Language and Mobility

CRITICAL LANGUAGE AND LITERACY STUDIES

Series Editors: Professor Alastair Pennycook (*University of Technology, Sydney, Australia*), Professor Brian Morgan (*Glendon College/York University, Toronto, Canada)* and Professor Ryuko Kubota (*University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada*)

Critical Language and Literacy Studies is an international series that encourages monographs directly addressing issues of power (its flows, inequities, distributions, trajectories) in a variety of language- and literacy-related realms. The aim with this series is twofold: (1) to cultivate scholarship that openly engages with social, political, and historical dimensions in language and literacy studies, and (2) to widen disciplinary horizons by encouraging new work on topics that have received little focus (see below for partial list of subject areas) and that use innovative theoretical frameworks.

Full details of all the books in this series and of all our other publications can be found on http://www.multilingual-matters.com, or by writing to Multilingual Matters, St Nicholas House, 31–34 High Street, Bristol BS1 2AW, UK.

Other books in the series

Collaborative Research in Multilingual Classrooms
Corey Denos, Kelleen Toohey, Kathy Neilson and Bonnie Waterstone
English as a Local Language: Post-colonial Identities and Multilingual Practices
Christina Higgins
The Idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the Evolution of a Global Language
Philip Seargeant
Gendered Identities and Immigrant Language Learning
Julia Menard-Warwick
China and English: Globalisation and the Dilemmas of Identity
Joseph Lo Bianco, Jane Orton and Gao Yihong (eds)
Language and HIV/AIDS
Christina Higgins and Bonny Norton (eds)
Hybrid Identities and Adolescent Girls: Being 'Half' in Japan
Laurel D. Kamada
Decolonizing Literacy: Mexican Lives in the Era of Global Capitalism
Gregorio Hernandez-Zamora
Contending with Globalization in World Englishes
Mukul Saxena and Tope Omoniyi (eds)
ELT, Gender and International Development: Myths of Progress in a Neocolonial World
Roslyn Appleby
Examining Education, Media, and Dialogue under Occupation: The Case of Palestine and Israel
Ilham Nasser, Lawrence N. Berlin and Shelley Wong (eds)
The Struggle for Legitimacy. Indigenized Englishes in Settler Schools
Andrea Sterzuk
Style, Identity and Literacy: English in Singapore
Christopher Stroud and Lionel Wee
Talk, Text and Technology: Literacy and Social Practice in a Remote Indigenous Community
Inge Kral

Language and Mobility

Unexpected Places

Alastair Pennycook

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS
Bristol • Buffalo • Toronto

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.
Pennycook, Alastair, 1957-
Language and Mobility: Unexpected Places/Alastair Pennycook.
Critical Language and Literacy Studies:. 15
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Language and languages—Variation. 2. Intercultural communication. 3. Communication, International. 4. Native language and education. I. Title.
P120.V37P46 2012
417'.7–dc23 2012009342

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1-84769-764-6 (hbk)
ISBN-13: 978-1-84769-763-9 (pbk)

Multilingual Matters
UK: St Nicholas House, 31–34 High Street, Bristol BS1 2AW, UK.
USA: UTP, 2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, USA.
Canada: UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, Ontario M3H 5T8, Canada.

Typeset by Techset Composition Ltd., Salisbury, UK.
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Short Run Press Ltd.

In memory of William Pennycook
who might have enjoyed Chapter 8.
1926 (Leeds, England) to
2011 (Truro, England),

**

And for Joan Pennycook (Hawkings)
1926 (Peermade, India)
and still going strong

In memory of those others on the steps of Lahai in 1927
(see Figure 1.3):

Dorothy Hawkings (Cummings)
1897 (Topsham, England) to
1990 (Wellington, England)

Frank Hawkings
1898 (Finchley, England) to
1975 (Culmstock, England)

Gladys Eadie (Cummings)
1887 (Topsham, England) to
1953 (Sydney, Australia)

Donald Eadie
1914 (Topsham, England) to
1992 (Guildford, England)

Elizabeth Eadie (later Moore),
1919 (Topsham, England) to
2008 (Merimbula, Australia)

And Jenifer Groves (Hawkings), not yet on the steps at
Lahai (the little girl under the trellis, Figure 1.5):
Peermade (India) 1930 to
Woking (England) 2003

Contents

Acknowledgements

This book owes much to two different instigations to write differently. The first came from a project with Vaidehi Ramanathan. In the context of various discussions about India, postcolonialism, Gandhi and so on, we discovered that our mothers had both been born in Kerala, South India, and from there had started to try to weave a complex tale of families, history and postcolonial theory. We ambitiously hoped to think and write our ways out of embedded colonial and postcolonial framings of history, politics and identity. In the end, however, such a task floundered on some of the shoals of difference that still lurk beneath the waters of postcolonial history. Some of this writing emerged from that project even if it has now split into different trajectories, and it was Vaidehi who encouraged me to try writing in ways that I have done in Chapter 1.

The second instigation came from Julie Choi as part of her edited book with David Nunan. Julie invited us to write a reflective account on an incident in our pasts that shed light on questions of language and culture. Some of the notes I initially wrote for that developed into the background of Chapter 5 of this book, while the piece I ended up writing for that book has now become the basis for Chapter 3 here. It was that incitement to write about my own experiences, to try writing in a different mode and to reflect on such moments that opened up new possibilities for writing.

My thanks for permission from Routledge/Taylor & Francis, and to the editors David Nunan and Julie Choi for permission to use a much rewritten version of that chapter, Pennycook, A. (2010c) Sweating cheese and thinking otherwise. In D. Nunan and J. Choi (eds) *Language and Culture: Reflective Narratives and the Emergence of Identity*. New York: Routledge, pp. 194–198. Thanks too to Cambridge University Press and Bonny Norton and Kelleen Toohey for permission to use a rewritten version of Pennycook, A. (2004) Critical moments in a TESOL praxicum. In B. Norton and K. Toohey (eds) *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This is now Chapter 7, Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackboard.

Thanks to Vintage Books, Random House and Faber & Faber for permission to use Wallace Steven's poem Thirteeen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.

I owe thanks to Bonny Norton and Vaidehi Ramanathan, the former co-editors of this book series. We had agreed that not only would we encourage new authors to contribute to this series but we would also try to publish some of our work (subject to the same strict criteria of proposal and manuscript reviews), and here, finally, is my contribution. This series has been a lot of work but it has also been encouraging to see the new critical work emerging from many different quarters. I also owe a great deal to the new co-editors, Brian Morgan and Ryuko Kubota, who have brought new energy and ideas to this work. They also gave me extensive, informed and critical feedback on an earlier draft of this book, as did Stephanie Vandrick, whose review of the first draft was very helpful in crafting a more sophisticated, polished and readable (I hope) final version. Arleen Schenke also gave me invaluable feedback on an earlier version of the first chapter. And many thanks to my sharp-eyed and thoughtful indexer, Astrid Lorange. Also thanks to the great team at Multilingual Matters, Anna Roderick, Tommi Grover, Sarah Williams, Elinor Robertson, Martisse Foster and Laura Longworth.

I owe as ever many thanks to my generous colleagues and thoughtful graduate students. My colleagues in Language Studies and the Language and Change Research Stream at UTS, including our ever-supportive and intellectually engaged Dean, Theo van Leeuwen, continue to provide a strong scholarly environment in which to work. Two major research projects funded by the Australian Research Council, and in collaboration with colleagues Liam Morgan (early literacy) and Emi Otsuji (metrolingualism) have opened up significant spaces for research and reflection. My doctoral students – Julie Choi, Bong Jeong Lee, Shaila Sultana, Sender Dorchin – continue to push my thinking in different directions. And former doctoral students, now colleagues and co-authors – Celia Thompson, Ros Appleby, Adam Le Nevez, Emi Otsuji, Maria Harissi, Marianne Grey – sustain the intensity of intellectual work.

As ever, I am greatly indebted to that wonderful worldwide community of scholars with whom I am privileged to be able to talk through my ideas, and from whom I learn so much, including Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza, Elana Shohamy, Bonny Norton, Vaidehi Ramanathan, Tim McNamara, Stephen May, Steve Thorne, Brian Morgan, Sinfree Makoni, Suresh Canagarajah, Jan Blommaert, Chris Stroud, Samy Alim, Awad Ibrahim, Ryuko Kubota, Claire Kramsch, Ruanni Tupas, Beatriz Lorente, Angel Lin, Adrian Blackledge, Angela Creese, Andy Kirkpatrick, Monica Heller, Alexandre Duchêne, Luisa Martin Rojo, Melissa Moyer, David Block, Ben Rampton, Christina Higgins, Ahmar Mahboob, Ingrid Piller, Kimie

Takahashi, Cynthia Nelson, Brian Paltridge, Martin Nakata, Walter Mignolo, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Mary Louise Pratt and many others. Thanks to family members, especially Trish Burgess in Canberra and Ann Jones in Melbourne, for helping fill in family details. Thanks as ever to Dominique Estival, who journeyed with me to stand on the steps at Lahai and has supported and encouraged my work especially through some of the harder times. And thanks to my mother, Joan Pennycook, born in India, living in England, who watched parts of this project with a touch of scepticism, but eventually saw why it could be interesting, and gave it her support.

Preface

The usual purpose of a preface is to locate the new text within current disciplinary standards and habits of thought. When the author is Alastair Pennycook, with an extensive and formidable body of field-leading and field-transforming publications, such conventions feel less relevant in that academic conformity and caution have never been his strong suits. Coming boldly on the international scene in 1989, Pennycook's Foucauldian take on Method as 'interested knowledge' in *TESOL Quarterly* broke paradigmatic ground in a profession steeped in ideological neutrality and the presumed universality of its favoured modes of practice. Over the years, Alastair has also been comfortable in assuming the role of the playful provocateur, taking pleasure in moving scholarly goal posts, bending rules, and at times poking fingers in the eyes of the established order. A most vivid example would be his unflattering avian metaphor for linguistic impartiality, 'liberal ostrichism'—whose public explanation at a 2001 TESOL conference was interrupted mid-sentence by the arrival of a tall, major figure in the field, known for his critiques of this political turn in applied linguistics, followed by Alastair's impromptu response: 'Well, speak of the Devil.' For some, the humour of the moment was in many ways carnivalesque, following Bakhtin, where public laughter serves to undermine received wisdom and authority. This spirit of inventive and transgressive play runs through many of Alastair's previously coined and conceived notions: for example in the promotion of *raplish* and *hip hop pedagogies* (2007), in proclaiming the *myth* of English as an international language—and as part of larger project in language *disinvention* (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007); or in the parodic acronym *TEML* (Teaching English as a Missionary Language; Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003); or on the cover of his book, Critical Applied Linguistics (2001), and the unusual insertion of a copywriter's caret in the subtitle (i.e. 'a *critical* introduction')—a visual cue for the 'restless problematizing of givens' (cf. Dean) underpinning Pennycook's reflexive notion of the critical. The list could be easily extended.

The Critical Language and Literacy Series is most fortunate to have *Language and Mobility: Unexpected Places* as part of its growing list of books. It is an aptly titled contribution in which conceptual and thematic mobility are generously displayed in each chapter, while a broader sense of the unexpected comes to unify a rich diversity of topics and settings. While language, particularly when conceptualized as a local practice (see also Pennycook, 2010), is a central concern, broader forms of meaning making are explored through an unusual array of artifacts and integrated textual practices. For example, we are invited to share the 'mnemonic traces' of manjari seeds from Kerala, a tactile reminder of Pennycook's own familial roots in colonial India. In ways similar to Vandrick's (2009) reminiscence of tea ceremonies and memories of her missionary youth in India, such objects incite contemporary awareness of privilege and racialized hierarchies, some of which remain stubbornly inscribed in TESOL's knowledge base. Yet the agency of the colonized is also illuminated through Pennycook's analysis of farewell addresses to British colonial managers. Written in a high literary poshness worthy of an Oxford don, though written by Indian nationals, these formalistic English addresses carry the strategic traces of Malayalam discourse norms, suggesting a localized textual hybridity that is seemingly compliant but also resistant.

This recurring theme—of out-of-place, ostensible 'imports' (imagine cheese in Hunan, Cornish anthems in South Australia)—is developed most prominently in Pennycook's impressively detailed discussion of the sport of cricket and Indian cricket, in particular. In ways similar to Foer's (2004) classic 'How Soccer Explains the World', the game becomes a surrogate for historical grievances and contested national/postcolonial narratives (see also *Miss World or Miss Bantu? Competing dialogues on female beauty;* Ch. 4 in Higgins, 2009). In style and attitude, the Indian (or Caribbean) version of cricket begins to take on local sensibilities; it becomes transformed—decolonized, re-semiotized—in flamboyant ways likely to outrage far-away traditionalists, and perhaps intentionally so. And much like the English language, it is no longer 'owned' by so-called native-speakers/players. Ever the provocateur, Pennycook claims that it never was: 'Cricket is an Indian game accidently discovered by the English.' Of course, the 'accident' here is not a dispute over dates and patents. It is in how the newly indigenized game (or language, or cultural practice) is re-presented to 'us'. In unexpected ways, the familiar becomes unfamiliar and unsettling, and *by accident* we come to see ourselves through the eyes and practices of the Other; in Levinas's sense, we are presented with new opportunities to think, act and teach otherwise (Säfström, 2003). Being out-of-place, in this sense, is as much in the mind as it is on the map, and it can apply to the everyday as much as the exotic.

Moreover, it is a state of being/knowing that expands the possibilities for critical work. As Luke (2004) suggests: 'To be critical requires an analytic move to self-position oneself as Other even in a market or field that might not necessarily construe or structurally position one as Other' (p. 26).

Such re-positioning, if it is to be utilized for pedagogy, requires new conceptualizations of locality, particularly on the *processes* of localization that foster critical, reflexive awareness and the agency of subjects-in-discourse. One way to consider this process, might be to borrow an ecological metaphor and think in terms of a *deep* locality—an active and selective process that simultaneously receives and transforms (or re-traditionalizes) externalities in the service of local continuity in contexts of change. Bateson's (1972) term, the *status quo ante*, comes to mind, as does van Lier's (2004) detailed account of *emergence* and *affordance*. A complementary understanding can be gained from indigenous knowledges, particularly in a postcolonial frame as exemplified by Menezes de Souza's (2007) description of Kashinawa multimodality as a form of *ethnogenesis*: '"entering a culture quietly"… not to remain, … but to appropriate and transform, *in order to preserve* one's own (indigenous) culture' (p. 166, italics in original). Stroud and Wee (2012), in their recent contribution to this series, foreground this agentive dimension through their important discussion of *style* 'as a form of bricolage … where pre-existing elements are appropriated and combined in new and different ways to create distinctive styles' (p. 66). In common, such syncretic and emergent conceptualizations of locality/localization counter imitative and deficit orientations to 'external' standards and practices (see e.g. Sterzuk's discussion of Indigenized Englishes, 2011), and they underpin a perspective on continuity/change that unifies much of this book. In Pennycook's words, 'If hip hop or English or cricket in unexpected places are conceived not so much as having spread and been taken up, but rather as having always been local, then we can start to think about language, culture and identity in similar terms'—terms by which we might re-focus critical work in support of the *resourceful* practices of language users, learners and teachers.

Expected and unexpected language use is closely tied to our assumptions about native speaker (NS) and nonnative speaker (NNS). While NNSs (especially teachers of English) have become a popular focus of scholarly investigation, rarely is this linguistic categorization questioned or 'critically resisted.' Pennycook disrupts this linguistic distinction by reconceptualizing the notion of passing for a NS not as crossing this false linguistic boundary but as an act of becoming and performing. Here the identity of NNS, positioned as opposite to NS, is disrupted, as consistent with the assumption behind 'queer' in queer theory which nonetheless poses a tension between identity politics and troubling sexuality as an identity category (Nelson, 2009). When

the idea of race, as well as gender, class, and sexuality, comes into play, performing NS identity becomes further complex. Women of mixed race, for instance, might try to 'pass' through language use in order to avoid stigmatized racial, gendered, or socioeconomic identifications or conversely to construct an ethnically authentic self (Bucholtz, 1995). Pennycook's skepticism of linguistic categorization offers a new way of approaching NS/NNS issues in our field, taking an important step toward more complex understanding of these linguistic categories that are bound up with personal and political struggles in racial, gender, class, and sexual hierarchies of power.

In respect to teachers, several field-internal constraints should be considered. From a critical perspective, language teacher education has been consistent in its *non-local* orientations to language, and arguably more so in recent years as the neoliberal instrumentality and commodification of English and English language teaching is increasingly advanced through 'value-adding' curricula in the service of global capitalism (e.g. Chun, 2009; Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Kubota, 2011). When language is objectified, de-contextualized and treated as an innocent code (e.g. empiricist/idealist notions of language), within this economistic framework, then awareness of language and power are removed from the lexico-grammatical knowledge expected of teachers, conflating options for 'resourcefulness' to communicative efficiencies and entrepreneurial literacies (Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Luke, Luke, & Graham; 2007). In terms of constraints, the possibilities for *critical* language teacher education are further reduced by the typically modularized approach to preservice training in which critical pedagogy often gets presented, if at all, as a late add-on, a set of abstract concepts, from which interested teachers must create their own lessons and in zero-sum terms that threaten to take time away from other language work deemed more important.

In Chapter 7, Pennycook proposes an alternative: 'It seems to me that trying to be a critical educator is more often about seeking and seizing small, unexpected moments to open the door on a more critical perspective'. Towards this goal, he re-visits his notion of the *praxicum* (practicum meets praxis) to help teachers notice and act upon unplanned opportunities when *critical moments* arise in class. Readers then accompany Alastair on a round of student-teacher observations in suburban Sydney, where several unexpected moments are explored. In a post-observation session with a student-teacher named Liz, a fascinating example regarding the appropriateness of teaching/using 'close the tap' in place of its more familiar phrasal verb substitute, 'turn off the tap' is recalled. In the dialogic discussion that follows, we come to see how a seemingly insignificant language choice can become a window onto much larger issues of language and power, and the politics of language standardization in the context of nation-state identity. Perhaps most important

for this specific chapter, we come to share Liz's emerging awareness of her own critical agency around such syllabus choices.

One of the more intriguing aspects of this chapter is the juxtaposition of short passages from Wallace Stevens' poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*. While the poem's immediate purpose might be elusive, its cumulative effects seem contrapuntal, each stanza or iteration reminding us of the multiple voices/harmonies available in every language lesson (contra zero-sum, one-dimensional reasoning) and through which critical moments are recognized and improvised by the resourceful teacher. The *art* of critical teaching is thus foregrounded with due caution given towards doctrinaire prescriptions (i.e. emancipatory modernism). Some readers may not agree and find the poem a distraction both in style and its relevance for social justice concerns. Yet, for Pennycook, who views the problematizing of givens, as a permanent task of the *subject* (in Foucault's sense), critical work must always be agile, mobile and responsive to unexpected domains and modalities in which power/knowledge curtail human freedoms and possibilities.

To be critical, we may need to think not only of new sites of power but also of new modes and articulations of meaning making. Towards this goal, and throughout the book, Alastair has engaged in a more personalized, narrativized style of writing. As well, he has explored and shared intimate details of his own life experiences and familial background. The 'danger' of such writing is in how it (mis) aligns with readers' prior assumptions of the critical and expectations of what a critical life should look like. On both accounts, Alastair is up for the challenge, and in this new book is certain to engage all readers—in *unexpected* ways.

Brian Morgan
Ryuko Kubota

References

Bateson, G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind.* New York: Ballantyne Books.

Bucholtz, M. (1995) From Mulatta to Mestiza: Language and the reshaping of ethnic identity. In K. Hall and M. Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (pp. 351–374). New York: Routledge.

Chun, C. W. (2009) Contesting neoliberal discourses in EAP: Critical praxis in an IEP classroom. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 8*(2), 111–120.

Clarke, M. and Morgan, B. (2011) Education and social justice in neoliberal times: Historical and pedagogical perspectives from two postcolonial contexts. In M. Hawkins (ed.) *Social Justice Language Teacher Education* (pp. 63–85). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Foer, F. (2005) *How Soccer Explains the World.* New York: Harper Perennial.

Higgins, C. (2009) *English as a Local Practice: Post-colonial Identities and Multilingual Practices.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.