An Autoethnographic Approach to Identity and Second Language

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL   English as a Second Language

NEST   Native English Speaking Teacher

NLS   New Literacy Studies

NNEST Non-native English Speaking Teacher

SLA   Second Language Acquisition

SLS   Second Language Studies

SLW   Second Language Writing

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sonder[1] *n.* the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed... (The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows 2013)

The starting point for this book was a simple personal observation about the inadequate ways second language learners[2] like me were represented in academic publications. I thought it was essential that second language scholars came to a sonder and ultimately respected our lives and experiences. When I first started reading research articles on second language learners, I noticed that the academic literature did not always recognize or do justice to our subjective life experiences (Kouritzin 2000). My inference was parallel to Thesen's (1997) observation in her research. Thesen documented a mismatch between the ways second language learners saw themselves and how institutions and, to some degree, research communities addressed these individuals and represented their experiences (see also Firth and Wagner 2007). As a researcher, I found that this observation piqued my intellectual curiosity about the subjective life experiences of multilinguals and made me wonder how I could capture these experiences in their richness, dynamism, and complexity.

Much to my dismay, I repeatedly observed that the experiences of multilingual writers were dissected into unrecognizable pieces and transformed into conceptual objects that were not always true to the experiences of multilingual writers. In my opinion, something quite interesting was getting lost in translation. For example, most research articles did not provide enough information about their participants or their

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[1] Sonder comes from French and its verb form means examining something carefully and/or in depth.
[2] For the purposes of this study, I use multilinguals, multilingual writers, second language writers, second language learners, and second language users interchangeably.

natural habitats. Hence, they did not allow the readers to imagine the people of whom they spoke as human beings with sophisticated lives or as members of various communities situated in time and space. Notable exceptions include case studies such as Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988), Kinginger (2004), and Schmidt (1983), in which their participants—Nate, Alice, and Wes, respectively—came across as real people. An additional point to note here is that studies similar to Peirce's (1995) and Prior and Shipka's (2003) research demonstrate that a study does not have to be about one individual to be loyal to experience. To give some examples, research studies can take a specific setting or object as their focus instead of individuals yet still be close to experience—for example, they can concentrate on a classroom (e.g., Duff 1995), a document (e.g., Haas and Witte 2001), a building (e.g., Swales 1998), or a company (e.g., Spinuzzi 2003). Unlike most research studies, the studies above show what it really takes to accomplish real-life goals related to language and writing as actual writers/language learners are engaged in real-life tasks.

Being a multilingual writer and a writing instructor to many multilingual writers, I instinctively knew that our realities were quite different from those represented in most research articles. However, I did not truly understand how vast the fracture was until I read some research studies on multilingual writers like me and participated in studies myself. When I read multilinguals' experiences retold in the academic literature, I realized the differences between what mattered to me as a multilingual writer, on the one hand, and what researchers studying our experiences wrote or focused on, on the other. To remedy this disconnect between research and experience, I decided to take full advantage of my multiple identities as a person who could assume the perspectives of both a multilingual and a researcher. I believe a better alignment between experience and its academic description has much to offer to Second Language Studies (SLS) as an emerging field as well as to multilingual writers and people who interact with them.

To that end, similarly to Simon-Maeda (2011) and Canagarajah (2012), in this book, I investigated my own experiences regarding my academic identity and literacy development as a multilingual writer. Using ethnographic data and narrative inquiry, I examined my academic identity and literacy development as an international graduate student in a second language throughout my graduate studies—in light of the academic literature on identity and literacy but also in alignment with my perspective as a multilingual. The conceptual framework informing this longitudinal study was partly Bakhtin's dialogic approach and partly the principles and best practices generally accepted in identity and literacy research. In this

book, I examined my ontogenesis as a multilingual academic writer based on my life history/literacy narratives and ethnographic data. The framing questions I explored are 1) What kind of identity work does becoming an international graduate student entail? 2) What are the academic literacy practices of an international graduate student? and 3) How do the identities and literacy practices of an international graduate student interact with each other and change, both contextually and over time? The purpose of this book was to capture the fleeting realities of a multilingual writer holistically, including the mindscapes as well as the practices that constituted those realities. My aim is not to dismiss or replace other ways of inquiry but rather to complement existing theoretical approaches and empirical findings in the SLS literature by contributing to the line of research in SLS that investigates the subjective experiences of multilinguals.

It is encouraging that in recent years more researchers have begun to acknowledge the importance of capturing the subjective experiences of multilinguals, or *emicity*. In this context, I want to clarify the term *emic*. *Emic* refers to the participants' meaning and value systems or subjective points of view regarding their experiences, while an *etic* point of view prioritizes the observations and interpretations of the researchers over the interpretations of the insiders. The idea of *emicity* has a much longer history beyond second language studies—e.g., anthropology (Harris 1976) and linguistics (Pike 1967). However, since the 1990s but especially in recent years, many SLS scholars have pointed out the importance of *emic* understanding and called for more *emic* studies to complement more *etically* oriented research, which has been prevalent in SLS (Firth and Wagner 2007; Lillis 2008; Pavlenko 2002b). This book aims to address this perceived need for *emic* studies to reach a more comprehensive understanding of second language identity and literacy as well as their interaction.

Assuming that a discrepancy exists between the realities of multilingual writers and the academic literature studying multilingual experience, as I claim, and despite recent calls in the direction of fixing this imbalance in SLS, some might still ask why it is necessary to account for the experiences of multilingual writers from their perspectives. The representation of identities and literacy practices of multilingual writers through their own eyes is worth investigating for several reasons. First, as I illustrate in this book, subjective experiences/interpretations make a difference. They do so in the ways multilingual writers respond to their audiences and interlocutors, develop attitudes toward their second languages, situate themselves in the communities in which they participate, and assign value and meaning to their interactions. Second, not opening spaces for the subjective experiences of multilingual writers in academic

venues has ramifications; for instance, it might have an alienating effect on multilingual writers/scholars themselves. Because the researchers' interpretations of multilingual experiences seem to have priority over those of multilinguals, they might feel silenced. For example, Pavlenko's (2003) study demonstrated the negative effects of some identity labels in the academic community, such as "native speaker" and "non-native speaker," on language teachers in a TESOL program. Especially when there is a mismatch between the experiences of multilingual writers and their representation in the literature, as has been the case for me, multilingual writers might begin seeing themselves as "weird," "abnormal," or, even worse, "inferior" in some way. Alternatively, even if the difference between multilinguals' experiences and their representations is positive, this misrepresentation can still put pressure on multilingual writers to measure up to some unrealistic expectations—parallel to the case of body image and self-esteem problems caused by unrealistic representation of female bodies in the media (e.g., Sheehan 2013). Misrepresentation can also be detrimental to the research community because descriptions of multilingual writers will be incomplete, skewed, and misleading (Firth and Wagner 2007). Therefore, my main claim is that developing multilingual identities and literacies is an intensive and complex developmental experience about which much more should be investigated, especially from the perspectives of multilingual writers themselves. Even when the researchers are multilinguals themselves, this does not necessarily guarantee a research approach or research report that puts the participants' point of view or story to the fore. This endeavor is important both for ethical reasons and to develop more accurate conceptual tools to understand the development of multilingual writers.

Based on the in-depth descriptions that an ethnographic case study affords, in this book, I provide a detailed description of identity and literacy development in a second language. This project can contribute to SLS in two primary ways. First, because it is an autoethnography, it provides a window into the *emic* perspective of the participant. Second, because it is a holistic study, it allows readers to see various factors working together *in situ*—sometimes in alignment, sometimes in opposition, and often in uniquely complicated interactions. I elaborate on these points below.

The first strength of this project is its *emicity*, a central feature of autoethnographic studies. Because autoethnography is not a common research method in SLS, I would first like to provide a tentative definition of autoethnography. Autoethnography is a qualitative mode of inquiry in which the participant, the writer, and the researcher are the same person. In this special case of ethnography, both the behavior and the consciousness

of the participant-researchers are presented in the final report.[3] The most distinctive feature of autoethnography is that it conveys the *emic* perspectives of the participants. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, it is critical for the voices of multilingual writers to be included in conversations regarding their worlds and lives. Among other reasons, it is important because coming to a *sonder* regarding multilingual writers makes it possible for them to be seen with empathy as fellow human beings and consequently to be treated ethically by both the research community and the institutions and policymakers that have an influence on the lives of multilinguals. This is especially important in cases in which multilingual writers are in disadvantaged positions in the communities of which they are a part, for example, as immigrants or minorities. It is not difficult to see that for researchers, policymakers, and teachers alike, reaching an understanding and potentially predicting and changing behavior cannot be possible without first learning about why people do the things they do from their *emic* perspectives.

In addition to its *emicity*, a second strength of this book is that it takes a holistic approach. Holistic studies are those that aim to account for all the aspects of a structure or entity they investigate. For example, these studies focus on language learners as human beings with lives rather than as people who exist only in language classrooms, or they investigate an entire writing process or writing task rather than examining a single variable, such as written feedback. Holistic studies are valuable because they make reaching a comprehensive understanding based on different studies, research areas, and findings more likely, by opening spaces for dialogue and balancing the negative effects of overspecialization. Taking advantage of being a case study, this book looked at various factors influencing identity and literacy development rather than examining these factors in isolation. As Silva (1990, 20) has noted, ideally, "the writer, reader, text, and context, as well as their interaction" should all be accounted for to reach a more complete understanding of second language writing. Following Silva, in this book, I looked at the writing and reading that took place in a graduate school, the texts and contexts enacted by people, and their dynamic relationship in a way that emphasized the interdependence of writers, readers, texts, and contexts.

My overall goal is to present the mental, social, and physical realities of becoming a multilingual writer in an academic context. By publishing this book, which is based on my dissertation, I hope to reach a wider

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[3] See Denzin (2006), Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), Holman Jones (2005), and Watson Gegeo and Gegeo (2011) for alternative definitions of autoethnography.

audience who might find the contents useful in some way. I also hope that my narratives will help others see second language writers like me as living beings. They say that storytelling invites more storytelling. I will consider my goal accomplished if other people can recognize their stories in mine and if I can inspire more multilingual writers to share their stories and more researchers to embrace these stories. In this sense, my hope is to tell stories that go beyond description and make a difference.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In general, this project utilizes a sociocultural conceptual framework. This framework consists of generally accepted principles on identity and literacy in the literature,[4] complemented by Bakhtin's dialogic approach. Because the purpose of this study is to describe the subjective experiences of a multilingual writer, I refrained from following any theoretical orientation or concept in the areas of identity or literacy too closely, and, consequently, from imposing a particular theoretical lens on subjective experiences. Instead, this project utilizes an eclectic conceptual framework that allowed for a larger degree of freedom in capturing and explaining the particularity of first-person experiences.

In this chapter, I first present the theoretical frameworks regarding identity and literacy that informed this study. Then I provide a brief overview of Bakhtin's dialogic framework to the extent that it influenced this project (see Appendix A for an account of my personal engagement with Bakhtin). Along with Bakhtin's dialogic approach, the generally accepted principles on identity in SLS and the New Literacy Studies (NLS) approach in literacy studies served as the conceptual framework for the current project. Below, I briefly explain the basic principles and concepts of these sociocultural theoretical orientations that are relevant to the study.

A Conceptual Framework for Identity

Partly as a result of globalization and partly owing to the rise of poststructuralism, identity research has enjoyed a growing interest in a wide range of language-related disciplines. Poststructuralism has been a significant driving force behind this rising interest in identity and therefore it is not surprising that poststructuralist theories and frameworks have been

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[4] See Norton and Toohey (2011) and Barton and Hamilton (2000) for reviews of identity and literacy, respectively.

more influential at the intersection of identity studies and language-related fields.[5]

The most influential theories and theorists in identity research in SLS have been Pierre Bourdieu (1991), Judith Butler (1990), Benedict Anderson (1991), Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), Chris Weedon (1987), Neo-Vygotskyan approaches, and, to a lesser degree, Bakhtin (1981). For example, Bakhtin's *authoritative and internally persuasive discourses* (e.g., Lee and Maguire 2011) and *chronotope* (e.g., Prior and Shipka 2003), Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (e.g., Menard-Warwick 2005), Butler's *performativity* (e.g., Pennycook 2004), Anderson's *imagined communities* (e.g., Kanno and Norton 2003), Lave and Wenger's *situated learning* and *legitimate peripheral participation* (e.g., Morita 2004), and Weedon's *subjectivity* (e.g., McKinney and Norton 2008) have been popular and fruitful theoretical constructs in SLS. Similarly, Neo-Vygotskyan approaches, such as sociocultural theory and activity theory, have been utilized by many researchers in investigating the relationship between identity and language (e.g., Ivanič 2006; Lantolf and Genung 2002; Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). The current study draws and expands on these theories of identity.

Guiding Principles about Identity

As suggested above, identities have been approached using various theoretical constructs and orientations in the SLS literature. Despite this diversity, it is possible to observe some commonalities in the ways identities are theoretically conceptualized. Because the aim of this study is to use the accumulated wisdom of the scholars investigating identity without losing sight of the particularity of the case, these common denominators, rather than a particular theory, served as the conceptual framework for the current study. According to the conceptual framework used in this study, identities are multiple, heterogeneous, situated, and dynamic. The following list of principles distilled from the literature on identity informed the present study.

- Identities are multiple (e.g., Burgess and Ivanič 2010). In any given context, there are multiple identities. Multiplicity applies equally to individuals and communities. Particular individuals occupy

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[5] It is worth noting that, unfortunately, poststructuralist and postcolonial theorists such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Edward W. Said have not been utilized as widely as those mentioned in this section.

multiple identities simultaneously and sequentially. Similarly, particular communities provide multiple subject positions to their members.

- Identities are heterogeneous (e.g., Norton 2006). Identities are distributed in a heterogeneous way. For example, not all identities of an individual are valued and enacted equally. Similarly, not all identities a community offers are appraised the same way. In other words, both different communities and different individuals attribute different sets of value, power, and prestige to various identities. The working knowledge of these distributions of value and power is an essential aspect of disciplinary socialization.

- Identities are situated (e.g., Vitanova 2010). Identities are situated in two senses. First, they are embedded in larger social practices and, as such, are positioned in relation to other identities. Second, they are situated historically and geographically. As a result, identities are nested in various intersecting zones of influence—for instance, in the case of language learning, national education policies, foreign relations, the spread of English, and particular institutional policies are some of these influences.

- Identities are dynamic (e.g., McKinney and Norton 2008). Identities are both emergent and ever-changing. They are considered emergent in the sense that identities are enacted at a micro scale as an interaction unfolds as a reaction to other interlocutors. Identities also change in more macro scales as particular identities change historically, culturally, and institutionally.

Guiding Definitions of Identity

Next, I briefly present the definition of identity that informed this study, which is in line with the general framework above. There has been a constellation of definitions for identity in a number of disciplines developed by many theorists but identity studies seem to have reached a consensus, with a general trend from definitions of identity as binary and static group memberships to more sophisticated and socially constructed definitions of identity (e.g., Block 2007; Firth and Wagner 2007; Norton and Toohey 2011). For this case study, I did not strictly follow any definitions or concepts because, by design rather than abstract academic concepts, this project prioritizes the *emic* perspective of the participant. Therefore, *emic*

identity categories in the communities examined are taken as the starting point and focus. Nevertheless, I used a broad definition to guide my inquiry. Based on the common features of identity in the literature, I worked with the following definition of identity—or, to use a more Bakhtinian term, *ideological becoming* (Bakhtin 1981).

> "Identity is a dynamic and continuous process through which individuals consciously and unconsciously recognize, situate, and appraise themselves and others in relation to one another. As individuals and the communities they participate in co-construct one another, the individuals' actions and stances create a perception of coherence called self."

This definition of identity[6] is based primarily on the work of Ivanič and Norton (e.g., Ivanič 2006; Norton 1997). For example, Norton (1997, 410) defined identity as "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (see also Norton 1995). Drawing on Weedon's conceptualization of subjectivity, Norton's definition emphasized the relationality and situatedness of identities. Norton's later work, too, drew on this definition of identity (e.g., Kanno and Norton 2003; Norton 2000). Moreover, Norton developed very influential concepts in identity research, such as investment and imagined identities (Norton 1995). Influenced by Bourdieu, for Norton (1997), investment referred to the complex relationship between the learner and the target language and its speakers. This process was marked by both desire and commitment, or the lack thereof. Norton argued that this relationship was not a psychological phenomenon but rather a situated and negotiated one that took shape and came into being in social space via social interactions (Norton and Toohey 2011).

Just as Bourdieu influenced Norton's concept of investment (Norton 2010), Anderson's notion of imagined communities helped Norton expand the domain of identity to include imagined identities—which may or may not have a one-to-one correspondence with *etic* reality—because, for Norton (2001, 166), "a learner's imagined community invite[s] an imagined identity, and a learner's investment in the target language must be understood within this context." Norton's work and concepts such as investment, instead of motivation, and imagined identities as an extension

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[6] Many concepts have been used instead of or in conjunction with the construct identity. Examples include identification (e.g., Hall 1996), subjectivities (e.g., Kramsch 2009; Morita 2004), self (e.g., Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009; Ivanič 2006), and voice (e.g., Prior 2001; Thesen 1997).

of Anderson's imagined communities, have been widely utilized in SLS. For example, in addition to Norton's own research, investment and imagined identities have been put to use in research on a variety of populations and contexts from foreign or heritage language learners to international graduate students (e.g., Gao 2012; Park 2011; Seloni 2008).[7]

A second influential scholar who developed theoretical models related to identity is Ivanič. Although Ivanič's research concentrated primarily on the relationship between writing and identity, it is worth noting that Ivanič (2006) stated that her claims about writing and language applied equally to all forms of communication. Ivanič (1998, 31) saw writing as part of the identity work we do in our daily lives and referred to writing as:

> "an act of identity in which people align themselves with socioculturally shaped possibilities of selfhood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody."

Unlike most descriptions of identity in SLS (for instance, Pennycook's 2007 work is a notable exception), Ivanič's work underlined a generally ignored aspect of identity: the performances individuals put on to enact and contest their various identities. Moreover, approaching a Bakhtinian understanding of *ideological becoming*, Ivanič's definition accentuated the fact that practices regarding language and identity were always charged with the values attached to them and were never neutral.[8] Though Ivanič did not provide a formal definition of identity in her work, she nevertheless considered several terms for identity, such as identification and subjectivity, and delineated the following features of identity (Ivanič 2006). For Ivanič, identities were relative and embedded in larger social practices. Ivanič stated that identity was not a state of being but rather a process of becoming. Different from many theoretical orientations to identity, Ivanič also stated that identities are distributed over a large network of people, artifacts, and practices. Both Norton's and Ivanič's empirical and theoretical work underlined the situated, dialogic, and complex nature of identity. Furthermore, they called attention to the central role subjective perspectives and stances played in identity development, which is particularly pertinent to the current study, with its focus on subjective experiences and perceptions. In this section, I provided some generally

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[7] See Kanno and Norton (2003) for a survey of the constructs investment and imagined identities in second language studies.
[8] See also Prior (2009) and Menard-Warwick (2005) for other sources exploring what Bakhtin's theoretical framework has to offer.

accepted principles regarding identity and the definition of identity that informed this project. Next, I explain the conceptual influences regarding how literacy is conceived for this study.

New Literacy Studies (NLS)

The term New Literacy Studies was first coined by Gee (1990) in the early 1990s and its research agenda has turned itself into a field in its own right (Barton and Hamilton 2000). NLS has become a leading theoretical orientation in literacy studies; it conceptualizes literacy as a social practice rather than a cognitive ability to read and write (Gee 1990), which puts literacy in the social domain rather than in the minds of individuals. Because NLS scholars have been interested in capturing literacy in all its forms in various social settings, they have preferred to study non-academic contexts (Tusting 2012). This study, on the other hand, applies the NLS approach to an academic setting and, hence, expands the domain of empirical work done within the NLS framework. Moreover, the current study utilizes an autoethnographic research design, which has not been fully exploited as a research method in literacy research. Although autoethnography has been listed as one of the *New methods of literacy research* in Albers, Holbrook, and Flint (2014), empirical studies using autoethnography to investigate literacy have been few and far between (but see Gillen 2014).

There has been a considerable effort to develop NLS theoretically over the years, especially by the New London Group.[9] Barton and Hamilton (2000, 8) delineated the six basic principles underlying NLS: 1) Literacies consist of social practices that revolve around texts, 2) Literacies are multiple with different areas and ranges of influence, 3) Not all literacies are equal; they carry different weights and values, 4) Literacies are nested in larger social practices and as such influence and are influenced by them, 5) Literacies are historically situated, and 6) Literacies are dynamic. Based on the general principles underlying NLS in general and those proposed by Barton and Hamilton in particular, below I briefly summarize the conceptual framework of literacy informing this study.

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[9] The New London Group (1996) is a group of literacy researchers who advocate more realistic and appropriate theoretical and pedagogical tools to address current trends affecting literacy education.

Guiding Principles of Literacy

In this section, I briefly discuss the theoretical principles of literacy that informed this study. According to this conceptual framework, literacy and literacy practices are social practices embedded in larger social structures and practices. Similar to the conceptualization of identity explained above, literacy practices are also temporally and spatially situated, multiple, heterogeneous, and dynamic.

- Literacy is not a cognitive skill or ability but rather a social phenomenon (Gee 1996). Therefore, literacy is about "what people do with literacy" (Barton and Hamilton 2000, 8) as much as what they do as part of literate activity. It is important to note that this view does not deny the cognitive aspects of literacy but rather puts the coupling of cognitive and social factors at the center of investigation—for example, it takes into account both the processing constraints of an individual and the social tasks accomplished by literacy practices.

- There are multiple literacies in any given context (Street 2009). These multiple literacies co-exist, as they often have different but overlapping domains of influence. While some literacies have much wider domains (for example, as a result of global educational trends or national literacy policies), others act on a much smaller sphere (for instance, a small-scale literacy project implemented in a particular institution about literacy and deaf signing).

- Literacies are multiple and are not distributed equally in terms of value and power (e.g., Hamilton 2001). While some literacies are prestigious and dominant, others are not. Usually, a literacy that is considered prestigious in a community is encouraged by its members, whereas less prestigious ones are discouraged. However, it is worth noting that different communities and individuals can attribute different values to different literacies at different times and in different contexts.

- Literacies cannot be isolated from larger social practices and confined to a domain that contains merely an individual and a text (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanič 2000). Literacies are thoroughly social and situated at every step, from writing rituals and practices to reading materials and audiences, to distributions of meaning, power, prestige, and commodities to the purposes and attitudes of

readers and writers. Moreover, literacies are temporally and spatially situated, which suggests that they should be examined *in situ*.

- Literacies are dynamic (e.g., Tusting 2000). Similar to identities, literacies are both emergent and ever-changing. They appear and change over time at different timescales. Literacies also change contextually.

Guiding Definitions of Literacy

After this brief introduction to the general conceptual framework of literacy, I present the definitions of three primary theoretical constructs in the NLS framework that informed the study. Following the theoretical work in NLS, I use the following definitions:

> Literacy is the knowledge and behavior of individuals regarding activities that involve reading and writing, and literacy practices are any communicative, interpretive, and/or facilitative activity that requires reading and writing as a crucial part of a goal-directed task or event.

One of the central concepts in NLS is *literacy events*. Literacy events describe specific, observable, contextual, and emergent uses of literacy. The definitions above are inspired by Heath's (1983, 50) conceptualization of literacy events as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interaction and interpretive processes." More specifically, the definition of literacy here is influenced by the NLS framework in general, which builds on and refines Heath's definition, to include both the behavior and the interpretation of the individuals involved—e.g., Barton and Hamilton (1998), Barton and Ivanič (1991), Scribner and Cole (1981), and Street (1988, 2001). Heath's definition strongly suggested that conceptualization of literacy as merely a cognitive skill was insufficient to accurately describe how individuals utilized literacy to accomplish real-life tasks.

Early ethnographic studies on literacy followed Heath and focused on literacy events. In time, the construct proved to be useful but insufficient to investigate literacy because this notion foregrounded the observable at the expense of what was not (e.g., Scribner and Cole 1981). Hence, a new construct was necessary to complement the notion of a literacy event, linking literacy events to larger social practices. Scribner and Cole were the first to introduce the notion of literacy practices and Street (1988) provided a detailed description of literacy events and literacy practices. More

recently, Street (2000, 22) defined literacy practices as "particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts." The focus on literacy practices as opposed to literacy events was meant to underline the patterned social aspects of literacy that often went beyond the reader/writer and the text.

Among others, Street (2001), Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanič (2000), and Baynham (2004) refined the concept of literacy practices over the years. According to the NLS framework, literacy practices are "cultural ways of utilizing literacy" (Barton and Hamilton 1998, 11). Literacy practices situate literacy events in larger social and cultural frameworks to include the networks of significance and power in the domain of literacy studies (Baynham 2004; Street 1988). It was seen that, though social meanings and power relationships were public performances to some extent, some of them were not immediately observable. For example, unlike literacy events, literacy practices included the values, attitudes, and feelings of the individuals as well as the social relationships, which could not always be directly observed but only inferred.

A Bakhtinian Approach

Bakhtin's dialogic approach complements the general principles and definitions discussed above. While the principles and definitions listed in the previous two sections provide specific guidelines related to my research questions on identity and literacy, Bakhtin's dialogic framework serves as the underlying theoretical framework regarding language, language use, socialization, and change. In other words, Bakhtin's dialogic approach provides a panoramic picture and holistic tools, whereas the principles above offer fine-grained tools designed particularly for studying identity and literacy. Below, I summarize Bakhtin's dialogic approach.

Since the recovery of Bakhtin's works by scholars at the Gorky Institute in the 1960s and their discovery in the West in the 1970s, Bakhtin has cast a wide shadow over many disciplines (Lähteenmäki and Dufva 1998, Linell 2009). Not surprisingly, Bakhtin's dialogic framework has also informed SLS and literacy studies (e.g., Ball and Freedman 2004; Hall, Vitanova, and Marchenkova 2004; Ivanič and Camps 2001; Prior 2001). For example, the following Bakhtinian concepts have been utilized: *authoritative and internally persuasive discourses* (e.g., Lee and Maguire 2011; Prior 1995), *speech genres* (e.g., Braxley 2005), *double voicedness* (e.g., Lee 2004), and *chronotope* (e.g., Prior and Shipka 2003). The current study draws and expands on this line of research because Bakhtin offers a useful framework for examining the interactions among texts and between

the writer and other people who influence the *ideological becoming* of the writer. In this section, I present my rationale for using a Bakhtinian framework for this study.

Bakhtin's framework is particularly fitting for this study because the main focus here is dialogic interactions as represented in narratives and temporal changes in identity and literacy development. However, because this is a case study, I refrain from following and exploring Bakhtin's ideas too closely and making theoretical claims based on the data. Instead, I use Bakhtinian concepts as a starting point to the extent that they help describe and make sense of my subjective experiences.

In what follows, I present the central ideas underlying Bakhtin's framework to explain how they are pertinent to studying the interactions between texts and people. In line with the principles listed above, according to Bakhtin, these interactions are multiple, dialogic, situated, and dynamic. Though the Bakhtinian concepts of *other*, *addressivity*, *dialogized heteroglossia,* and *authoritative and internally persuasive discourses* are presented separately below, these constructs form a holistic framework and are mutually constitutive of one another.

Other

Other is a Bakhtinian concept that fundamentally shapes this project. Bakhtin (1986) conceptualized *others* as the frames that influence what a text or a person is because individuals perform utterances as a response to both past, present, and anticipated utterances of other people. In other words, individuals orient themselves toward *others* in certain ways and their practices are fundamentally influenced by their interactions with *others* in the process because of the dialogic nature of their interactions. According to Bakhtin, without the utterances of *others*, there can be no language and, similarly, without the *other*, there can be no consciousness. In other words, our texts and identities and those of *others* mutually condition each other. Bakhtin often used the concept of *interillumination* (or *interanimation*) to refer to this dialectic co-construction. Bakhtin (1984) asserted:

> "To be means to be for the other, and through him [sic], for oneself. Man has no internal sovereign territory, he is all and always on the boundary; looking within himself, he looks in the eyes of the other or through the eyes of the other… I cannot do without the other; I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me (in mutual reflection and perception)." (as quoted in Atkinson, 2010, 618)