Researching Identity in Bilinguals, Multilinguals, Language Learners, and Their Teachers: A Comparison of Methodological Approaches

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Survey the literature on identity in bi-/multilingualism and language learners to see what methods are most often used. In your discussion group studies by research methodology as much as possible (e.g., case studies, ethnographies). Discuss the relative advantages and disadvantages of those methods and propose an identity study with a rationale for a research design.

Researching Identity in Bilinguals, Multilinguals, Language Learners, and Their Teachers:
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The process of learning to speak another language and the ongoing practices of using two or more languages present challenges to individuals as they negotiate new forms of interaction using a range of linguistic resources. In addition to and along with this expansion of linguistic resources, these individuals encounter challenges to their identities as they position themselves as language learners, bilinguals, and multilinguals. Many scholars in applied linguistics and related fields have begun to focus on the reciprocal relationships between identity and second language acquisition (Block, 2007; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004b; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Identities relating to various forms of categorization have often been ascribed to language learners and bi- or multilinguals[1] including *native speaker* or *non-native speaker*, *student*, *immigrant*, *sojourner*, various ethnic groups, various races, various socio-economic groups, *heritage language learner*, *child of immigrants*, *generation 1.5*, *normal* or *deviant*, *good learner* or not, *beginner* or *intermediate* or *advanced*, and so on.

According to Firth and Wagner (1997), SLA research has typically been preoccupied with one identity only: that of the *learner*, someone receiving instruction in a second or foreign language. However, the majority of recent research on language learners and multilinguals and their identities resists these static categorizations and takes a constructivist perspective on identity, "not as something fixed for life, but as fragmented and contested in nature" (Block, 2007, p. 864). Bonny Norton, whose work has influenced many other researchers, uses *identity* "to refer to 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" (Norton, 1997, p. 410). Identities may be *imposed*, *accepted*, or *negotiated* (Pavlenko &

[1] Hereafter, multilingual will be used to refer to all users of more than one language.

Blackledge, 2004a): imposed by interlocutors and by the wider social context in largely unintentional ways, accepted by individuals who do not feel that they can resist them, and negotiated by those who find the power and agency to maintain or construct acceptable positions for themselves.

This perspective on identity as something that can be negotiated, and in fact as something that has to be negotiated constantly in different contexts of interaction, reflects a general shift in the study of language learning and multilingualism from a positivist paradigm to a postpositivist view of research and the world, as well as a shift from predominantly quantitative to largely or even predominantly qualitative approaches (Block, 2007; Chapelle & Duff, 2003). Whereas positivism assumes that reality or truth exists and can be studied through rigorous scientific methods similar to those used in the natural sciences, *postpositivism* or *interpretivism* assumes that reality is subjective and that the purpose of inquiry is to discover how individuals interpret the reality around them as result of their context, culture, and experiences (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). The result of this shift in perception of reality and the focus of inquiry for research on identity is that studies using this construct over the past twenty years or so take identity as multiple, as malleable, and as "crucially related to social, cultural, and political context" (Varghese, et al., 2005, p. 23). These studies tend to ground their theoretical position in the work of scholars such as Bourdieu, Foucault, Weedon, and Butler in order to support claims that identity is influenced by socialization and located in various levels of discourse, but that subjectivity allows room for individuals to choose the ways in which they perform and conform to certain roles (Menard-Warwick, 2005; Norton, 2000).

As the theoretical understanding of identity has shifted, of course, the most appropriate and widely-used methodologies for studying identity have also changed. If identity is tightly connected to context, individuals can construct their own identities, and identity is bound up in relations of power, then appropriate methodologies must take the immediate context of language use, the perspectives of those who are interacting in that context, and the larger political and social context into account. Thus the emergence and growth of identity as a construct of interest in applied linguistics has been accompanied by the growth and development of methodologies that serve well to study it, including ethnography, (critical) discourse analysis, and narrative inquiry (Nunan & Choi, 2010; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004b).

Research in identity has been categorized by reviewers in terms of the theoretical approaches that are used to engage with it, including social identity theory, communities of practice theory, and other theories borrowed from gender studies and cultural studies (Kramsch, 2009; Menard-Warwick, 2005; Varghese, et al., 2005; Yi, 2010). Studies have also been grouped according to context: Block (2007), for example, cites studies concerning naturalistic contexts of learning, classroom-based foreign language learning, electronically-mediated (internet-based or online) contexts, and study abroad. However, there are very few, if any, reviews of research on identity that focus on the methodological choices that researchers make in order to encompass the complexity of this topic. Likewise, reports of empirical work on identity also tend to focus on theoretical framework and context rather than methodology, often omitting or avoiding explicit claims to a given approach, perhaps because these approaches are so often eclectic (Rampton, Roberts, Leung, & Harris, 2002).

This paper attempts to unpack the methodological choices that characterize research on identity in relation to language learners and multilinguals over the last fifteen years since Norton called for greater attention to identity in language learning (Norton Peirce, 1995) and particularly over the last decade. Although this paper makes no claim to cover the full gamut of empirical studies in that time frame that have considered the nature and construction of identity among language learners and multilinguals, it does consider a range of studies that may be considered representative of the methods that have been used to address questions of identity. The studies below are grouped based on their (apparent) dominant approach and discussed in terms of the ways that they make use of this approach. This overview of methods will conclude with a consideration of methods that might be appropriate for studying a group of learners that present particular challenges to the study of identity and can also benefit from rich understanding of identity: heritage language learners of critical languages in the U.S.

Mapping the Range of Research on Identity

The following discussion addresses five broad approaches to identity research: ethnography and ethnographic approaches, (critical) discourse analysis, narrative inquiry and text-based analyses, studies of online interaction, and studies that rely on quantitative approaches. The first three categories represent relatively well-defined methodologies in applied linguistics (Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Lazaraton, 2003; Li & Moyer, 2008), while the latter two categories are more eclectic. One characteristic of the methods that drive identity research is the high degree of overlap among approaches, as is true among qualitative methods in general (Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Rampton, et al., 2002). Therefore the categorizations that are used here should not be seen as distinct and disparate fields in and of themselves, with clear and impermeable boundaries. Instead, they represent zones across a field of research. A given study may gravitate toward one approach more than another, it may seek to define a zone in that field (e.g., Baynham, 2006; Hevern, 2004), or it may deliberately locate itself between two zones (e.g., Coffey & Street, 2008). A given method, such as interviews, may appear across four or even five of these categories; however, interviews are subjected to distinctly different forms of analysis from approach to approach, as will be discussed below. All of the studies focus on language learners or multilinguals; many also focus on their teachers, who often are also multilinguals.

It may be noted that case studies are not considered as a category in this taxonomy, and nor is conversation analysis, both of which are considered to be major categories of qualitative analysis in applied linguistics (Chapelle & Duff, 2003). The primary reason for this choice is that the methods of data collection and analysis that serve to support case study research can vary across the same field as identity research in general, so that almost every study below can be categorized as a case study. Case studies are often characterized by the small number of participants included or the focus on a specific context, as are studies of identity in general: "Although groups, organizations, and countries may be the focus of case studies, those investigating issues of a psychological or linguistic nature typically undertake the detailed description and analysis of an individual subject (i.e., research participant) from whom observations, interviews, and family or life histories and other narratives provide the primary database" (Duff, 2008, p.32). Although Duff (2008) explicitly differentiates case studies from ethnography, explaining that an ethnography is "a particular kind of anthropological case study" in which the focus is "the *cultural* basis for… beliefs and values" (p. 34, emphasis in the original), and Willis, Nilakante, and Jost (2007) claim that ethnography and case studies have emerged from different fields, in practice ethnographies and case studies using ethnographic methods are rarely distinguishable in published identity research. Identity relates closely to concepts of culture (Atkinson, 1999; Duff & Uchida, 1997), so it follows that while many other types of case studies are possible, those dealing with identity are typically ethnographic case studies. Table 1 summarizes the various prominent approaches to analysis of identity in applied linguistics that will be discussed in this paper.

Approach	**Participants**	**Data Collection**	**Data Analysis**
Ethnography and ethnographic approaches	Individuals or small groups, often engaged in cross-linguistic contexts including language classrooms and sojourns abroad	Participant observation (often audio- or video-recorded), semi-structured interviews, researcher journals, participant diaries, documents, questionnaires	Grounded theory, constant comparative method, sometimes existing framework – focus is thick description and *verstehen* (understanding)
(Critical) discourse analysis	Individuals involved in a specific context of interaction	Relatively small stretches of recorded and transcribed interaction, frequently a sub-set of data from an ethnographic study	Focuses on relationship between language use and larger social or political context; CDA focuses on issues of power instantiated in language use
Narrative inquiry and text-based approaches	Individuals or small groups of language learners or multilinguals; writers of various texts	Natural or elicited narratives; usually based on interviews, often life history interviews; diaries; texts include published papers, published memoirs, student papers, linguistic autobiographies	Usually content analysis or thematic coding; may also focus on linguistic features relating to orientation in time and space; may draw on concepts from rhetorical analysis
Studies of online interaction	Writers of various texts, participants in internet-based courses	Primarily online data from various forms of computer-mediated communication; may include field notes, interviews, student work	Varies – often follows same analytical procedures as ethnography
Quantitative approaches	Relatively large numbers of language learners or multilinguals	Questionnaires; quantification of data collected through observation or interviews	Varies – usually statistical analysis (descriptive statistics, correlations, factor analysis) with extensive interpretation

Table 1. Comparison of research approaches in identity studies.

Ethnography and Ethnographic Methods

A number of “hallmark” traits have been ascribed to ethnography and ethnographic methods, particularly participant observation (Heller, 2008) and fieldwork in general (Willis, et al., 2007). Ethnography focuses on description and explication of a specific cultural context or phenomenon, and in applied linguistics it specifically attends to language use in relation to this context or phenomenon (Coffin, Lillis, & O'Halloran, 2010; Rampton, 2010).

Frequently researchers begin with a general idea or curiosity about the cultural context that they intend to study, but not an *a priori* hypothesis or theory; the specific research questions and even the methods may take shape over time as the ethnographer collects data, begins to analyze it, formulates or adapts hypotheses, and continues to collect data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Heath & Street, 2008; Heller, 2008). Lazaraton (2003) summarizes the key features of ethnography as follows. Ethnographers generally:

- believe "that 'reality' is both holistic and socially constructed,
- aim to "uncover an emic (inside) perspective on the culture in question,"
- maintain awareness of their own "*positionality*, or subjectivity" as researchers and in other ways that may affect their interpretation,
- devote long periods of time to the research context (*prolonged engagement*),
- draw on multiple data sources in order to compare perspectives and accounts (*triangulation*),
- strive for *thick description* of the cultural context,
- engage in "a cyclical process of data analysis that results in *grounded theory*," and
- "attempt to apply ethnographic findings to real world problems" (p. 3).

In addition to participant observation, which always involves field notes and frequently involves audio- or video-recorded events such as class meetings, data collection in ethnographic studies of identity usually includes ethnographic interviews. These are semi-structured or unstructured and allow the interviewer and the interviewee to collaborate in directing the flow of talk as they delve into the participant's life history, current practices, and self-perceptions

(Spradley, 1979). The data may be drawn from other records including researcher journals and reflective diaries written by the participants. Ethnographic studies may include data from questionnaires, usually as a starting point for participant selection. Researchers may also collect documents that are relevant to the context or produced by participants. A certain amount of additional research regarding the context in question, both past and present, also makes an essential contribution to ethnographic work (Heath & Street, 2008).

Analysis of ethnographic data ideally begins before the data collection has ended, and it usually relies on the constant comparative method to establish categories that describe the range of observed phenomena and then to hone those categories (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Various scholars place different amounts of emphasis on the role of theory-building in ethnography, but ethnographers can (and arguably should) develop theories that can explain the observed interactions and their relationship to the context in ways that fit their own data well and that may be generalizable to similar situations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Heath & Street, 2008). This use of grounded theory differentiates ethnography from other approaches, which begin with an existing theory and then attempt to fit the data to it (Willis, et al., 2007). In identity research, scholars may begin with a framework of some kind; one that appears frequently across approaches is Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice, which associates learning, participation, and identity construction in ways that guide inquiry and analysis. Nevertheless, ethnographers should (and do) draw on this framework to develop their own explanatory theory for their context.

There is some controversy about the difference between conducting and writing a true ethnography and conducting a study that uses ethnographic methods. Despite Scollon's (1995) concern about "the miniaturization of the concept of culture," contexts as small as a single classroom have become acceptable sites for ethnographic studies. Identity studies frame their ethnographic cases in various ways, tracking different individuals in the same context or tracking individuals across contexts. The size of those contexts varies, and often studies published as journal articles or book chapters must limit their analysis and discussion to a subset of data or participants (e.g., Achugar, 2006; Menard-Warwick, 2008; Yi, 2009), but the characteristics of ethnography generally apply to these investigations.

A number of identity studies focus on a few focal participants in a given context and present these individuals as cases within the larger case of that context or situation. Among the most widely cited ethnographic studies in recent identity research is Duff and Uchida's (1997) comparison of four teachers of English as a foreign language in a private language school in Japan. Focusing on teachers' emic understanding of appropriate classroom practice and their role in teaching culture, this study draws on data collected over six months including questionnaires for the teachers and their students; numerous class observations (audio- or videorecorded) and follow-up interviews (audiorecorded) with each teacher; field notes; diaries kept by each teacher; a researcher journal kept by Uchida, who was simultaneously working in the school; a review of instructional materials; and various other data about the school. This range of available data allowed extensive triangulation across types of data and comparison of the four teacher cases, and the methods also allowed comparison of teachers' in-class practices with their own intentions and frustrations regarding those practices and their students' responses to their instructional choices. Although Duff and Uchida (1997) do not make an explicit claim about their methodological approach, their data collection, their treatment of the case, their reference to analysis as "recursive, reflexive, triangulated" and their report that they "coded for recurrent, relevant themes" (p.460), three of which are discussed at length, all signal an ethnographic approach.

The scope of this study and the completeness with which it is discussed are relatively rare, but other studies also manage to describe multiple comparable cases using a variety of data sources. Achugar (2006) focuses on a specific program, the Bilingual Creative Writing Program in south Texas, and considers the perspectives and practices of various stakeholders within it, though she is concerned with the students as well as the instructors and focuses more on the relative legitimacy associated with each of the program's languages. Schecter and Bayley (1997), appearing in the same issue of TESOL Quarterly as Duff and Uchida (1997), present a similarly complex study that draws comparisons among and within four families who had immigrated from Mexico to Texas or California. Focusing on the home context, they include data from interviews with the parents and children, elicited fictional narratives in English and Spanish from the children, samples of English and if possible Spanish writing, and audio- and video-recorded data including audio data from recorders that the children wore on belts. Describing different connections between the children's use of each language, the parents' desire for language and cultural maintenance, and the family's beliefs about the relationship between language and cultural maintenance, Schecter and Bayley (1997) sought to explain the influences on inter-generational transmission in these families. Dagenais (2003) also considers parents' attitudes and practices related to transmission of a family language across several families; her data seem less extensive than Schecter and Bayley's, but she theorizes the role of imagined communities in these families' language learning choices in an intriguing and generalizable way.

In a number of articles and a book, Norton (1997, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995) draws on her extensive study of 5 women who immigrated to Canada and struggled to negotiate identities that allowed participation in Canadian society and opportunities to improve their English. Although she does not draw on substantial observations of these women in their homes or workplaces, she constructs coherent narratives out of the material collected through meeting with the women together on a regular basis, encouraging them to keep diaries and responding to them, interviewing them individually and as a group, and using a detailed questionnaire at the beginning and end of the data collection period. Comparing across these five cases, she generates a persuasive theory of *investment* in language learning as a flexible, context-sensitive alternative to the concept of motivation and of the challenges of finding agency to speak when native-speaking interlocutors are reluctant to offer the learner legitimacy.

In a study that applies community of practice theory to the socialization of six Japanese graduate students in the U.S., Morita (2004) also draws on a wide range of data types collected over a long period of time, in this case a full year. For each of the six women in her study, she includes class observations, student reports on classroom experiences, three formal interviews, and interviews with their instructors. Drawing on the CoP framework, Morita (2004) develops her own theory about the relationship between classroom participation and identity construction among these international graduate students.

A number of studies also take ethnographic approaches, more or less explicitly, but limit their data collection or analysis to a subset of their data. Menard-Warwick (2008) chose two cases from a larger ethnographic study and focuses on class observations and interviews to compare the emergence of intercultural identity in these two teachers and its impact on their teaching. Jarratt, Losh, and Puente (2006) focus on three bilingual first-year students out of a sample of 1068 who participated in their original survey, using questionnaire data, comments from a focus group interview, and a writer's memo about the paper they collected to generate "a kind of linguistic, academic, and cultural ground against which we read the paper. We sought to sketch the narrative of movement into and out of languages, where it was available, reading the valences and attitudes toward each language and toward academic writing as a practice" (p.29). Other studies using ethnographic methods with a small number of cases include Yi's (2009) treatment of transnational identity construction in the out-of-school literacy practices and particularly the online communication in which two Korean-American adolescents participated; Haneda's (2005) discussion of two student writers; and Hirano's (2009) action research approach to analyzing student identity and learning in a long-term tutee. Many of these studies have an underlying critical perspective in that they recognize the relationship of linguistic practices to power relations in the larger societal context, but Motha's (2006) discussion of her research with four teachers who were recent graduates of a MATESOL program explicitly strives to produce a "critical feminist ethnography" that attends to these issues (p.500).

Although she only draws on data from interviews and her personal interactions with her focal participants, Mills (2004) produces an intriguing account of identity construction among mothers of Pakistani descent in the United Kingdom and "their responses to their positioning with respect to the languages of their cultural inheritance" (p.169). While her choice of data sources seems narrow, she includes the perspectives of each mother and one of her school-age children, comparing their views of language and language maintenance, and she makes the infrequent but highly recommended choice (Chapelle & Duff, 2003) to involve the women more fully by soliciting their responses to transcripts of their own and their child's interviews. Also, Mills (2004) is exceptionally explicit about her "reflective and cyclical" approach to data analysis (p.169), which adheres to the norms of ethnographic research. In another study that limits data collection to one method but uses ethnographic approaches for analysis and expertly locates his theory, Morgan (1997, 2004) relies entirely on field notes from his work as a teacher in a community ESL program for Chinese immigrants to Canada. He justifies this choice by claiming that teachers should be able to conduct and publish research that allows their students "freedom from observation and documentation" as they engage in "transformative practice," particularly when engaging with "identity work that explores language resources…to challenge power relations in the family, community, and society" (p.438).

Finally, bridging between ethnographic approaches and critical discourse analysis is an extensive study of language socialization and identity construction among ESL students at a high school in Hawaii (Talmy, 2008). Using data from a larger study that includes hundreds of hours of classroom observation, 58 interviews with teachers and students, field notes, and various documents collected over two and a half years, Talmy identifies two classifications of ESL students, local ESL students and school-sanctioned ESL students, who manage their class participation in dramatically different ways. Unlike many other ethnographic studies mentioned here, Talmy uses close discourse analysis of specific stretches of talk in order to analyze and demonstrate how students' identities are imposed on them, resisted, and constructed through language.

Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

Ethnography, and more specifically ethnography of communication and linguistic ethnography, are sometimes constructed as broader approaches that include discourse analysis (DA) in their toolkit of methodologies, but they are also often discussed as methodological options within DA (Coffin, et al., 2010; Rampton, et al., 2002). The distinction between discourse analysis and ethnography here reflects a methodological pattern in the available literature on identity, in that the previous group of studies generally focuses on a given context or a group of individuals, while the following studies focus tightly on limited stretches of interaction, which are usually described as excerpts from a much larger body of data. These studies emphasize the ways that the participants in these interactions construct their identities in a dynamic, dialogical way through specific choices regarding language use.

Discourse analysts generally define *discourse* as “language as a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 20). While this definition can be unmanageably broad (Blackledge, 2008), it emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between language use and societal structures over the microcontextual role of grammatical or even pragmatic structures. Blackledge (2008) distinguishes between critical and non-critical approaches to discourse analysis in that critical discourse analysis (CDA) conceives of “social practices not just in terms of social relationships, but also in terms of their implications for status, solidarity, distribution of social goods, and power... Discourses are always defined in relation to other discourses" (p. 301). A critical orientation recognizes that discourse cannot be isolated in a given context, such as a single classroom, but “is produced in and through social practices, institutions, and actions” that reflect and are reflected in that classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 1999, p. 460). Discourse “includes not only what is actually thought and articulated but also determines what can be said or heard and what silenced, what is acceptable and what tabooed…” (Kumaravadivelu, 1999, p.460). This emphasis on access to language use and constraints on language use and the ways that they relate to larger power structures outside the given context corresponds to the general body of sociocultural approaches to identity in language learners and multilingual users.

The following studies all take a critical approach to DA in one way or another, differing more in terms of their focus on the specific features of language that instantiate identity construction than in terms of their assumption that these specific instances of language use are tied to larger discourses. The relationship between language use and power, in the sense that more powerful participants in an interaction maintain that power and define roles for others, is particularly apparent in Achugar's (2009) analysis of a 20-minute stretch of classroom discussion in the same context as her 2006 study (discussed above), the Bilingual Creative Writing Program. Using an analytical framework derived from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, she draws attention to the specific bilingual practices of this community as evidenced in this interaction. For example, she theorizes that the professor's efforts to alternate between English (his L1) and Spanish (his highly proficient L2) legitimize both languages for the purposes of discussing assigned texts. At the same time, students' preference for one language or another and their willingness to alternate languages in response to other students' choices position them within the classroom community. Students who function in both languages and accommodate others' intellectual contributions as well as their language choices are seen as constructing a "professional identity" more effectively than others.

The construction and transmission of identity through resistance to the identities that a given institution attempts to ascribe to individuals is clearly depicted in Talmy's (2008) study of ESL students at a high school in Hawaii, mentioned above. Like Achugar, he selects and closely explicates representative stretches of interaction from a much larger body of data (625 hours of class observations, 158 of which were audio- or video-recorded, as well as 58 formal interviews). He closely explicates the response of teachers and students to identities available in their institution, which include a school-sanctioned view of the quiet, conforming ESL student and a more subversive identity constructed among "local ESL" students who come from Hawaii and attempt to distinguish themselves from those who are "fresh off the boat" by refusing to do assignments and resisting teachers' efforts to help or encourage them. Typically "power in discourse is to do with powerful participants *controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants*" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 46), but this study demonstrates that "social subjects" are "active and creative" (p.39). In this case, the "local ESL" students resisted the less-powerful subject positions imposed on them by their school and exemplified de Certeau's contention (discussed in Kumaravadivelu, 1999) that "under certain adverse circumstances the tactics of the weak can take the form of systematic and sustained subversion" (p. 461).

Pomerantz (2008), in her study of the construction of "good language learner" identity (Norton & Toohey, 2001) likewise focuses on identity construction within a stretch of classroom talk. Her close attention to turn-taking and miscommunication reveal the ways that identities become established through discourse, though her approach is somewhat less critical and contextualized than Talmy's (2008). Menard-Warwick's (2009) monograph on gendered identities among Latina immigrants to the U.S. largely takes an interview-based narrative approach, but she devotes a chapter to gender positioning in classroom discourse. Not all studies that focus on short excerpts of text focus on close analysis of linguistic choices, however. Wallace (2008) uses her interview excerpts with pairs of children in the UK to closely trace the ways that they link literacy, religion, and identity in their talk rather than documenting the specific linguistic resources they use to position themselves in relation to her or each other. In this way her study has much in common with the next category, narrative inquiry.

Narrative Inquiry and Other Text-Based Approaches

Narrative inquiry as an approach to research builds on the assumption that humans in general use stories to make sense of their lives and to express this sense to others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Pavlenko, 2002). It allows analysts to take the phenomenon of *story*, the way people convey their experiences of the world to others, and submit it to inductive processes of inquiry that allow them to construct a scholarly *narrative* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As a result of this inquiry, “researchers can gain rare insights into learners’ motivations, investments, struggles, losses, and gains as well as into language ideologies that guide their learning trajectories” (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 214). Not all studies that make use of narratives engage in narrative inquiry; many focus on the development of linguistic features or storytelling schemata in language learners (Pavlenko, 2008). However, narratives make a uniquely rich and intriguing source of data for identity studies because “narrative resources enable speakers to perform identities discursively” while also showing that “such identities are relational, not absolute, since they involve comparisons and oppositions with present interlocutors… [and] past identities” (Baynham, 2006, p. 377).

Nunan and Choi’s (2010) edited volume of short narratives on identity and culture produced by many prominent (and some less-prominent) applied linguists offers self-produced, self-theorized insights into these individuals’ development as scholars. Luke (2010) in particular recognizes the tension between producing his own narrative and theorizing it, beginning with the rhetorical question, “Who am I as author to know what you might do with this?” (p. 131) and ending with the almost apologetic, “no grand narrative on offer here. No overarching theoretical schemata or claims. It’s a record of my writing,” (p. 137). Bell (2002) cautions that, “Although good practice demands that researchers share their ongoing narrative constructions, participants can never be quite free of the researcher’s interpretation of their lives” (p. 210). The goal of the researcher, then, is to engage in a sensitive, reflexive, collaborative “restorying” that resists easy generalizations but conveys past space and time while returning to “present and future considerations… of the event… and its significance for the larger life story that the person may be trying to live” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11).

Narrative inquiry in applied linguistics frequently draws on interviews, learner diaries, and language learning autobiographies, though scholars emphasize that these are all “accounts” and not “fact”; they are each constructed for a given context (De Fina, 2009). Baynham (2006) describes narrative “not as a transparent vehicle that conveys “what happened,” but rather, a structured and structuring genre that shapes and constructs the story that is told and the self-presentations that it involves” (p. 376). Coffey and Street’s (2008) narrative inquiry study focusing on the ways that two adult foreign language learners engage in language learning as “an enacted identity project” (p.454) explicitly sets out to examine the “performative metanarrative” produced by their informants (p. 456). The contrast between the two data sources, a written language learning autobiography and a subsequent semi-structured interview shows the impact of context on the narratives produced. Events presented positively in the written autobiography might be presented quite negatively in the interview, and the structure of the interviews was far more fluid and used different resources (including humor and direct reported speech) than the written texts.

For Connelly and Clandinin (1990), one of the most important considerations in the process of narrative inquiry is the collaborative process between the researcher and the researched that allows the narrative to take shape; the final scholarly narrative is thus a narrative of the scholar’s experience with the informant, just as Heath and Street (2008) advise aspiring ethnographers to present a coherent narrative of their process of inquiry in their chosen cultural context. Two studies of individual language learners stand out as examples of research narratives that result from extensive interactions between the researcher and the informant that elicited complex stories of identity negotiation. Tsui (2007) presents the narrative of Minfang, a teacher of English as a foreign language (EFL) in mainland China, in a generally chronological way but also in a way that moves from one accepted identity to the next. He negotiates his way from student to teacher in the same academic department, from a “marginal” EFL teacher to a “model” teacher using the communicative language teaching methods. Although Tsui describes this development in terms of Wenger’s (1998) theory of learning as participation in a community of practice, the underlying narrative itself, based on intensive series of interviews with her informant as well as the informant’s diary, which she read and used to inspire further dialogue, provides a compelling view of Minfang’s identity construction in the context of his department and national policies.

Kinginger (2004) offers a similarly compelling perspective on a language learner, Alice, and the contexts in which she negotiated her identity, both in her real-world interactions and in her diary. Like Tsui, Kinginger established a connection with her informant at the beginning of the research process and then relied heavily on the diary that Alice produced while living and learning French in Quebec and France. Stating that “the data are analyzed thematically as artful representations, or performances, of reality” (p.223), Kinginger (2004) weaves together Alice’s reflections on her experience as she sought to position herself as a capable speaker, considered the impact of learning French on her self-perception, reconsidered her choice to study abroad, and tried to decide how to negotiate this learning experience to serve her goals with her own interpretation of the account Alice provided.

A number of other identity studies have relied heavily on texts produced by language learners or multilinguals, though they make no explicit claim to a narrative inquiry approach. Pavlenko (2003) relies entirely on learner autobiographies assigned in a MATESOL course as a way of demonstrating the influence of texts read in the course on the students’ self-perception as bilingual professionals. Focusing on specific linguistic features such as tense and change-of-state verbs, she shows how they essentially reconstructed their own identities in the course of their narratives. Golombek and Jordan (2005) similarly rely on texts that MATESOL students produced in the context of graduate courses, along with interviews, to uncover the ways that their readings impacted their understanding of themselves as non-native-speaking yet competent teachers.

In another study centered on narrative and identity, Pavlenko (2001) compares 16 full-length published memoirs and seven autobiographical essays that describe language learning processes. She considers multiple aspects of these memoirs, striving to “examine social, cultural, and historical conventions that shape language learning autobiographies” (p. 213) and to unpack the ways that the writers relate their language learning experience to gender while also producing “a gendered genre.” Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) also rely on published memoirs to evidence the identity construction process among children of immigrants. While the choice to rely on such material as research data seems questionable in that these memoirs were produced and honed for the purposes of publication and sale to a particular U.S. market, they also illuminate the fact that all narratives are constructed in one way or another, more or less deliberately, for specific purposes.

Canagarajah (2004) and Hyland (2010) also rely on written material produced for other purposes in their identity studies. Comparing the work of novice writers and published “expert” writers and contextualizing this work in his ethnographic research or in his personal relationships with the authors, Canagarajah (2004) describes and illustrates the different approaches to constructing an individual voice that are available to multilingual writers at different stages in their language learning process as well as in their professional development. These multiple data sources allow Canagarajah to discuss the texts that are produced in terms of the texts that might have been produced, including the ways that a student writer avoided conflicts between her native and target writing traditions, though she could have negotiated between the two more actively, and the ways that a published Sri Lankan author could have limited himself to fully Western or fully local ways of producing academic texts but instead creates a hybrid voice when producing work for both communities.

Hyland's (2010) analysis of identity diverges from any other presented here in that it uses a corpus-based approach to analyze published material as a way of investigating the subtle tactics that scholars may use to establish identities. To this end, he creates a corpus of articles authored by Deborah Cameron and a corpus of articles and monographs authored by John Swales and compares both of these corpora to a third corpus of comparable applied linguistics articles and book chapters. By quantifying the most frequent words and word clusters (lexical bundles) in each author's corpus and by using key word analysis[2] to compare their work to that of other scholars, Hyland identifies lexico-grammatical features that characterize their work and then interprets these features in terms of identity construction. Citing features such as her use of words signaling dialogical contrasts and her penchant for conditional statements, Hyland presents the identity Cameron constructs through her writing as "a steadfast and committed academic, a disciplinary expert confident in her beliefs and determined in her assurance" (p. 174). Swales, meanwhile, is shown to produce "the identity of a cautious and inquiring colleague exploring the mysteries of the ways people use language with the same curiosity and eye for classroom practice that his practitioner readers might" (p. 174-175) through the way he uses the first person and addresses "the reader" and his comments on the accuracy and validity of his own claims. While a scholar without Hyland's particular combination of skills in corpus

[2] Key word analysis is a statistical operation that determines which words are significantly more frequent in a corpus of interest than in an a suitable reference corpus, in this case the corpus of general applied linguistics material.

analysis and ability to explicate lexico-grammatical features qualitatively might not attempt a similar methodology, Hyland (2010) makes the useful argument that “narrative is a self-conscious and reflective assembling of experience for the purpose of constructing an identity” while in other contexts, such as writing academic articles, individuals are “claiming identities while engaged in doing something else” (p. 162).

Identity in Online Interaction

In recent years the increasing influence of the Internet and the accompanying emergence of computer-mediated communication (CMC) as a means of social interaction and a pedagogical tool (Harasim, 2000; Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004) has gradually led to greater interest in the study of identity in online interaction. While some early studies of identity in internet-based courses and other online contexts focused on identity as a set of static features (as did most research in applied linguistics until the sociocultural turn), a number of scholars have noted that the internet provides a unique context for participation and identity construction (Belcher, 1999; Hevern, 2004; O'Dowd, 2007; Reeder, MacFadyen, Roche, & Chase, 2004). Although Kramsch (2009) makes a foray into describing the study of identity in online contexts, this area remains under-studied and under-theorized in applied linguistics.

A few notable studies, however, have analyzed identity construction in online contexts using well-grounded theoretical approaches and innovative data collection methods. The studies mentioned here draw on the same theoretical positions and, in many ways, the same methodologies as the ethnographic, DA, and narrative inquiry studies mentioned above. However, these studies vary the details of their data collection and their use of analytical approaches, particularly in the extent to which they incorporate and integrate both online and face-to-face (F2F) data in their analyses of identity.

Categorized and discussed above with ethnography because it draws extensively on F2F data, Yi (2009) also makes extensive use of internet-based data, both analyzing her informants' written productions and interactions online and interacting with them online through email and synchronous CMC (a chat program). This approach allowed Yi to bring together multiple contexts of interaction and compare how her informants constructed their identities through different media as well as in different communities and languages. Lam (2004) similarly investigates her informants' online practices as well as interviewing them in person, which again allowed a comparison across contexts and revealed emergent bilingual practices. Her study differs from Yi (2009) in that she engages in a more detailed discourse analysis of the chat transcripts, particularly in terms of its Chinese-English bilingual features. She found that her informant used their participation in these chat rooms, which primarily used English but were dominated by speakers of Chinese, to develop confidence as well as competence in their use of English.

Hevern (2004), Graham (2007), and Ligorio and Pugliese (2004) have each taken a unique approach to analyzing identity construction in fully internet-based contexts. The focus of Hevern's (2004) study is a corpus of postings culled from a range of weblogs (or blogs). In analyzing the ways in which blog authors constructed their identities and how this identity construction shifted in response to the events of September 11, 2001, Hevern proposes a new method of inquiry that he calls "digital ethnography." Coding these blogs for "potential mechanisms of self-presentation" (p. 324), he identifies three major forms: textuality, graphical content, and potential to promote interaction (or contact) between author and reader. Of these, the latter two are uniquely available to blog authors as compared to writers in text-based media, and all three differ from the affordances of F2F conversation.

Focusing on a different mode of CMC, Graham (2007) analyzes online interactions relating to a specific critical incident that occurred on a public listserv that she calls ChurchList. As Reeder, et al. (2004), among others, have pointed out, online communities such as the one brought together by this listserv negotiate their own norms and generate unique cultures of their own. In online contexts, just as in more traditional interactions, “whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 23). Graham, using “an ethnographic qualitative approach” (p. 744), analyzes both individual identity negotiation and the negotiation of a group identity, which became dramatically more salient after one member responded to another’s prayer request relating to his homosexuality in a way that many other members viewed as insensitive and judgmental. The 387 postings related to this single instance demonstrated, in Graham’s interpretation, the ways that the community, largely but not entirely guided by its creator and moderator, implicitly and explicitly articulated the rules of appropriate interaction. While Hevern (2004) and Graham (2007) focused on naturally-occurring interactions on the internet, Ligorio and Pugliese created an interactive game involving a mystery to be solved in a multi-user domain, and used methods from conversation analysis to examine the ways in which volunteer participants constructed various positions in relation to their online interlocutors.

Other studies have focused specifically on the construction of identity in online communities of learning. Nguyen and Kellogg (2005) use both F2F and discussion board data from a content-based ESL course to analyze their students’ interactions in multiple ways. As the content of the course dealt with civil rights and a number of issues on which learners had strong positions, the learners engaged in identity construction through specific linguistic practices that aligned them with certain opinion positions and with certain classmates. Drawing on the theory of communities of practice (CoPs) and particularly its theorization of *engagement*, *alignment*, and *imagination* as modes of participation (Wenger, 1998), Nguyen and Kellogg (2005) show learning related to identity construction in this community.

Nelson and Temples (forthcoming) likewise use a framework derived from CoP theory to analyze participation, identity construction, and learning in an online learning community. Relying primarily on data from the students in a fully-internet-based course, all of whom were participating in an international exchange program for one semester and taking an ethnographic approach to data analysis through emergent themes, they present two case studies of students in the course and analyze the relationship between the learners' awareness of their online community is a community of practice and their satisfactory construction of a complex intercultural identity. Like Hyland (2010), they assert that their choice of contexts and data allowed them to focus on identity construction in interactions that were not elicited and constructed for the purpose of the study, though the class context and the participation of the instructor created certain constraints on participation.

Sujo de Montes, Oran, and Willis (2002) similarly focus on a fully-internet-based course. Their analysis, like Graham's (2007), focuses on three critical incidents in which identity and the nature of appropriate behavior in the online context became particularly salient. Taking an explicitly critical approach, they show how each of these incidents brought up issues of racial difference and accompanying power differences among the participants in the course, who were in-service teachers and teachers in training in a region with large numbers of Hispanic and Navajo as well as white inhabitants.

Taken together, these studies of identity in online contexts demonstrate that the internet and CMC offer new contexts for analyzing interaction and identity construction using familiar theoretical frameworks and well-practiced methodologies. At the same time, these contexts offer unique means of collecting and analyzing evidence of identity construction through the content of online text as well as the ways this text connects to others' text, the images accompanying it, and the ways that participants respond to others' contributions.

Quantitative Methods in Identity Research

A few noteworthy studies have taken approaches to analyzing identity that do not necessarily align with the interpretivist paradigm and sociocultural theories that drive all of the studies that have been mentioned heretofore. In quantitative, positivist research, it remains possible to treat identity as an interpersonal variable that can be definitively attributed to participants, that remains static throughout the data collection period (if not, presumably, for life), and that delineates a relatively homogeneous group (Dornyei, 2007). Some studies of identity have taken both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyzing identity, notably Caldas and Caron-Caldas's investigation of the development of bilingualism and biliteracy in their own children, documented in Caldas (2006) as well as a number of articles. Though their research relies heavily on field notes and memory, Caldas and Caron-Caldas (2002) also used quantitative survey measures and devised a quantitative method for measuring their children's use of English in comparison to French that they call the Bilingual Preference Ratio (BPR), which is the proportion of one language or the other in relation to the overall words produced in given stretches of recorded conversation. Relating the BPR to contextual factors, they found that the children's language use, and apparently their identities as French-English bilinguals, were strongly influenced by the language of the community around them while in the U.S. or Quebec.

Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001), Noels (2005), and Lee (2005) all rely entirely on data from surveys to conduct their analyses of language learners. Phinney, et al.

(2001) constructed complex statistical models relating the ethnic identities of children of immigrants to their proficiency in their family's home language, their parents' efforts at language and cultural transmission, and their interactions with peers from the same ethnic group. Although they do not attend to heterogeneity within ethnic groups, they do present different models for Armenian, Vietnamese, and Mexican families that highlight the heterogeneity among groups and suggest salient factors that would be worthy of additional qualitative analysis.

Noels (2005) and Lee (2005) likewise conducted studies focusing on heritage learners of various languages, generally defined as learners who recognize a cultural connection to the target language (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003). Although Blackledge, et al. (2008) point out that the claim that heritage language learning is related to identity is "almost a truism," for these researchers working with heritage learners revealed unexpected ties between language learning and identity and challenged their categorical approach to learner identity. Noels (2005), using established methods and measures for analyzing motivational orientations, found that the group of learners who claimed to have German-speaking parents or ancestors and the group who claimed to be heritage language learners (HLLs) of German overlapped but did not align perfectly; in fact, almost 25% of learners who were not identified as HLLs based on family background nevertheless claimed a heritage identity for themselves. No matter which definition of HLL was used, family background or self-attribution, the HLL group was more likely to profess motivations that related to *identified regulation*, which is a subcategory of extrinsic motivation that relates language learning to identity construction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Lee (2005) likewise found that participants in his survey of university language learners who were studying less-commonly taught languages (LCTLs, referring to languages other than English, Spanish, French, and German in the U.S.) claimed heritage learner identity in unexpected ways. African-

Americans selected Swahili and Chinese students from various regions and nations chose to study Mandarin Chinese for heritage reasons although they could not identify ancestors who used these languages, and Pakistani students chose to study Arabic for reasons relating to their religious heritage rather than their ethnic or national heritage, while students with apparent HLL status did not self-identify as HLLs because of low proficiency. Unlike Noels, Lee (2005) allowed these findings to impact his theory of heritage learner identity, claiming that learners' cultural affiliation (in terms of ethnicity or religion) and proficiency should both be considered when attributing HLL identity to learners.

Proposing an Approach: Identity in Heritage Learners of a Critical Language

The findings and the limitations of these quantitative studies of heritage learners and the findings and methods of qualitiative identity studies relating to heritage learners such as Mills (2004), Schecter and Bayley (1997), andYi (2009) suggest that further qualitative analysis of identity in heritage language learners is warranted. Among heritage learners, HLLs of critical languages in the U.S. deserve particular attention because this designation essentially appropriates their affiliation to and skills in the language as assets in terms of U.S. international relations and national security (Wiley, 2007). Assuming an interpretivist, sociocultural theoretical approach to context, discourse, and narrative and considering the methodological approaches discussed above, what would be the best approach for studying identity in this population? One model might come from a large-scale study of identity and heritage languages that has not been discussed heretofore. Blackledge, Creese, and a number of collaborators including (apparently) native speakers of the languages in question present data from one of "four linked case studies" of heritage language learning in complementary (community-supported, not state-funded) schools in the U.K. (Blackledge, et al., 2008, p. 552). The design and execution of this study involves not only observations and interviews in multiple contexts, including the complementary schools and the learners' homes, over a long period of time, but it also involves data collection in multiple languages. Informants are free to select their language of choice and code-switch among languages at will. Furthermore, the researchers allow the findings of their study to deconstruct even the core concepts of interest, as the learners and their teachers negotiate the boundaries around what is considered "heritage" and what is considered "a language."

Certainly not all researchers can engage in studies of the size and scope of this one, nor can they design an ideal study and then be assured of locating and negotiating access to a context and community in which to conduct it. Given a community of learners of a heritage language that is also a designated critical language, many different approaches to analyzing that community would be both possible and appropriate. The first question to ask, then, is whether the researcher intends to focus primarily on the experience of individual learners in relation to their context or on the context as a whole and the participation of learners within it. Ethnographic approaches could be appropriate for both, but the latter goal would lend itself to a full (micro)ethnography, while the former would lend itself to a narrative study, perhaps based on a combination of interviews and learner diaries. In addition, the researcher can decide to focus more closely on linguistic behaviors in small stretches of audio- or video-recorded interaction and their relationships to identity construction in this context.

Ultimately, the studies presented here have demonstrated that a variety of studies, with varying theoretical priorities and various methodological approaches, can be conducted based on data that has been collected through similar ethnographic methods. These studies have demonstrated that in many ways the overt differences in methodology that appear in published articles, book chapters, and monographs may actually reflect different lenses laid over the researchers' data in order to produce a coherent account as much as they reflect different intentions for the data collection itself. With that in mind, the researcher would be wise to aim for a few key criteria to increase the chances that the data thus collected will lend itself to multiple analytical lenses. These roughly follow Lazaraton's (2003) list of criteria for ethnographic studies: multiple methods of data collection that reveal stakeholders' perspectives, including observation, interviews, recordings, documents, and possibly learner diaries as well as a detailed, reflexive researcher journal; lengthy engagement in the research context, and if possible engagement in multiple contexts relevant to the learners, such as public school, home, and a complementary school; and an analytical approach that begins before data collection has ended and continues cyclically to produce a coherent theory of identity construction in this context.

Although proposing a study of heritage learners in detail is impossible without considering the specific constraints of contexts, stakeholders, willing participants, and time, it is possible to envision methods of participant selection, data collection, and analysis that could lead to valuable ethnographic case studies of heritage learners of a language such as Arabic. Participants should be recruited through their public school, through their community Arabic school, or through other community contexts or social networks, such as their mosque (the local *masjid*). Using an ethnographic case study approach, the researcher(s) should collect data through observation (some of which should be videotaped), interviews (all of which should be audiotaped), written materials, photographs, educational materials including textbooks, and related documents such as school curricula, standards, or charters. As much as possible, this data should be collected at multiple sites including the students' public school, their community

Arabic school, and their homes. Ideally, a team of researchers or a researcher with assistants should discuss language learning with the stakeholders in both English and Arabic. Finally, analysis should be ongoing, iterative, and thematic, focusing on the personal, family, institutional, and sociopolitical factors that influence the choices and the practices around learning Arabic for these participants. Connecting these factors to the learners' actual proficiencies and progress in Arabic and English is not imperative for an identity study based on the existing literature but would be interesting, informative, and useful as well.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed a wide range of studies in the field of applied linguistics that explicitly investigate and illuminate the relationships between language learning or multilingualism and identity. The vast majority of these studies take a qualitative, constructivist approach to identity, focusing not on fixed categories of people but on identity construction within and in relation to given contexts and surrounding discourses. Although many of these studies have contributed to the theoretical and methodological breadth of this area of study and can serve as admirable models for further research, they also exhibit some limitations that leave much room for expansion of research on identity. The most prominent omission among these studies, considering that most of them are produced by applied linguists and published in applied linguistics journals, is the reluctance of many authors to theorize the relationships between identity and learning in ways that can inform pedagogical practice. Kumaravadivelu (1999) contends that "language teachers can ill afford to ignore the sociocultural reality that influences identity formation in and outside the classroom, nor can they afford to separate learners' linguistic needs and wants from their sociocultural needs and wants" (p. 472). Research such as that discussed here has helped to identify those needs and wants, though it has not generally taken on the challenge of connecting them to learning. One exception is Yi (2009), who asserts that researchers and educators should:

> consider how to build effective and engaging classroom environment in which students take ownership of ways of doing and learning in order to develop multiple (complementary and competing) understanding of identities, and to engage in cultural self-exploration and self-expression in meaningful ways." (p. 124)

Briefly, the other areas that merit greater attention in identity research can be summarized as follows:

- *Methodological explicitness.* Even if authors choose to avoid claiming a particular approach, and particularly when they do so, their reports should include explicit discussion of data collection and analytical processes that are grounded as thoroughly as their theoretical positions (see Coffey & Street, 2008; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Mills, 2004).
- *Multiple contexts of data collection.* Studies, particularly case studies of individual learners, should strive to include data from more than one context and ideally recordings of informants in their natural contexts of learning and use (Block, 2007).
- *Multilingual data collection.* Studies of language learners and multilinguals should be conducted multilingually, with data glossed carefully in the research reports (see Achugar, 2009; Blackledge, et al., 2008; Yi, 2009).
- *Progress regarding the study of online identity construction*, including well-structured theory and honed methodological approaches.
- *Greater collaboration with research participants*, not only as interlocutors but as co-researchers. At minimum, researchers should be more diligent with member-checking.

- *Attention to additional contexts and conditions for identity construction,* particularly those that have been considered more heavily in categorical terms than in complex interpretivist identity construction studies, including heritage learners.

Finally, Menard-Warwick (2009) proposes a question that has not been sufficiently considered and that may serve to guide future research on identity:

> the key question is not whether one 'self' is more 'real' than another, but rather to what extent individuals hang on to 'a sense of continuous identity' across social contexts and instances of discourse - and to what extent this sense affects opportunities to learn new languages and literacies. (p.47)

Now that so many researchers have studied identity construction in ways that emphasize its fluidity and heterogeneity, the aspect of identity that remains to be understood further may be durability, and the balance between durability and fluidity depending on context and life experience. Although this theoretical question remains open, the chances that the existing methodologies for studying identity reviewed here, when used rigorously, will be able to generate insight into these questions remain very strong.

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