

**Multilingualism and multiliteracies in the mainstream:
A change-oriented case study**

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Multilingualism and multiliteracies as mainstream phenomena

The New London Group (1996) addresses issues of language and literacy in an increasingly diverse world in their proposal for a “pedagogy of multiliteracies.” They use the term multiliteracies to refer to the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity. They suggest that “new communications media are reshaping the way we use language. When technologies of meaning are changing so rapidly, there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning, however taught” (1996, p. 64). They add that when the “proximity of cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the key facts of our time” (p. 64), we need to rethink language learning and teaching. They ask, “what do these changes mean for literacy pedagogy” (p. 64)?

In order to improve their literacy pedagogy for English language learners (ELLs), many mainstream teachers are able to consult with colleagues who teach English as a second language or bilingual classes, or administrators who are knowledgeable about teaching literacy to ELL students. Nevertheless, mainstream teachers must often rely on their own resources and desire to alter and improve their instruction to suit their ELL students’ needs while also responding to and implementing district policies regarding ELLs and literacy. But, as the New London Group acknowledges, change involves more than simply implementing a new curriculum or innovative lessons. Literacy practices and teaching can be seen as complex practices that are socially and historically situated (Barton, 1994; Gregory & Williams, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; New London Group, 1996; Pennycook, 2001). Changes in literacy pedagogy must therefore involve openness to understanding non-dominant ways of using language and literacy and integrating them into instruction. But how this is to be achieved is not a simple or straightforward matter.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibilities of collaborative, change-oriented research on literacy instruction for ELL students through a discussion of a case study in progress. The research project discussed in this paper investigates the following questions: First, what are the issues faced by a mainstream teacher wishing to improve her language and literacy instruction for the ELL students in her elementary classroom? Second, how does the teacher's narrative history vis a vis literacy (that is, her life experiences with respect to literacy and literacy practices) interact with larger (i.e., district- and school-wide) language and literacy policies? In other words, how do micro (personal) and macro (contextual, political) factors interact to affect how she attempts to address the literacy needs of her ELL students? Third, how does this mainstream teacher interested in changing her literacy practice for ELL students effect change in her instruction? Finally, given the collaborative nature of this project, and a transformative research agenda, how does my role as the researcher and active participant in the classroom impact the change process?

In this paper, however, I focus my attention on change-oriented and collaborative research in this context. Specifically, I discuss the challenges and opportunities for research conducted within a feminist-poststructuralist framework, addressing issues such as the researcher/participant relationship, collaboration for pedagogical change, and constructs of validity, or trustworthiness. Note that there are numerous issues related to these that also complicate and trouble the conduct of such research—issues of ethics, voice, etc—which in the interest of time and space will not be addressed in this paper. However this is not to diminish the importance of these issues in conducting research within a feminist/poststructuralist theoretical framework.

Case study in progress

The research discussed in this paper involves a case study in progress of a mainstream elementary teacher attempting to better address the literacy needs of her ELL students. “Melissa” is a novice third grade teacher of Filipina origin in her mid-twenties. She speaks Spanish at an intermediate to advanced level, and uses it minimally for procedural purposes in her classroom, but not for instruction. Her students include native English speakers, as well as

nine speakers of Spanish and one Korean speaker. These ten students are pulled out for one hour a day for ESL instruction, but are in Melissa's class for the majority of the school day. Although Melissa has attended three district inservices on teaching ELL students, she has no other professional development or preservice teaching experiences working with ELL students. In some ways, she is a defacto ESL teacher. She was selected for this study because of her expressed desire to improve her literacy instruction for her ELL students. The school where Melissa teaches serves approximately 250 students in a small mid-western city, and represents a diverse array of ethnic, language and socioeconomic groups.

Data collection for this study includes semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, and classroom participant observations to assist me in getting to know my participant and the setting. Other data collection activities include a conversational e-mail journal between me and Melissa, joint lesson planning, and analysis of videotaped "model lessons" conducted by the researcher in Melissa's classroom. The interview data and relevant portions of the observational data and e-mail journals are being used collaboratively by the researcher and participants to construct Melissa's narrative history (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Godmundsdóttir, 2001) vis a vis literacy, or narrative accounts of Melissa's literacy practices throughout her life. The constructed narrative history is being analyzed along with the remaining data using Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the intertextuality of discourses extant in Melissa's literacy practices, her instructional practices, and the school's and district's literacy policies.

My own role as an active participant in this project and this project's transformative agenda require that I explain something about myself, my background, and my politics regarding bilingual and ESL education. Prior to beginning my doctoral studies, I was a bilingual fourth grade teacher for two years and an "at-home" mother for one and a half years. Before that I held various short-term positions teaching high school Spanish and substitute teaching in bilingual and ESL classrooms. I am a white, middle class female. My native language is English, but I am also fluent in Spanish as a second language. I am a committed advocate for strong bilingual programs for all children in the public schools, particularly dual language immersion programs that allow children and families to develop their native languages while acquiring proficiency in a second language. My

commitment to the current project stems from a growing sense of realism on my part about the current state of language in education policy and population trends in education. While I believe bilingual education is the ideal, it may be idealistic to expect quality bilingual programs in all settings. Even if that goal were to be achieved, there are too many children in the meantime sitting in mainstream classrooms with teachers unprepared to meet their needs. Accordingly, I am also committed to helping serve English language learners in whatever settings they find themselves, such as mainstream all-English classrooms.

In the next section I situate the case study in progress in terms of poststructural and feminist theories. I then discuss how these theories help me to understand this case while at the same time troubling those very understandings.

Poststructuralism, language, and literacy

Some would argue that in a multilingual and multiethnic world, the concept of “mainstream” no longer useful. From a poststructural perspective, it can be argued that “mainstream” is a construct of humanism—a way of viewing the world according to binary structures such as white/black (or brown), rich/poor, male/female, researcher/participant, good/bad, mainstream/other. Pennycook (2001) articulates a poststructuralist perspective with respect to the field of critical applied linguistics, arguing that we need to move beyond a dichotomous view (macro/micro; dominators/dominated; powerful/powerless) of language education that separates issues such as teacher agency and hegemonic power structures, and instead focus on how languages are used, negotiated and appropriated by subjects in local contexts. Within a poststructuralist framework, the present study investigates how a teacher mediates macro and micro forces, such as larger school district policies and her own subjectivities, instead of how those forces contrast with each other ideologically and act on the teacher.

A poststructuralist framework also questions how power operates through multiple discourses, focusing on concepts of intertextuality and hybridity in literacy instruction. James Gee (1996) defines discourses as "...ways of behaving, interacting, valuing,

thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or 'types of people') by specific groups of people....”

They are “ways of being in the world” and are accordingly social and products of social histories (p. viii). According to the New London Group, intertextuality refers to

the potentially complex ways in which meanings (such as linguistic meanings) are constituted through relationships to other texts (real or imaginary), text types (discourse or genres), narratives, and other modes of meaning (such as visual design, architectonic or geographical positioning). (1996, p. 82)

Hybridity, on the other hand, “...highlights the mechanisms of creativity and of culture-as-process.... People create and innovate by hybridizing -- that is, articulating in new ways -- established practices and conventions within and between different modes of meaning" (New London Group, 1996, p. 82). This study explores the intertextual links between two teachers’ literacy practices, the discourses of literacy extant in school/district language and literacy policies, the teachers’ actual literacy instruction, and their ELL students’ home/community literacy practices. I am also interested in what kinds of hybrid language and literacy practices these teachers may facilitate, encourage, or bring into their classrooms.

Feminism(s) in educational research

Feminism resembles poststructuralist thought in its shift away from traditional ways of knowing. However, feminism also supports research for change (Hollingsworth, 1994; Lather, 1991; Weiner, 1994). In discussing feminist praxis research, Weiner states,

First, praxis constitutes an indication of a continuing feminist commitment to changing the world rather than merely researching it...; Second, praxis rejects the 'theory/research' divide, uniting 'manual and intellectual activities which are symbiotically related' (Stanley, 1990, p. 15). Third, it dissolves the methodological/epistemological split in which 'method' is the relatively insignificant 'how' subordinated to the significant 'what' -- the knowledge that is being sought. Here, then, the vision of feminist praxis is further extended to

encompass not only theory, action and values, but also has the epistemological aim of challenging and dissolving conventional, regulative dualisms such as male-female, mental-manual, black-white, theory-practice and so on (p. 129).

For Weiner, feminist praxis may contain some if not all of the following features: 1) deriving from experience and rooted in practice; 2) continually subject to revision as a result of experience; 3) reflexive and self-reflexive; 4) widely accessible and open to change; 5) grounded in the analysis of women's (and men's) multiple and different material realities; 6) illuminative of women's (and men's) multiple and different experiences and material realities; 7) explicitly political and value-led; 8) within the classroom, imbued with feminist organizational practices grounded in equality, non-hierarchy and democracy; and 9) within educational research, additionally rejecting conventional dualisms such as theory/practice, mental/manual, epistemology/methodology (p. 130).

According to this view, feminist praxis research is political and counter-hegemonic. Such a conceptualization of feminist praxis research assists me in disturbing traditional assumptions about knowledge and empirical research methods. Although I do not focus directly on issues of gender inequities, I draw from feminists' tradition of questioning historically male-dominated and legitimized views of what constitutes legitimate knowledge and ways of knowing. In doing so, I utilize the conception of feminism in education as political, seeking to improve the life chances or educational conditions of those who have been "othered," or placed on the downside of humanistic dualisms such as male/female, white/black or brown, rich/poor.

Such a vision of feminist research is not shared by all, however. Poststructural feminists, for example, often critique change-oriented praxis research as operating within an "emancipatory modernist" (Pennycook, 2001) paradigm that is not reflexive, or too sure of its own righteousness (see Lather, 2001). Lather (1991) asks, "What would a sociological project look like that was not a technology of regulation and surveillance" (p. 15). She argues that

Postmodernism offers feminists ways to work within and yet challenge dominant discourses. Within postmodernist feminism, language moves from representational to constitutive; binary logic implodes, and debates about 'the real' shift from a radical constructivism to a discursively reflexive position which recognizes how our knowledge is mediated by the concepts and categories of our understanding. Hegemonic forms of academic discourse are thoroughly challenged, including those at play in our intendedly counter-hegemonic work.... (p. 39)

However, for Lather, political engagement and interestedness in research differs from emancipatory work, in which the researcher seeks to change the life situation of those she researches according to her own conceptions of what constitutes a better way of life. Lather (1991) suggests that the key issue for those conducting praxis-oriented research is “how to maximize self as mediator between people's self-understandings and the need for ideology critique and transformative social action without becoming *impositional*” (p. 64). This dilemma weighs heavily on my project, and will be discussed later in this paper with respect to the collaborative research relationship.

At the same time that poststructuralist and feminist theories help situate the goals and research questions of the present study, they also pose significant methodological challenges. The remainder of this paper will address the challenges and opportunities posed by poststructuralism and feminism in conducting a change-oriented case study. I will focus on the researcher/participant relationship, conducting collaborative research with a transformative agenda, and issues of validity and trustworthiness. In these discussions I will address how I have attempted to deal with the challenges and opportunities in and through the case study in progress.

Researcher/participant relationship

Field notes, informal interview, 3/23/03:

During this afterschool visit Melissa and I talked about the statewide standardized testing that she has to administer next week. She has really been

“teaching to the test,” although we didn’t use those words in our discussion. But she has been using her language arts time to have the students read short informational passages and then have them answer multiple choice questions about the readings—in the same style as typical standardized tests. All of her students were working on this in English, including her English language learners. She suggested that the use of these activities was partly because the new district superintendent places a lot of emphasis on testing, and that most of her English language learners would have to take the test. I asked her how she felt about the statewide standardized test, and she said she does not like it one bit. She said, “They’re children. They don’t care about this test, and why should they?” In this discussion I was very cognizant of my own experiences as a fourth grade teacher, and I drew on this experience to make Melissa more comfortable, more willing to share information—so that she would see me as an insider (?). I expressed my own dislike for standardized tests, and how it impacted my own teaching. I did not tell her that I refused to teach to the test. I need to think about how *I* talk about literacy, teaching, testing, students, etc., and how this may impact Melissa, her teaching, and this project.

As is evident in the above excerpt from my fieldnotes, the researcher/participant relationship can strongly affect the kinds of data that are collected. But particularly salient in the above example are issues of power and how power operates discursively through the researcher/participant relationship. Mainstream discourses (and counter-discourses) of race, ethnicity, gender, class, education, etc. will inevitably surface throughout this collaborative project, and it is through these discourses that power--defined according to Foucault as “that which is to be explained” (see Pennycook, 2001)--is exercised and negotiated. A primary methodological challenge, then, lies in critically reflecting on and challenging how we (researcher and participant) and the educational institutions we represent think, talk about, and enact literacy practices and literacy instruction while recognizing and mediating issues of power as it operates and is produced through the research relationship (Moje, 2000).

In response to this challenge, and in order to help situate the present study culturally and historically, I have been constructing researcher autobiographical narratives related to my own teaching and literacy practices, as well as my experiences with ELL students. Such a method is in concert with feminist theory. According to Gaby Weiner,

Autobiographical accounts...can be helpful in furthering understanding about how historical events are played out. By utilizing the narrative structure of biography, they can help us understand changes in historical perspective of, and social conditions in, say, education at the same time as offering frameworks within which personal choices and apparently serendipitous events can be located and positioned. (1994, p. 10)

Autobiographical narratives can aide in understanding how researchers and their participants recognize, resist, reproduce and mediate different discourses of power, race, education, and conceptions of literacy that pervade the research relationship and teaching and research practice.

In the present case study, I have been writing my autobiographical narratives in response to observations made in Melissa's classroom or conversations she and I have had. The following is an excerpt from a narrative I wrote about my own experiences as a novice teacher having to administer state mandated standardized tests to my ELL students:

Researcher autobiographical narrative, April, '03:

As a fourth grade bilingual teacher I felt the same way about state standardized testing that Melissa does, but during my first and second years of teaching I did not teach to the test. I felt pressure to teach to the test, but felt that the tests were very unfair for my English language learning students. One of the reasons that perhaps I felt able, as an untenured, novice teacher, to not teach to the test was because I knew that I would only be living in that area of the country for a limited amount of time (two years) due to my husband's career. Knowing this made me less concerned about "behaving myself" to maintain my job. Financially we could do well on my husband's salary, and I knew I would be quitting my job relatively soon. This position of privilege allowed me a certain degree of freedom in how I performed my job, in how I taught.

Noteworthy in this autobiographical excerpt is Melissa's presence. Although the events I reflect on through this narrative occurred six years ago, before I even met Melissa, she is there in the impetus for my reflections. She is there as I write, or re-create, the events of the past. In this sense I see Melissa and myself as two parts of the same story. St. Pierre's (1997a; 1997b) metaphor of the fold is useful here. She sees the fold as a way to understand "the conflation of the subjectobject, inside-outside binaries" (1997a, p. 3). As she explains with respect to her own research,

I believed that the subject of my fieldwork, this researcher, was not the unified, contained, stable individual of liberal humanism but a subject folded into subjectivity by the outside, a subject who could not be separated from the outside but always a part of it, folding, unfolding, refolding with/in it. (1997a, p. 3)

The concept of the fold treats the outside as a mirror of the inside, disrupting and deconstructing the "interiority-exteriority binary" (1997a, p. 3). The disruption of the subject-object, or researcher-participant binary is evident in a number of studies highlighting the often messy relationship between researcher and participant (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2002; Hollingsworth, 1994; Sondergaard, 2002).

So what does this mean for the conduct of my research? Rather than denying my own power and influence in the research relationship, I assume that both Melissa's and my own discourses in use will affect or color the kinds of data that are identified, collected, and analyzed. The use of autobiographical narratives in the present study will be used as an analytical tool to help expose and allow me to critique my own discourses of language, literacy, and instruction, and how they reflect, exercise and create power in the research study and the research relationship.

Whose agenda is it, anyway? Collaborating for change

In discussing new directions for research on literacy, Berg (2003) suggests, Today's expanded conception of literacy cannot be reduced any longer to the machine-like simulation of human information processing.

Moreover, it is not enough to rely on traditional university-based debates about how to deal with multilingualism. Researchers must become partners with readers and practitioners. They must work with them, not just talk about them. (p. 108)

This call for collaboration is echoed by a number of researchers (Delgado-Gaitan, 2002; Edelsky & Boyd, 1993; Hollingsworth, 1994; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). According to Shulamit Reinharz (1992), in participatory or collaborative feminist research, the participant helps make decisions about the study design and analysis. She explains,

This model is designed to create social and individual change by altering the role relations of people involved in the project. The model can be limited to a slight modification of roles or expanded so that all participants have the combined researcher/subject role.... To achieve an egalitarian relation, the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk. Differences in social status and background give way as shared decision-making and self-disclosure develop. (p. 181)

However, I would argue that we cannot assume that differences in status, and therefore in power, will disappear simply by declaring and attempting to implement a research model of shared decision-making. Just as power plays into the negotiation of the researcher/participant relationship, it is crucial that we recognize how power operates through collaborative inquiry.

In my research, I am assisting Melissa, at her request, in adapting her literacy instruction to better meet the needs of her ELL students. In doing so, I have been trying to follow her lead in terms of exactly what kinds of assistance she would like, and ultimately what she would like to get out of this collaboration. I have specifically and explicitly attempted to engage in shared decision making, as described in an excerpt from my field notes, written after an afterschool meeting with Melissa:

I asked Melissa again what exactly she would like to get out of this project. We had discussed it before, but I wanted to be sure that I knew what she wanted and that she was going to feel that this project was serving her needs. I suggested

that she could think about it and e-mail me, but she said, “Lara, you *know* what I want out of this project. I want to be able to reach all my students.” She also said she could really use “a second pair of hands” in the classroom to help students out when they have questions. I told her that a teacher I worked with a couple years ago suggested that videotaped lessons (of her and of me conducting model lessons) would be helpful, and I asked her if that was something she would be interested in. She said she would be interested, and also said she would like me to give her specific suggestions for instruction when I observe a lesson or strategy that could be improved to better meet her English language learning students’ needs. We also agreed, based on my suggestion, that joint lesson planning might be helpful. *Fieldnotes, 5/21/03*

In transcribing and reviewing my fieldnotes I am struck by how power may operate unequally even in overt attempts to level the playing field in a collaborative research relationship. If a participant asks a researcher to intervene when the researcher deems it necessary, or to make specific instructional suggestions, to what degree is collaboration really happening? Who has the power to make what decisions, and how is this power exercised and recognized in the collaborative relationship? Given the issue of power, what can be the role of collaboration in a project with a transformative agenda? In the rest of this section I explore how feminism and poststructuralist thought trouble and inform collaborative and change-oriented research.

As indicated above, there are cautions to be considered in conducting collaborative research, specifically with regard to how power operates through a collaborative relationship and whose agenda is being followed in transforming practice. Edelsky and Boyd (1993) welcome changes in research traditions brought about by collaboration in terms of the hierarchy of research--participants and researchers acting on a more even keel. However, they claim “that...collaborative research in education may be a phenomenon with a too-smooth exterior that masks internal contradictions and tensions” (p. 4). They suggest that in collaborative research there is a fine balance between collaboration and critique, and between institutionalized hierarchical relationships among participants and researchers: “Status differences emanating

from outside of collaborative research often lurk in the shadows inside it and impinge on it" (p. 17).

Moje (2000) comes to a similar conclusion. She suggests that simply conducting collaborative research without critically assessing the power relationships involved in teacher/researcher collaboration is problematic. Drawing from feminist-poststructuralist theories (i.e., Lather, 1991) and her own experience of a difficult collaborative research relationship, Moje states that "smooth collaborations are upheld as the ideal, but the quest for smoothness, closeness, and friendliness may be driven or confused by dominant ideologies of 'niceness,' especially for women engaged in research" (Moje, 2000, p. 25). She questions "how positions and power relations are negotiated and contested in uncomfortable research relationships and what possibilities emerge from engaging in frustrating, seemingly non-collaborative practices" (Moje, 2000, p. 26). Following Foucault, she sees power as socially negotiated and communicated not only through spoken language, but through discourses such as body language and dress. She states, "The recognition that even attempts to deny power can result in oppressive relations is perhaps the most troubling notion for a stance that calls for closeness, rapport, and collaboration in research" (p. 28). Goldstein (2000) goes a bit farther, suggesting that it is not even possible to have a truly collaborative relationship between researcher and researched. Instead, she strives for "symbiosis" in her collaboration--"research that is mutually beneficial to both the researcher and the researched and hurts no one in the process" (Goldstein, 2000, p. 524).

Edelsky and Boyd (1993) also highlight a tension between conservative versus emancipatory ends for collaborative research:

When research topics tend to lead the eye away from seeing how whole groups are kept in their place or when the research does not challenge the ideology of materials or curriculum, can it do anything more than contribute to keeping things as they are? What would it take to make collaborative research nonhierarchical, empowering, *and* emancipatory? (Edelsky & Boyd, 1993, pp. 17-18)

As noted earlier in this paper, Lather (1991) poses a similar dilemma: How do we conduct research for change without the researcher imposing her own idea of what form that change should take? Again poststructuralism is critical of emancipatory research as being too sure of it's self. However, while my research has a transformative agenda, Melissa was specifically selected and agreed to participate in this study because she wanted to transform her practice. In other words, I did not select a participant based on the degree to which *I* thought she needed to change, but rather on the basis of whether or not *she* wanted to change. Clearly, this does not eliminate power differentials. Indeed, the goals of transformed practice in this study are focussed on my own understandings and experiences teaching in bilingual/ESL classrooms. But it does make me less comfortable with the term "emancipatory," and more comfortable with the term "collaborative." I believe that research with a transformative agenda, even if the goals for exactly how practice is transformed emanate primarily from the researcher, can be self-critical and reflexive. In addition, as the researcher I must be open to not just helping enact change, but also being changed. Along the same lines, I need to be conscious not only of how, as a university researcher I have and may exercise symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1992) over my participant, but also the ways in which she may be on the upper end of the power relationship (for example, in the classroom and through her more intimate knowledge of her students).

Lather (1991) states, "the potential for creating reciprocal, dialogic research designs is rooted in the intersection between people's self-understandings and the researcher's efforts to provide a change-enhancing context" (p. 65). But in Lather's more recent writing, she re-thinks her conceptualization of "praxis" (Lather, 2001). Drawing from Derrida, she thinks of praxis as "living on," working and practicing, while at the same time "dislocating the self-presence of the concept as a sort of redemption" (p. 9). She continues, "My interest is a praxis that attends to poststructuralist suspicions of rationality, philosophies of presence and universalizing projects..." (p. 9). So what does this tension between involvement and imposition mean for a project such as my own? Lather's reconceptualization of praxis helps me trouble taken for granted humanist assumptions about me, my participant, and my data. Designing and carrying out a collaborative research project with a transformative agenda must involve both researcher and participant communicating honestly and openly about their goals and visions for the research and being reflexive regarding the issues of power that underlie such a collaboration.

Understanding how power operates from a poststructuralist perspective, and practicing reflexivity should be at the forefront of discussions about and practice of collaborative change-oriented research. However, I must document this critical reflexivity in my research. In addition to videotaping myself conducting model guided reading lessons with Melissa's students (at Melissa's request), I will be audiotaping me and Melissa as we watch and critique the videotapes. At the same time, throughout the research project, Melissa and I will be communicating through an e-mail journal, discussing events in the classroom, clarifying issues of instruction, or of the data. Both of these methods are attempts to document and provide space for critically reflecting on our collaborative relationship. I will then analyze both of these bodies of information in order to elucidate discourses and counter-discourses regarding language and literacy practices and issues of power as they play out in our work.

Trustworthiness and Catalytic Validity

As a politically interested researcher in a collaborative and change-oriented project situated within school and university settings still dominated by modernism and positivist thinking, I often find I must respond to questions of credibility and validity with regard to my research. I conceptualize the credibility of my research in terms of trustworthiness and authenticity, and catalytic validity (Pennycook, 2001).

Edge and Richards argue that "feminism has forced researchers to confront the place and voice of the individual and the ways in which these are represented" (Edge & Richards, 1998, p. 346). They argue that the value of the biographical or narrative method, rests on the personal element of shared stories, and that "at root the problem is to retain and defend the authenticity of the participant's account" (Goodson, 1991, cited in Edge & Richards, 1998, p. 347). But given the disintegration in poststructuralist thinking of binaries such as subject/object and the troubling of constructs such as "data," how does one ensure the authenticity or trustworthiness of one's data and findings? According to Edge and Richards, authenticity can occur only if "relevant aspects of the value-system of the researcher [are] explicitly declared: there must be a position, indicative of purpose, and possibly of expectation" (Edge & Richards, 1998, p. 349). Furthermore, as in traditional qualitative research, care can be taken through the use of triangulation of events and member checks to ensure that the participant is being accurately

represented, or re-created, in the narrative account. But St. Pierre, (1997b) suggests that this is not enough. Alvermann (2000a) recommends methods such as including the participant's voice or own account parallel to the narrative composed by the researcher in research reports or writings, as well as blending narrative methods with other methods such as case study and ethnography in order to give findings authority. Including Melissa as a potential co-creator of her own narrative history, and my own involvement constructing the narrative, illustrates in the context of research methodology the feminist-poststructuralist concern with disintegrating the subject/object binary. Moreover, by involving Melissa in constructing these and my own autobiographical narratives, my work may potentially become more critical, recognizing and exposing the multiple voices of experience and discourses of language and literacy at work in Melissa's classroom. But the "crises of representation and legitimation" (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000) are not easily dealt with or dismissed. In the end, the researcher must be vigilant in her efforts to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of her data and findings. As Carter (1993) suggests, "we must...become much more self-conscious than we have been in the past about the issues involved in narrative and story, such as interpretation, authenticity, normative value and what are purposes are for telling stories in the first place" (1993, p. 11). It is here that feminist and poststructuralist theories assist me—in becoming more reflexive; more self-consciously critical in my research.

I also find legitimation for my work in its reflexively transformative agenda. Research in applied linguistics should be responsive to "catalytic validity," which "asks how effective research is in bringing about social and political change" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 168). Lather (1991) also discusses the importance of catalytic validity, conceptualizing it as the degree to which research re-orient, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it. Lather's view of catalytic validity is similar to Freire's "conciencizao," and flies in the face of researcher neutrality. Some, like Scheurich (1997), would argue that Lather's ideas of catalytic validity represent just another modernist construct, or standard, and are critical of its assumptions about "reality" and lack of reflexivity. Nevertheless, I believe that striving for catalytic validity in Pennycook's terms--a project that helps bring about social and political change—while at the same time being self-critical of the researcher's own politics and understandings holds much promise for educational research in general, and for my project in particular.

Concluding thoughts

In discussing the future of the field of interpretive studies, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) predict a postfoundational paradigm:

...race-, ethnic-, and gender-specific interpretive communities will fashion interpretive criteria out of their interactions with postpositivist, constructivist, critical theory and poststructural sensibilities. These criteria will be local, aesthetic, emic, existential, political and emotional. They will push the personal to the forefront of the political, where the social text becomes the vehicle for the expression of politics (p. 915).

They suggest four common commitments of interpretive inquiry and qualitative researchers: 1) the belief that the world of human experience should be studied from the view of the historically and culturally situated individual; 2) that qualitative researchers will work outward from their own biographies; 3) scholars will value and produce works that speak clearly and powerfully about the worlds studied; and 4) "these texts will be committed not just to describing the world, but to changing it" (p. 915). The present case study marks a movement toward the kind of interpretive and qualitative research envisioned by Denzin and Lincoln. In the process, poststructuralist thinking and feminism challenge me to break down the binary structures and assumptions that tend to bind our understandings and guide the researcher/participant relationship and collaborative research, while at the same encouraging a critical and reflexive catalytic validity.

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