes the function of *lingua mundi* (Jernudd 1992), absorbing the *lingua franca* role of other international languages, a complex dynamic of cultural politics emerges (Pennycook 1994). The solidarity effects of language forms become interrupted for native English speakers when stable but radically different Englishes serve global communication needs. In such tension *laissez-faire* traditions of language policy can be cast aside and policies of officialisation of English, of mandating

native speaker norms as correct and of promoting monolingualism can take hold (Cameron 1996; Lo Bianco 1997).

In this tension the language of affect for English speakers is no longer English as such, but a variety, and solidarity functions in language are transferred to standard varieties of the language (Marenbon 1987). In this way polycentricity (many norms of correctness that differ within an easy or uneasy intelligibility) emerges and 'English' becomes a network of interrelated models; a 'single interdependent communication matrix' (Pattanayak 1986, p. 59). These intra-language tensions accompany inter-language tensions which result from the practical collapse of the goal of nation-state language policy which sought to enshrine single national standard languages as emblems of distinctiveness and national cultural identity. The sheer scale of human movement has made multiculturalism a global phenomenon with unprecedentedly large and differentiated population transfers in all parts of the globe.

Languages caught up in the multimodal environment of contemporary communication, which combine verbal linguistic meaning-making with the gestural, visual, spatial, and the radically altered writing and reading regimes of computer literacy, such as oral-like writing and writing-like oralism in voice instruction, complicate literacy practices with multicultural contexts as the modes, codes and cultural meanings interact with each other.

The effect, then, of these forces for change is to make every nation need to come to grips, in public policy and in educational practice, with polyglot populations. Languages serve functions of affect and solidarity as much as the more obvious communication function. Since languages are emblematic of group identity in plural societies they present a strong contest to nations founded on concepts of unilingualism. But nations which construe themselves as pluralist, accommodating to diversity, imagining it as a resource in a globalising and multipolar world, are a recent innovation. The state has traditionally been either neutral or neglectful of popular multilingualism. More commonly it has been hostile.

Paradoxically, in the same moment of cultural, civic and personal diversity brought about by globalisation, with its hybrid language and cultural forms emerging from new population mixes, there is also a massive contraction of diversity. The spread of consumer society, with its gradations of industrial to post-industrial structure and the interconnected world-system of production and distribution of goods and services, constricts the social and semantic space for language systems which order the world in pre-industrial ways and whose speakers organise their sociality in ways incompatible with industrialised order. Much of contemporary cultural diversity consists of national inflections of an underlying consumerist commonality. Diversity, for this reason, may be more illusory than real.

Even as the technological changes that accompany and make globalisation possible themselves multiply and diversify, and as communication becomes progressively multimodal, the universalising and homogenising force of absorption into a common underlying ethic and process of signification is obliterating language diversity. During this and the next decade there will be the greatest collapse of language diversity in all history. In parallel with natural ecology, where species diversity is being rapidly eroded, human linguistic diversity is also contracting dramatically. It is a sobering thought that a staggering 90 per cent of the world's presently spoken languages are on the verge of extinction.

What does globalisation replace?

In agrarian and preindustrial society - the pre-nation state - language diversity was normal and unthreatening. According to Edwards, 'In all parts of the world there was benign linguistic neglect on the part of rulers' and 'given linguistically diverse empires, peace and prompt payment of taxes were the major concerns linking rulers and ruled' (Edwards 1994, p. 130).

The agrarian and pre-industrial state allowed space for diversity; rulers did not seek community with their subjects, preferring horizontal attachments of culture with either the dynastic systems or religious systems of rule in other political entities. The state's authority and purpose rarely included the inculcation of the ruled into normative patterns of culture that identified them with the rulers (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1993; Seton-Watson 1977).

The nation-state, on the other hand, is constructed on the idea of a symmetry between ethnicity, or peoplehood as expressed in and by language among other defining factors, and the organs and structures of the state. A long and complex process produced such a dramatic change in the notion of a polity. The seeds, at least, of the nation-state's hostility to multilingualism can be discerned in this pre-nation-state. In particular two developments had an impact: the emergence of standard languages and the notion of national languages, subsequently fused in the idea of national standard languages.

From the late medieval period, language academies had worked to cultivate prestige literary forms of vernaculars. They did this primarily in the interests of cultures as civilisation, not cultures as rivalrous identifications. Such language cultivation was not explicitly addressed towards replacing vernaculars and the large chains of spoken language forms that typically were the communication tools of primarily rural populations. Rather these standardised literary forms were to sit on top of the communication patterns as an elite peak to a deprecated, but largely ignored, multilingual and multidialectal base.

The second seed in the agrarian world that led to the nation-state's hostile position with regard to minority languages came partly from the ideas of Romantic philosophers. Reacting against the rationalism of science which, through descriptive examination, was theorising genetic links and universal or common properties among languages, Romantic philosophy asserted the distinctiveness of individual languages. Languages were claimed to express the essential qualities of peoplehood. Individual languages were claimed to be distinctive of the essence of groups, and therefore of their differences. For the Romantics, what science might uncover about the common features of languages could not diminish their expressive power as emblems of the soul and character of the 'races' who spoke them and who were in turn themselves made, by the languages, into peoples. In this way, while the beginnings of linguistic chauvinism may lie elsewhere, a strong impetus for it results from the idea that particular languages provided for the carriage of identity and national character.

Such thinking influenced the later view that nations were, essentially, groups of people speaking the same language. The formula was something like: 'A group speaking the same language is known as a nation and a nation ought to constitute a state' (Kedourie 1961).

The nation as state

Language names give effect to the link between peoplehood and linguistic behaviours. The selection of a variety of language was made from the many spoken chains of communication. Spoken communicative practice, rarely self-conscious as language, was interrupted by the selection of one variety for its elevation to the role and function of national standard. This involves the de-selection and disempowerment of other varieties.

Naming one variety for fulfilling functions of national identification over other claimants is accompanied by another process, 'officialisation'. Officialisation involves allocating privileged, hierarchical functions and status to some, while deliberately excluding others. National languages are claimed to unify the nation, often a disparate people of the horizontal domain, and then are called upon to fulfil the functions of the state, the vertical axis of public administration (Enloe 1981). Language standardisation, initially generated for literary reasons, then serves, through the precision and predictability that codified norms allow, the practical tasks of running state apparatuses. National minorities around the world still struggle today with the legacies of this dual elevation of single

varieties within nation-states.

It is the 'nationing' of peoples through unitary forms of language around the world that is contributing to the reduction of language diversity worldwide.

The academies and dictionary writers could hardly have imagined that the outcome of their work would, in the hands of industrialism and nineteenth-century nationalism, be such a powerful tool for the practical job of inculcating whole populations, whose main unity often was that they shared the same geopolitical space, into national administration.

These 'practical' needs require the precision and accuracy of standard languages: the taking of a census; fitting workers into the labour force by making them minimally literate; or the creating of a school system (Hobsbawm 1993). These needs of 'nations-become-states' enshrined the position of the standardised form of national languages.

The dysfunctional nation-state?

The nation as state, in its classic or canonical form, has now had to concede enormous ground. One reason has to do with the size and great diversity of modern states, especially those in the New World; another with the failure of most classic 'ethnically pure' nation states to eliminate internal diversity completely. Finally, of course, there has been the impact of processes of globalisation and of regionalism, usually for reasons of economic self-interest but often leading to substantial interdependency.

In clan life, in villages, or in small settings of any type, community is sustained materially through interdependent practices of life, such as subsistence farming; the common tending of property; mutual and manifest dependence on resources; or through the ritualised ways in which cultures represent communality to their members. However, modern nations may be really too vast and populous to sustain community materially in such ways. Such nations are imagined communities (Anderson 1983).

The nation-state constructed on a unitary set of affiliations did not eliminate diversity and multilingualism; rather it marginalised them functionally. Interdependence in the economic realm and other conditions of possibility, such as instantaneous and uncontrolled communications, easy mobility, mass migrations and the new pluralisms such population transfers have produced, have led to the possibility of the transcendence of the nation-state as the exclusive organising structure for political affairs.

The emergence virtually everywhere of pluralistic nations necessitates new distinctions between the political nation and the cultural nation. An homogeneous, or rather a unitary, political nation, embodied in egalitarian citizenship, can be conceptualised as the common ground which allows diversity and heterogeneity in the cultural nation. Indeed it may be possible to secure cultural diversity only on the basis of uniformity in the political and economic realm. The defeat of the homogenising tendencies of the classic nation-state depends in large part on the idea of citizenship as the aggregating principle and the internal need, reinforced by external pressure and economic self-interest, for linguistic tolerance and cultural diversity.

The super-state and the micro-nation

Many of today's polities do not invoke ethnicity, culture, religion, or dynastic succession. NAFTA, EU, APEC, and ASEAN are acronyms that describe regionally derived economic-political and strategic units. Geographic regionalism for the conduct of economic affairs is burgeoning in all parts of the world. The world appears to be splitting into three gigantic trade blocs - a dollar-dominated American zone, a yen-dominated Asia and a Deutschmark-dominated Europe. Within such zones

economic entities progressively manage, in a technicist, economically rationalist way, the macro affairs of vast populations.

Dual or multiple citizenships abound; passport control is shared if not conceded by individual nations to supranational authorities; population mobility is currently at unprecedented levels. National governments struggle to limit and circumscribe the depletion of their control over populations; controls that once appeared to be unassailable. Population mobility and facilitated communication are essential, requiring high levels of cultural adjustment.

As the super state is too large to meet the identity needs of its constituents so at its heart the micro-nation emerges. Supranational entities appear less likely to oppose regional and local minorities in their interest in language maintenance. It is no accident that in 1991-2 the European Union and the Council of Europe opened up funded education to exactly the same minority languages that the same member states had tried for generations to obliterate in the interests of national cohesion.

Political structures based on notions of economic co-operation are not as concerned with the persistence of local languages of identity as states based on ethnic homogeneity. The communicative function of language is more salient. In Europe proximal groups whose languages were divided by arbitrary political borders are regrouping across old barriers, as internal borders become narrower and lower, and reviving languages of affect and contact, even for local economy.

The Red Book

In February 1992, a group of linguistic experts was convened by a UNESCO programme which deals with the cultural heritage of the world to consider and report on the language diversity of the world. The experts called for 'world solidarity' to preserve 'the non-physical cultural heritage' of the world and its endangered languages (UNESCO 1992) and recommended the issuing of a *Red Book on Endangered Languages*. This alarm was generated by their finding that 90 per cent of the world's currently spoken languages are endangered and may become extinct within one or two generations. Depending on the exactitude of definition there are between five thousand and six thousand spoken languages today and at present rates of extinction there will remain only some five to six hundred by 2020, only a small handful of which will be spoken by sizeable numbers of people (Vines 1996).

For those nations or regions of the world that are excluded from the global integrated economy, and for those regions of countries that are otherwise part of the global economy but which themselves are not, a massive attrition of language and cultural diversity is currently under way. In the face of such relentless absorption of the world's societies into the web of consumer capital, 'experts' can offer only two (impotent and questionable) responses: either more research or a programme of human 'museumification'.

On the basis of a feasibility study, a number of regional ecological language reserves to protect the endangered or dying languages can be set up. Their aim will be to keep the ecology of endangered languages intact or to reduce the risks of their irreversible extinction. These are experimental laboratories for the scientists and managers concerned, aimed at enabling them to find out the most effective means of preserving numerous expressions of the non-physical cultural heritage.

(UNESCO 1992)

Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1986, p. 20) have labelled the advancement of languages of wider communication, and the subsequent death of indigenous languages, *linguicism*. By this they denote the crime of linguistic genocide and the reduction of the number of the world's languages. The major criminal in their scenario is English although there are a number of regional languages of wider communication in Africa, Asia and South America - sometimes through deliberate language planning but probably more commonly via the operation of

linguistic 'market forces' - which are also restricting the domains and functional range of pre-existing languages and leading to their death.

Bilingualism: skill versus sedition

In the same breath that America's politicians seek to make English the official language - the language for which there are year-long waiting lists in some cities for access to places in adult programmes - they are also commending the study of foreign language as a skill (Zelasko 1993). In education debates, bilingual education is frequently deprecated as a 'cash cow' and claimed as an enemy of American civilisation (Gingrich 1995), yet at least '33 Federal agencies have over 34,000 positions which require foreign language proficiency' (Lo Bianco 1997). These are in languages where proficiency is seen to be a skill, where the languages are desirable as Truly Foreign Languages or TFLs and thereby deemed capable of being able to 'add to or sustain a national competency' (Walton 1992). Mastery of foreign languages, spoken far away 'in other countries', is something sufficiently divorced from daily life that it can be appreciated as a skill. Its mastery is likely to be less than the mastery and attachment to English, not thereby challenging presumed deep attachments of national allegiance. However, when the languages are less foreign, when emotional attachment and mastery may be high, their study, public use and maintenance 'threaten civilisation'. No longer a skill, but sedition.

Designing multilingual futures

The Multiliteracies Project seeks to create a metalanguage to unite disparate areas of communication and representation, multimodally as well as multiculturally, into a new pedagogy. Much of its justificatory logic is the potential for pluralism within globalisation. However, as argued above, this pluralism can be seen to be deeply ambiguous. At the same moment as globalisation is generating cultural diversity, technological sophistication and civic pluralism, the linguistic diversity of the globe is contracting dramatically and within new and established nation-states formal practices of statecraft valorise distanced, foreign skill in languages and neglect or deprecate domestic language diversity.

For this reason a Multiliteracies pedagogy must be able to adopt a wider vision and envisage a linguistically plural society and future. Unilingualism sits comfortably with, and gives credence to, ideas of naturalness and inevitability of world view. These can be made vulnerable only through the study of other languages and the interruption of the naturalness to which each predisposes its users. As the largest signifying system and set of practices available to humans, languages represent the embodiment of pluralist alternatives. Languages are potentially continually additive because there is theoretically no limit to the number which could be learned, and they are cumulative because their learning requires systematicity since knowledge and skill are built on necessary prior knowledge and skill. They are also embedded in wider cultural practice because they are systemically integral to the symbolic order of the culture of which they form a part. The maintenance and acquisition of additional languages, within a pedagogy of explicit attention to the surrounding sociocultural context, may generate intercultural skill and competence few other areas of education could aspire to; add rigour and academic substance few other curriculum domains could equal; and, because languages are performative, require the acquisition of rules of practice and implementation that only practical 'hands-on' subjects envisage.

Each of the dimensions of the 'what' of the Multiliteracies Project is capable of integrally accommodating bilingual competence. Designs of meaning in languages differ and reflect arbitrary constructs of 'reality'. Available Designs as resources for Design are discursive orders shaped by languages, and within them are the conventions of semiotic activity particular to different 'lifeworlds'. Their multiplication across languages strengthens the purpose of Multiliteracies in focusing on the grammars of semiotic systems to give students transportable knowledge and skill for participation in rapidly evolving communication environments. The process of Designing inherently carries the

negotiating practice of languages, the pragmatics of meaning-making which allows pidgin languages to be created in a matter of hours. The proximity of languages without historical relationships produces original compromises for communication similar to the new Designs that emerge as the outcomes of Designing new meanings.

Integrally, then, the teaching and learning of other languages bolsters the purpose and practice of Multiliteracies, enabling each of its phases to de-naturalise communicative practice and thereby to render it more available to scrutiny. The policies of education systems in many countries, which seek continually to define the literacies and languages of immigrant minority and indigenous students as defective by assessment against established norms, could be subverted by attaching recognition to the potential articulacy of these same students. This squandered bilingualism is the direct result of the inability of education systems to comprehend the intellectualisation of a potential bilingual skill. Many children utilise complex literacy awareness and talent daily; literacies which invoke ethnic, ideological, religious, script, technical and nation-identity statuses (Saxena 1994) in a marketplace of authorised, traditional and hybrid forms. Like spoken language, diversity in the plural literacy practices of minority children is often relegated to the margins of their lives. Yet they have within them the power to open up new intellectual worlds which are, at the moment, linguistically and intellectually closed to us.

The Multiliteracies team has set itself several tasks for development, one of which is the accommodation of the pedagogy to include true linguistic diversity. It is already evident from the trials of the Multiliteracies framework in South Africa (see Newfield and Stein, Chapter 14 below) that language diversity is perceived by students to be a crucial area for further development. It is critical to avoid the normalising, or 'naturalising', of English language and literacy with consumer capital society.

The challenge faced by the Multiliteracies Project is to develop a theory of communication and meaning making for a radically changing world. The challenge of language variation and variation in language attitudes and communication patterns are both internal to language and part of the wider linguistic ecology of which each language is a part. For instance, it is possible in certain languages to raise questions that are not typically encountered in other languages. Certainly some questions cannot be adequately comprehended within the English language. There is simply no linguistic provision for this to take place.

To explain this point I will use three separate examples. First, written Japanese, a language which consists of three interacting script forms: Kanji (adapted Chinese ideograms); a syllabic system of fifty-six items called Hiragana which is used mainly for grammatical particles; and a variation of Hiragana, also of fifty-six items, called Katakana.

Katakana is like a more sharp-edged form of the syllabic system of Hiragana but it is interesting mainly in relation to our concept of Multi-literacies because of the ideological work that it performs in Japanese writing. The social and literacy functions of Katakana in Japanese communication systems come from its exclusive use to render foreign words in written form. When a second language learner of Japanese encounters the required use of Katakana the effect is like a semiotic jolt. The practice of reading and writing anything encodes a constant reminder, that for a learner requires conscious attention to a dimension of language of which English speakers can be barely conscious. This is the boundary which marks the foreign from the indigenous; both the existence and the extent of loans within a language. Whatever pragmatic force impels borrowing mostly in the spoken form it becomes phonologised and nativised. Written Japanese requires, however, its constant elevation, keeping before the learner a theory about language and its emblematic function for its native users.

There is a slight parallel in English, which can be glimpsed in the 1981 edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary*, which represents the first dictionary of English from an Australian standpoint. This dictionary adopted the practice of giving Australian usages the unmarked form, with an asterix

serving as a mark, both literally and linguistically, of foreign Englishes. If the effect of Katakana is a semiotic jolt for learners of the language it must be experienced differently, but no less significantly, by its native users. Mother-tongue readers and writers of Japanese may have a sort of recurring, underlying, practice of having to operationalise a national/ foreign boundary marking, via a distinctive script form which is like a sort of subliminal, habitual coding of loans. Kanji operates as an imported but nativised system for encoding Japanese words, while Katakana is a native system for encoding foreign words. There is both a practice - and a reason - for making salient a script alternation pattern around word origins. A theory of communication cannot but be influenced by coding practices that carry such depth of meaning.

My second, and perhaps more dramatic, example of script meaning-making of which there is no parallel in English comes from Vietnam. Vietnam has an ancient literary tradition. In the early eleventh century learned activity took place at the Temple of Literature in Hanoi. Exams were held to determine who was granted access to the Temple and to pursue a scholarly life. The exams were in Chinese, Chu Han, for Vietnam was at that time a colony of China.

For several centuries Vietnamese scholarship proceeded in Chinese using Chu Han, the Chinese ideograms. During the fourteenth century, however, the Vietnamese language itself evolved an indigenous writing form - Chu Nom - which used Chinese characters in combinations unintelligible to Chinese speakers. Ideograms are, of course, a radically different literary idea from the alphabetic script which the English language uses. The decoding of an ideogram involves instant access to an idea not mediated by the sound of letters or letter groups. Chu Nom further complicated ideogram-decoding by encoding both idea and grammar.

Chinese writing and its Vietnamese variant co-existed for centuries. Chinese was reserved for courtly affairs; for administration, education and government and other high-level tasks, even after Chinese colonial rule was over. Chu Nom, on the other hand, came to be used for vernacular or popular writing; for stories and poems about everyday life. Chu Han ruled and Chu Nom was for the ruled. This socially divided concept of literacy, or script hierarchy, remained until the seventeenth century when French priests devised a romanised representation of spoken Vietnamese, which came later to be called Quoc Ngu.

It is interesting to speculate about how we might regard these competing scripts within a Multiliteracies framework. Perhaps colonialism is an Available Design whose semiotics pervade script selection and use. In the long period of transition from colonial rule this goes through the process of being Redesigned, transforming its meanings into new Available Designs; Designs which will always carry the messages of the old system in the bruises and shape of the new forms. For the two centuries after Quoc Ngu emerged, Vietnamese literacy involved a series of struggles between Chu Han for ruling; Chu Nom for identity; and roman script for Catholicism and conversion. Quoc Ngu was despised by the users of Chinese, and resented by Chu Nom users.

As French colonial domination and rule took hold of the country, language policy became a critically important tool of its ruling, just as it had been for the Chinese rulers of Vietnam. There were several attempts to promote Quoc Ngu, as well as some attempts by French colonial elites to reinforce Chinese, since with this writing domination came a rigid hierarchy the French imagined would be easier to control than the possibly revolutionary effects of vernacularisation. French attempts to promote the French language both in spoken and written forms were, however, paramount; their attempts to promote Chinese were motivated only by the effort to remove Vietnamese from nationalist literature in Chu Nom, but resisted by the Confucian-loyal scholar class and independence-minded nationalists. Nobody desired, or even imagined possible, mass and popular literacy in any script.

During the twentieth century national opposition to French colonialism fused with communist politics. Literacy became an object and a means of fostering independence and rebellion. Quoc Ngu was reappraised from a European imposition to a practical tool for mass literacy. The complex history

and struggle of Vietnam led eventually to the full adoption of Quoc Ngu - initially Catholic proselytising writing - as the national script, via successful mass literacy campaigns.

Vietnam thus became the only Confucian society to adopt alphabetic writing. Vietnamese society and history thus have available to them a tradition, a set of practices and meanings, an experience of literacy, of language literacy, and of scripts in language literacy, that can truly be called Multiliteracies. When Vietnamese read and write, these very acts invoke meanings which English does not know. Accretions of meaning built on to script in anciently sanctioned ways makes literacy more than some ecological process; it is a cultural achievement in which standards are sanctioned and carry deep messages.

In this way, even though the script battle has been resolved in favour of romanised writing, the designs available for literate practice in Vietnam have dimensions, complexities and resonances that a theory of communication and meaning-making such as that proposed by the Multiliteracies Project must acknowledge and incorporate.

Examples of this can be found in certain religious-based literacy practices - what might be called devotional reading. In some religious practices, reading holy books or holy words, which are often gendered and specified by age, requires motion such as rocking and other gestural practices. These are critical to the reading since the relation between reader and text involves transcendence. Committing sacred words to the body, that is infusing the body or embodying the word and its transcendent knowledge, is a meaning-making (or meaning-receiving) form of communication that is not readily identifiable in English or any other Western literary practice. I can think of some Christian mystic practices that indeed do involve literacy events and practices that are distinctive in some ways - for example, what Shakers practise - but there are few devotional reading and reciting practices whose meaning is dependent on motion or gesture. There are, however, many mystical practices in many religions and typically words with powers of transcendence, which, after all, is what a mantra essentially constitutes, feature in these practices. These are Designs, if you like, available to participants, practitioners and believers. The process of Designing, and the Redesigning, both confirm and reproduce patterns from the culture and society and belief community. Invariably these are multimodal and much more ancient than any modality combinations that we accept as being multimodal.

My final example is more down to earth. Both the British national curriculum and the Australian curriculum frameworks and new literacy benchmarking activities have struggled with, but ultimately fail to accommodate, linguistic difference. Language diversity is either trivialised or confined to the outer spaces of a centre staked out exclusively for a monolingual literacy in standard English. Mukul Saxena (Saxena 1994) has argued persuasively about the complex literacy awareness and practices of Panjabi families, and especially the children in Southall in England, who deal with script choices and their associated religious identities: Panjabi written in Gurmukhi script and associated with Sikhs; Hindi written in Devanagari script and associated with Hindus; and Urdu which is written in Perso-Arabic script and associated with Muslims. As Saxena explains, all three languages can be written in all three scripts, with everyday Hindi and Urdu being very similar in their spoken form and especially in their grammar. However in certain contexts these are made to diverge with the importation of either Sanskrit or Perso-Arabic origin words to mark Hindu or Muslim allegiance. Combined with English literacy, children in families with several generations have available to them literacies that mark Western/South Asian choices, Muslim-secular-Sikh-Hindu choices, and various nationalisms. Children from such backgrounds show impressive literacy skill and subtle awareness of the complex worlds of identity choices in the continuum of Hindi-Urdu-Panjabi language. According to the dictates of national curriculum initiatives, however, such children are deemed to be pre-literate because these assessments are based on English literacy alone, ignoring, or at worst not identifying, this complexity.

Similarly, the professional elaboration to the literacy benchmarks in Australia currently make no mention of English as a second language, bilingualism, or any of the non-prestige Englishes for that

matter. It is as though schooled literacy in English in Australia can assume a native English community of learners. There is not one mention of traditional literacies in Australia; not one reference to the patterns of integration of signs, gestures, meaning in landforms and art which are an Australian literate tradition of great antiquity; let alone any mention of the spoken language differences from the assumed standard English norm which is seen to underlie all literacy learning in school. It is literacy issues such as these that the Multiliteracies Project must address in the future.

Within a pedagogy of Multiliteracies, languages other than English, foreign languages, individual and social bilingualism, and, more broadly, global language diversity justify their space. A Multiliteracies pedagogy cannot but be multilingual.



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