

English Language Teaching in Complex Times: NETs as Boundary Workers

Margaret M. Lo mmlo@hku.hk

Division of English Language Education

Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong

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“The World has Changed, So Must the Education System!”

From *Learning for life; learning through life: Reform proposals for the Education system in Hong Kong* (Education Commission, 2002)



Quotes Wiki

Tomorrow. The word hangs in the air for a moment, both a promise and a threat. Then it floats away like a paper boat, taken from her by the water licking at her ankles.

Thrity Umrigar

Critical social theory

- English language teaching and learning are not separate from, but are embedded in sociohistorical and sociopolitical contexts.
- Our work both shapes and is shaped by wider social, cultural, historical and political forces.
- Therefore, change is a constant.



Conceptions of literacy

(Street, 1995)

Autonomous view

- “literacy is defined as a discrete set of skills that can be taught in similar ways across varying contextsdespite the very different needs and experiences of learners”

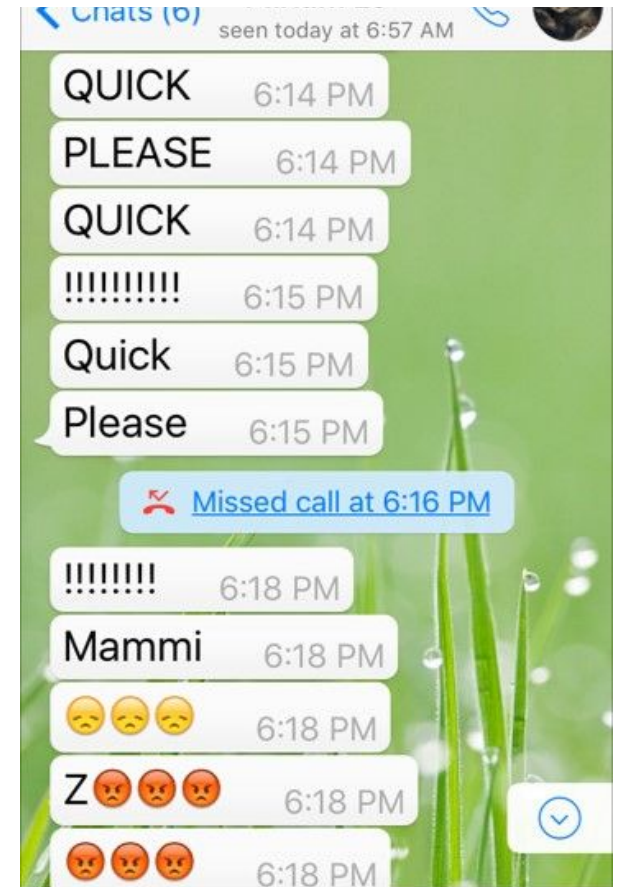
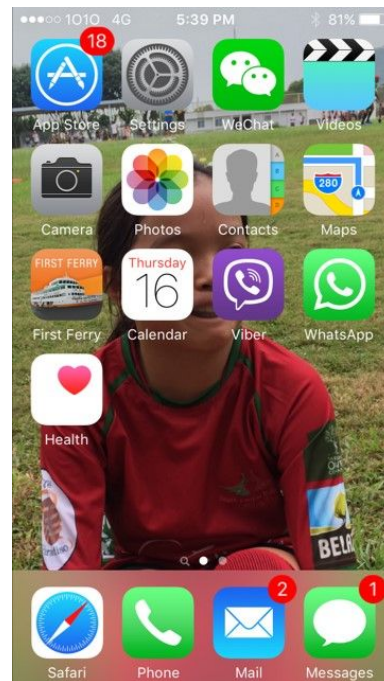
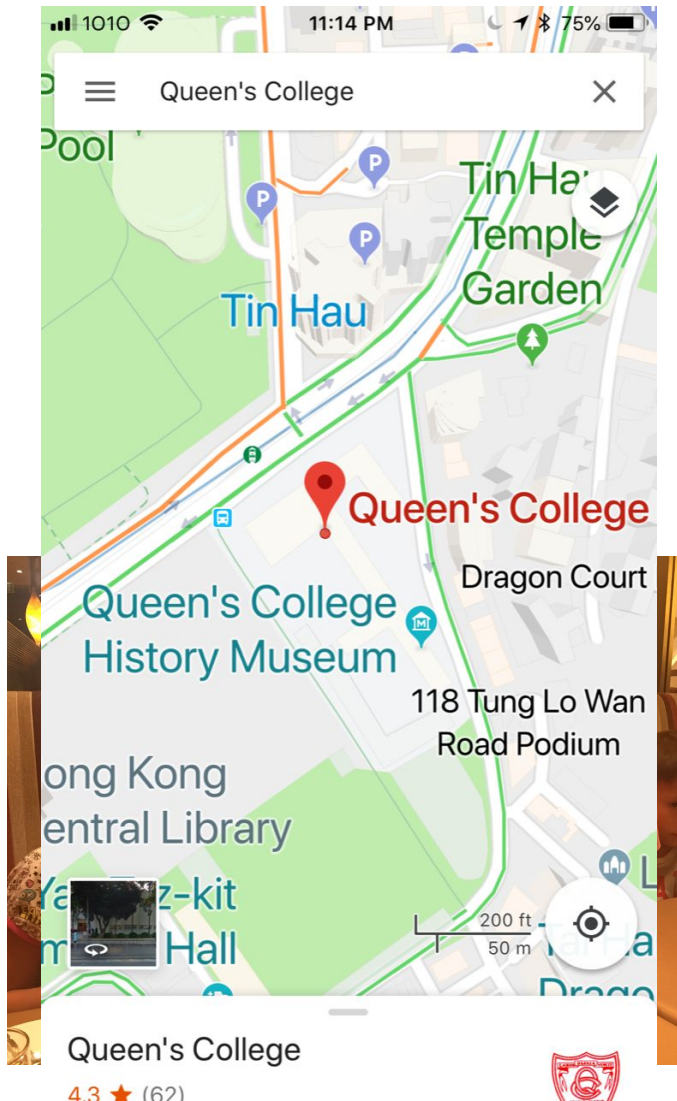
(Larson and Marsh, 2005:11)

Ideological view

- “literacy is primarily something people do; like all human activity literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people.”

(Barton and Hamilton, 1998:3)

New literacies: The multiple ways of communicating and meaning making in contemporary life



Multimodality

Multiple semiotic resources in dynamic interaction with each other

Linguistic Spoken and written language

Visual Still and moving images, colour, shape

Auditory Music, sound, voice quality

Gestural Body language, facial expression

Spatial Architecture, ecosystems, landscapes

Diversity

CBS

NAC

NCS



Inequality

richest 10% earn
44 times
poorest 10%



10%



The digital divide

Meanings in texts are social, ie they reflect and construct our values and identities

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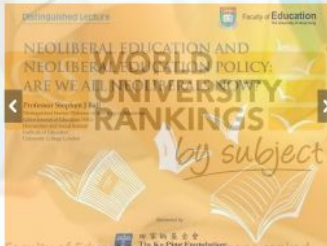
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... and they can be contested and challenged.

Recontextualisation and redesign

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Critical Literacy

Texts are made and read in particular institutional, cultural, historical, and political contexts that condition what meanings can be made, i.e. “reading the word and the world” (Freire and Macedo, 1987)

Language*-as-discourse and ‘reality’ are mutually constitutive. Language doesn’t merely reflect ‘reality’ but also shapes reality

Text participants are ‘positioned’ within discourses

Texts are contestable: values, ideologies or “truth claims”, commonsense assumptions, power relations

We read and interpret texts from our own subject positions



“an essential
trademark of quality
English language
education”

(Luk & Lin, 2007)

Discourses

“A **D**iscourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic experiences, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting...to signal a socially meaningful role”
(Gee, 2008: 161)

“Discourse is a form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world – including knowledge, identities and social relations- and thereby in maintaining specific social patterns”(Philips & Jorgenson, 2002:5) including (oppressive) relations of power.

Displacing the 'native speaker': expertise, affiliation, and inheritance

M. B. H. Rampton

ELT Journal, Volume 44, Issue 2, 1 April 1990, Pages 97–101,

Published: 01 April 1990 **Article history** ▼

Abstract

The concepts native speaker and mother tongue are often criticized, but they continue in circulation in the absence of alternatives. This

The 'native speaker'

1. A particular language is inherited, either through genetic endowment or through birth into the social group stereotypically associated with it.
2. Inheriting a language means being able to speak it well.
3. People either are or are not native/mother-tongue speakers.
4. Being a native speaker involves the comprehensive grasp of a language.
5. Just as people are usually citizens of one country, people are native speakers of one mother tongue

(Rampton, 1990:97)

The 'native speaker': an elusive term

- myth (Rampton, 1990)
- mystique (Ferguson in Kachru ed, 1982)
- symbolic (Luk and Lin, 1999)
- simplistic and misleading (Clark & Paran, 2007)
- idealized, cult, rich in ambiguity (Davies, 1991);
- ideology, complex iconic role (Holliday, 2005)
- 'different species?' (Aslan & Thompson, 2017)

Native-speakerism

(Holliday, 2005)

- “a pervasive ideology characterized by the belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (p.6)
- Assumes ‘native speakers’ = Standard English

Adrian Holliday (2005). *The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language*. Oxford: OUP

Native-speakerism: Othering

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| • Western, modern, international | • Confucian, traditional, local |
| • Adult, rational, knowledgeable | • Deficient, child-like |
| • Student-centred | • Teacher-centred |
| • Creative, fun, independent | • Hierarchical, rigid |
| • Genuine, communicative, authentic | • Rote-learning, exam-oriented, form-focussed |

(based on Holliday 2005 and Pennycook, 1998)

Native vs non-native dichotomy

‘ “native” and “nonnative” are mutually constitutive subjectivities that emerged historically and are reified through individuals’ negotiations of their own and others’ positionalities.’

(Aneja, 2016:575)

Privilege of (non)native speakers: consequences

- “We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned, or conferred by birth or luck....
- [some privileges] are only what one would want for everyone .. and should be the norm in a just society”(McIntosh, 1998:7)
- Other ‘privileges’ may feel positive for one group, but limiting and sometimes dehumanising for others. Such ‘privileges’ in fact shutting down relations and damage both sides.
- ‘[W]orking against [oppressive discourses] mends the social fabric, heals the soul, and reduces fear, isolation and alienation. It is not merely altruistic—it makes things better for everybody.’ (McIntosh, 2009)

Cartoon 1:

<http://pocho.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/trumpwall.jpg>



Cartoon 2:

<https://www.gocomics.com/learn-to-speak-cat/2015/02/28>

Boundaries

Working the boundaries

identify, interrogate, unsettle and remap (Giroux, 2013)

- *What counts as English language and literacy, and who is it for?*
- *Who are we? Who's in, who's out, and why?*
- *How do we work together for social justice?*

Self and Other

When I think I know the other... the Other becomes an object of *my* comprehension, *my* world, *my* narrative, reducing the Other to *me*.

What is at stake is whether the Otherness of the Other is supported within [our] relations...

And insofar as I can be receptive and susceptible I can learn *from* the Other as one who is absolutely different from myself.

(Todd, 2001:72-3)

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