

PART ONE

**Problematising second language and literacy learning in conditions of
cultural complexity**

OVERVIEW

Few people would question today that we are living in times of a major cultural-historical mutation. The sense of this cultural change, however, is difficult to determine, and one wonders to what extent the problems found in defining it are not in themselves major indicators of what is changing. In a certain sense, giving an historical account of this cultural mutation is rather simple. It amounts to something like this: a shift from ideologies of monolithic cultures and languages, to conceptions of complex cultures incorporating (and assimilating) diversity, to contemporary formulations of cultural complexity characterised by a proliferation of particular political, social and cultural identities. This latter mutation has led to the re-emergence of debates about multiculturalism and multilingualism in 'new times'. The context of debates about multiculturalism and future directions in the language and literacy education of migrants and minorities is marked by two contradictory tendencies: the recognition of difference, on the one hand, and the backlash of old and new forms of racism and xenophobia, on the other.

Part One of the thesis makes two points in connection with the language and literacy education of migrants and minorities in conditions of cultural complexity. The first point is that the crisis of cultural-linguistic universalism and contradictory multiculturalism opens a way to the tangible emergence of the void, of what is becoming increasingly recognised as a *Thirdspace* of social-cultural-semiotic practices and identities. A *Thirdspace* without ultimate meanings, without essentialised and fixed identities, presents itself as a dynamic space of radical openness leading to a new awareness of the complex mechanisms through which all identities (and all sociocultural reality) are constructed.

Chapter One introduces the concept of *Thirdspace*, while deconstructing the three domains central to (re)thinking ESL education. These domains are: 'culture' - and related to this, identity and language politics; 'mind' - and related to this, theories of learning; and 'literacy' - and related to this, conceptions of the textual practice of meaning-making. It is argued here that the concept of *Thirdspace* and the strategy of thirding is an important step in transforming the closed, and often reactionary, logic of binarism in these domains of inquiry. First and foremost, a *Thirdspace* approach moves away from conceptions of cultural identities, mind and literacy as static objects of the empirical gaze, and instead develops an account of their dynamics in social practices, as the actualisation of particular socio-political conditions. Once the social nature of these categories is critically realised, we can move to the exploration of the possibilities of articulating them anew.

Social accounts of cultural identities, mind and literacy reveal complex processes of mutation which are difficult to capture, while operating within their commonly

essentialised and dichotomised accounts. The focus on sociocultural practice, on ideologies and cultural politics, helps in understanding these processes as cultural-semiotic hybridisation leading to the emergence of new cultural identities. This perspective also appears to be productive in understanding the social origin of mind in the cultural-semiotic sphere of activities. And, finally, a sociocultural model of literacy allows us to explore the multiple meanings and uses of literacy. While this approach defines literacy as literacies, we also have to recognise that literacies intermingle, due to the diversity of perspectives and semiotic resources deployed by the participants in practice. Hence, the recognition of semiotic diversity and cultural difference becomes a key condition for a production of *transcendental* meanings in a pluralistic society.

The second point is that the shift of focus to social practice requires new theoretical formulations of learning in general, and second language (L2) and literacy learning in particular. Chapter Two reviews the literature in the field of L2 studies through the two metaphors of 'acquisition' and 'participation' to explicate two incommensurate conceptions of learning. While the metaphor of acquisition underlies an autonomous view of literacy learning concerned with the development of information processing skills, the metaphor of participation describes literacy learning as coming to know social ways with words and texts. In this view, L2 and literacy learning becomes directly related to the processes of becoming a member of a community - a participant in a practice. Understanding literacy learning as participation in semiotically mediated practices draws our attention to a much wider range of issues than those conceived of within an acquisitionist framework, especially to the issues of cultural politics, identity construction and the social organisation of practices in which L2 learners participate.

However, the dichotomy between 'acquisition' and 'participation' can not be reduced to a simple distinction between the individual and the social. The argument is made that 'participation' implies a location of consciousness (and learning) on the borderline between the self and the other. This again can be conceived of as the Thridspace of living events, in which meanings become appropriated, negotiated and constructed. The L2 learner engages in these meaning-making activities not as the sovereign subject, but as a socially constructed person. This issue alerts the attention of researchers and practitioners to the relations of power in meaning-making practices and to the importance of a critical awareness of how knowledge and meaning-producing technologies work.

The first two chapters, therefore, deal primarily with the problematics of L2 and literacy learning in a multicultural society. They outline some important issues related to (re)conceptualising learning in the Thridspace of mediated practices and set the grounds (in the plural) for its further elaboration.

CHAPTER ONE

Introducing a 'Thirdspace' perspective on language and literacy learning in multicultural conditions

Thirding-as-Othering is the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also ...

Edward Soja (1996: 60)

For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge.

Homi Bhabha (1990a: 211)

Hybridity in particular shows the connections between the racial categories of the past and contemporary cultural discourse: it may be used in different ways, given different inflections and apparently discrete references, but it always reiterates and reinforces the dynamics of the same conflictual economy whose tensions and divisions it re-enacts in its own antithetical structure. There is no single, or correct, concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but it also repeats as it changes.

Robert Young (1995:27)

Introduction

In times when conservative and liberal notions of multiculturalism, diversity and difference claim to provide final vocabularies for adjudicating cultural tensions in educational practices, it is important to raise questions about the adequacy of teaching frameworks, methods and models of learning that construe singular meanings and identities for those who are new 'latecomers' to the system (Gee 1999). As many researchers and theorists have emphasised, multicultural education is not feasible in conditions of the unifying top-down cultural politics of a permanent nation-state (Giroux 1996). Conservatives operate with the notion of an all-encompassing cultural identity of a nation produced in the public spheres of cultural politics and education, with the aim to differentiate, control, marginalise, and normalise the cultural Other. At the same time, it is no less important to identify the ethnocentric blind spots and voluntarist rhetoric in what were regarded as the most radical (liberal) critiques of the mainstream models of migrant and minority students' education. Because liberals celebrate cultural pluralism by essentialising the Other, they also fail to see "the power-grounded relationships among identity construction, cultural

representations and struggles over resources" (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997). Neither the totalising power of a dominant culture nor the educational governmentality of a nation-state can be underestimated or wished away through a mere celebration of the local embrace.

Today, when a conservative fetishising of the 'national' and the 'global' and a liberal pragmatism of the 'ethnic' and the 'local' seem to paralyse the very possibility of re-thinking cultural politics in education, we need an alternative to this binarist model. We need, to paraphrase Henri Lefebvre (1991), to resume the dialectic of multicultural spaces in which we live and learn in order to reveal contradictions between the global and the local, between centres and peripheries, between the individual and the social, between the politics of knowledge and knowing and learning in everyday practices and living events. In a word, we need a theory (a knowledge) of the production of cultural-semiotic and mental spheres in multicultural conditions; one that injects a third dimension into thinking about the possibility of crossing, erasure and 'translation' of the boundaries in the cultural production of identities, meanings and minds.

This chapter provides an introduction to the idea of 'Thirdspace' - a trialectic approach (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996) which allows for an account of the massive interconnections between local and global cultural processes as well as different material and discursive sites in the general context of literacy education, and second language and literacy appropriation, in particular. Drawing on the new cultural studies and the sociocultural studies of literacy as a key resource for addressing inextricably complex multicultural conditions of meaning-making, one of my aims here is to highlight the unfolding historical process of cultural and semiotic 'thrending' and 'hybridity' (Clifford 1988, 1992, 1997; Bhabha 1994; Bakhtin 1968; Foucault 1986; Popkewitz 2000; Soja 1996, etc.). Thrending and hybridity are presented here both as life choices for many migrants and as a political strategy for negating 'pure' cultural identities and meanings produced in the public spheres of cultural politics and education. It is argued that thrending and cultural hybridity are disruptive forces that challenge the strong reproductive functions of a nation-state, especially the reproduction of nationalist thought in identity politics, literacy education and language planning.

The concept of 'Thirdspace' proves to be helpful in understanding meaning-making practices of migrant and minority literacy learners in the nexus of manifold 'power geometries' (Massey 1994). Thirdspace positions in cultural and cognitive activities of literacy learning come from a struggle between multiple oppositional polarities. In living events, this struggle often leads to signs and meanings being appropriated, translated, rehistoricised, and reread. In this sense, differential relations of power are contextualising

conditions for thirding and hybridisation in literacy learning. These strategies, in the everyday literacy practices of migrants, allow for possibilities of supplementary sites of resistance and negotiation - "emergent, unanticipated forms of historical agency" (Bhabha 1994: 114). Hence, by emphasising the enormous sociocultural consequences for how migrants identify or have to identify themselves, agency is attributed to the social acts of subversion of the power-meaning determination by drawing on alternative and often incommensurate discourses. This tension leads to the articulation of new emergent possibilities of cultural reinvention, transformation and change in educational settings and in wider sociocultural spheres of life. The productive force of thirding and hybridity then becomes a key issue in the cultural making of new practices, meanings and discourses. It is an especially important concept to address in educational research in the highly fraught and exceedingly fragile conditions of cultural complexity.

In the light of this preliminary discussion, a metaphor of Thridspace emerges as the main conceptual tool deployed in this chapter, and as a leitmotif for the entire thesis, to problematise and deconstruct the often impenetrable binarism in the literacy education of migrant and minority students. In so doing, I focus here on three problematic domains:

- 1) 'culture' (and related to this, identity politics);
- 2) 'mind' (and related to this, conception of learning); and
- 3) 'literacy' (and related to this, conception of meaning making).

These three domains of inquiry are important in two senses. Firstly, there is a need to reconceptualise these categories, in order to better understand literacy learning in new times. The term 'new times' is currently being used with regard to the postmodern condition, in which the essentialising, border-constructing markers of cultural, institutional and community homogeneity become increasingly crossed and transgressed, heralding the emergence of multiple and blended identities, meanings and practices (Luke & Luke 1999, New London Group 2000). The inter-cultural dynamism of people and texts in new times has shown the porosity of cultural borders and exposed the complex and overlapping practices of identity and knowledge construction. These processes can not be ignored in literacy pedagogy today. Secondly, a reconsideration of essentialising binaries through the metaphor of Thridspace is not only an attractive epistemological strategy. For me, as a non-native speaker of English, Thridspace has become a reality of life, a position of identity articulation and an everyday practical experience of living inter-culturally. Therefore, I reconsider the categories of culture, mind and literacy through the concept of Thridspace not only from a position of a sociocultural researcher but also from a position of my marginality. As bell hooks (1990: 153) rightly points out, this is not only a location

which is imposed by the dominant culture but a position "one chooses as a site of resistance - as a location of radical openness and possibility".

1.1 Problematising 'culture' and 'nation(s)'

The widely spread assumptions that culture is a common denominator for those who live within it, and that its boundaries are defined by the unitary and coherent experiences of a nationality, are still driving mainstream research into language and literacy learning and education practices in the (late)modern world. The operations by which national cultures constitute themselves, as we have 'imagined' them, end at the borders that separate countries and demarcate their differences, ensuring that the national equals a complete cultural whole (Anderson 1991). These assumptions are historical constructs rather than universal givens, and they consequently constrain our understanding of what cultures and languages are, how social individuals operate and learn within the realm of the cultural and the linguistic, and how we might go about studying those operations and learning practices.

While acknowledging that 'culture' refers to an extremely complex concept (Eagleton 2000), we must begin by recognising its unproblematised elision with the historical investment in its universal understanding. That investment is considerable. Both Raymond Williams (1983) and more recently Terry Eagleton (2000) have provided seminal works which examine historical transitions in the descriptive and evaluative meanings of the term 'culture'. I would like to focus here only on one historical turn - the *volkisch* turn of the concept (Eagleton 2000: 12) - that is crucial for the entire argument in my thesis.

This turn, from the German idealists (Hegel, Herder, von Humboldt, Goethe, etc.) onward, has constructed culture as Culture (writ large) - a distinctive way of life of a Nation (*das Volk*). It has challenged the previous widely accepted conception of culture as a way of life of universal humanity. Though this turn started in the 18th century with an attempt to relativise European cultures, it acquired widespread acceptance in the 19th century with the massive sociopolitical and geographic transformations in Europe and North America and in the course of further redistribution of the colonial world. While essentialising culture on the basis of a nation's homogeneity was meant to construct the idealised way of life of a specific nation, it also brought to the fore one of the main problems - the politics of intercultural relations.

On the one hand, the notion of Culture supported the sociopolitical agenda of nation building and its development within state boundaries. This view persisted in Western thought as a major tool of homogenisation and the reduction of heterogeneity by assimilation or exclusion, to ensure internal coherence. On the other hand, intercultural

relations implied broader ideologies of how to deal with other large and small cultures outside its boundaries. The term 'civilisation' was used in parallel to that of 'culture' to evaluate levels of development, and ultimately to justify armed conflicts with neighbouring states or the plundering of the 'primitive' and 'savage' premoderns for political and economic purposes, as well as for those of cultural-ideological dissemination (Eagleton 2000).

This "classic view" of culture, as Renato Rosaldo (1989: 20, 27) describes it, "posit[ed] culture as a self-contained whole made up of coherent patterns," in which "each cultural pattern appears as unique and self-contained". Previously, the presumed national identity thus established was understood to be founded on a unitary experience dependent on some sort of vaguely defined political boundary (e.g. the tribe, the clan, the race). Later, especially with the advent of the world-system of capitalism in the second half of the 19th century, culture became increasingly formulated in terms of nationality, as the imaginary community of government that was the nation filled in the void of collapsing traditional communities, vernacular languages and dialects. Thus, the links between culture and nation were clearly established. Culture was seen as a complex whole of differences that needed to be regulated and controlled through the politics of a state. By relying on views of progress, modernisation and national development, a state politics promoted and strengthened the 'We' collective either through the liberal (contradictory) or the nationalist (racist) principles of classification, ordering and regulating of cultural relations and differences.

These characteristics of nationalist thought, as they emerged throughout the 19th century, echoed the assumptions behind the anthropological view of culture. Those assumptions have included "consciousness of the uniqueness or peculiarity of a group of people, particularly with respect to their ethnic, linguistic or religious homogeneity; emphasizing of shared sociocultural attitudes and historical memories; a sense of common mission; disrespect and animosity towards other peoples (racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism)" (Alter 1985: 7). Nationalism and the developing anthropological science converged in their visions of what constituted a coherent, distinctive community, in which the holism of nationhood as a governed and governing body was (and is) conflated with the symbolic-linguistic coherence of culture.

Nationalism contributed to the process of colonisation through language. One of the most common forms of this was imposing the dominant and standard dialect as the language, while making all existent local dialects subordinate. Another form was to deny access to the elite's language and thus make that dominant dialect into a form of cultural and symbolic capital that only a few could possess (Bourdieu 1991). Yet a third method used

was to create, for the conquered, a dialect that would enable educational and homogenising institutions to facilitate control of the masses. Ironically, these homogenising dialects were the key to the formation of nation-states, national identity and of nationalism (Anderson 1991). In all instances, the attempts to form an image of a national collective identity were necessarily linked to the forms of language and cultural politics.

According to modernisation theorists Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1992), the nation was the first modern form of collective identity. That is, nationness was based on the understanding of a large culture with a communal sense of shared traditions and beliefs, instead of merely being a community founded within geopolitical boundaries. In order to accomplish such a modernist project, what was needed were "narratives of identity," as Benedict Anderson (1991: 208) calls them - histories of nations as the making of a cultural totality. Anderson's influential concept of the nation as an 'imagined community' reminds us of all the ways in which identity has been developed and kept going through representations of the collective subjectivity of a nation's citizens. But here it will suffice to name just a few scientific narratives produced in response to a national policy of large-culture construction.

For instance, in the emerging social sciences of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and in particular in anthropology, culture came to mean the coherent totality of a group's social processes (a national identity). By the same token, in historical-comparative linguistics of that time language came to represent *Volksgeist* (a soul of nation) - a spiritual principle that unites people around a shared past and a present consensual desire to perpetuate the value of the cultural heritage that they have received in an undivided form. It was a general shift away from universal cultural and linguistic histories of humankind and towards those of groups of peoples moving to the fulfilment of their national destinies. This view was also backgrounded in new developments in structuralism. While recognising cultural and linguistic relativity, the works of Durkheim, Saussure, Sapir, Whorf, Malinowsky and others pushed the ideas of (over)determination, either by cultural or language systems, as the major determinants of national consciousness and thus promoted the single language of truth and monolithic cultural ideology. Such scientific constructions of national narratives were representing broader demands to make the cultural/linguistic heritage available for national consumption through identification with values that would further perpetuate the nation's coherent development (cf. Popkewitz 2000).

There is no denying that a common language was necessary for the preservation of the images of national identity and promotion of nationalism. However, a simple and uncritical acceptance of this overlooks and supports the notion of what Bourdieu (1991) calls 'the illusion of linguistic communism'. Thus, "by promoting the official language to the status

of the national language - that is, the official language of the emerging nation-state - the policy of linguistic unification would favour [and continues to favour] those who already possess the official language as part of their linguistic competence, while those who knew only a local dialect would become part of a political and linguistic unit in which their traditional competence was subordinated and devalued" (Thompson 1991: 6). It is precisely in order to provide narratives of a unitary, large culture that accounts of common traditions and standard languages continue their triumphant march well into the disciplinary practices of a post-war and a post-colonialist era (Holliday 1999).

The view of a coherent cultural and national totality is maintained in many disciplinary narratives (fields) today. But now equating culture with nation-state not only "serves as a nostalgic and sentimental myth that offers an illusion of a classless organic community of which everyone is an equal member" (Miyoshi 1993: 744). It is also a specific strategy for maintaining an epistemological-power status quo in "new political-cultural conditions of global relationality" (Clifford 1988: 275). The notion of a large culture still drives language policies and literacy campaigns that promote, on the one hand, the view of language as "a reservoir of unexamined cultural and political assumptions" and advance 'phonocentric' orientations to language education (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997: 38; Pennycook 1994a). On the other hand, it aggrandises the language of a large culture to such an extent that it becomes one of the most important of the many hierarchical hurdles imposed on multicultural society. As a result, language and ethnic minorities in their general striving to become 'accepted', often shun their primary languages or dialects and cultural practices and thus actively participate in a process of self-annihilation. This, Pierre Bourdieu (1991: 49) claims, induces "the holders of dominated linguistic competences to collaborate in the destruction of their instruments of expression" by taking up the dominant language as an educational investment.

Obviously, a national language politics influences the transmutation of liminal identities to those of self-rejection, self-hate, embarrassment or resistance. An appropriate (standardised) language as the major and valued tool of cultural communication strikes with its linguistic racism at sociocultural heteroglossia and polyphony. It strikes at the foundations of multiculturalism for that matter, creating ambivalence and 'psychological pathology'. I do not wish to overgeneralise or contribute to the essentialisation of the subaltern, although my own experience as a member of a language minority group indicates that this does regularly occur. In many cases, people from a language minority learn to devalue their primary language and even actively contribute to the subordination and annihilation of that language and culture. Furthermore, a sense of confusion intermeshed with a sense of anger becomes prevalent as liminals push for acceptance, while making clear and often hostile distinctions between themselves and their more-

recently arrived compatriots, as well as between themselves and members of the dominant culture.

How then does the discursive building of national identity, and by extension the building of the nation, account for those mental states of ambivalence, detachment and even of non-existence that emerge in minority groups due to their rejection and exclusion from dominant cultural and linguistic norms? It is convenient for a large culture not to talk about this at all but to formulate and sustain the universalist framework of the 'unrecognised' sociocultural production of people's consciousness, thus representing mind as an entirely natural and independent processing machine. Mind - that of the 'Crusoe' tradition - computes and stores information flawlessly, constructs the cognitive world by dividing experience into atomistic parts, and cognises the world with self-sufficient mental effort. The atomistic individualist within the welded unity of a single culture-language-state *carries the Culture* and will not tolerate the existence of the 'irrational' - uncertainty, ambivalence, undecidability - implicit in the concept of multiculturalism. S/he will not oppose the principles of the rational order of modernity but will make logical judgements by drawing on the conceptual framework produced by authority or in the 'consensus' of a large culture, even when multiple ethnicities, or nationalities, exist simultaneously within a single national-political space of which s/he is a part and a product. Hence, both cultural and language centralisation guard the hegemony of a single consciousness in a given society through ossification and stagnation of cultural-linguistic practices, identities and minds.

Thinking in this line, the narratives of homogenous national cultures, languages and minds are not simply inventions. They are real, powerful tools for naturalising, domesticating and classifying cultural, linguistic and sociopsychological differences. They are a semiotic means for producing desirable normalcy through the reified essentials of a Nation which "sometimes takes preexisting cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates cultures: that is a reality" (Gellner 1983: 48-49). It is not that national cultures or languages do not exist, but that their coherence is a myth constructed under the pressure of the nationalist impulse. This myth of national cultures and languages is a powerful one. Homi Bhabha (1990b:1), for instance, calls it "an idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force". But it remains a myth, or rather, a powerful discursive formation that offers a set of constructed meanings (unity, purpose, identity) while disguising another set of operations (exclusion, containment). As a result, both culture and language as categories of meaning are naturalised, along with the knowledge produced about them.

Indeed, terms such as culture, language or rational mind are "cultural artefacts of a particular type" (Anderson 1991: 4). They carry the signifying weight of the desire for a community composed of members equally assimilated to and immersed in a shared experience - a desire sentimentalised by democratic rhetoric and nostalgic in its search for a once and future totality within national borders. However, this myth becomes increasingly harder to sustain in conditions of internationalised economies, flourishing network communication, international financial markets and sociopolitical alliances. The processes of cultural globalisation - the international spread of English as *lingua franca* (Pennycook 1994a) and the transcultural expansion of popular media, cultural and discursive practices (Fairclough 2000) - have again brought the universalism of Enlightenment and its grand idea of universal humanity to the fore, albeit in a new postmodern formulation. Universal humanity is formulated now in terms of a 'global ecumenical community' that is generated within transnational, transethnic and transcultural networks and is driven by worldwide, norm-generating flows of capital, goods and data (Hannerz 1992).

It is clear then why the processes of globalisation are resisted in multiple ways and for multiple purposes. While we must recognise that globalisation does present a serious threat to local economic, cultural and linguistic practices, the processes of resistance often acquire reactionary forms such as a resurgence of nationalism and pan-culturalism, at the expense of local interests and cultural diversity within a nation-state. The reactionary form of resistance is driven by the fear of letting 'loose' a national Culture in conditions when the foreign from without and the different from within threaten the "abstract and purely analytical notion" of cultural totality (Bauman 1996: 11). Writing a collective identity is then a serious fiction that urges stasis, resists becoming, and abhors history for the sake of a collectivity of people (cf. Kalantzis 2001).

Powerful narratives of national identity are reflected in the ways scientific knowledge is constructed to sustain a singular meaning (truth) in the establishment of cultural identity. As Popkewitz (2000: 291) argues, "the history of the social sciences ... attends to how ideas are produced in response to national policy and a particular cultural milieu". In this regard, nationalist projects that drive academic studies restrict their foci to that of cultural, verbal and ideological unification and gloss over acknowledgment that the very existence of the national is a "coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given a bodily form" (Bakhtin 1981: 291). Hence, the nationalist assumption that we can study human practices and cultural experiences in units of nationally defined cultures becomes a dominant framework that organises the ontological structures and drives our knowledge industry today.

For one thing, then, we need to recognise, both in the public sphere of cultural life and in academic studies, the simple reality of today's multicultural states in which national languages and cultures are themselves assemblages of many 'other-cultural' strands, sedimentations where different sociocultural and hence linguistic elements constitute complex mixtures and blendings and in which the notion of original purity becomes seriously destabilised and questionable. We need to accept the fact that large cultures as autonomous communities do not exist. Notions such as American, Russian, Chinese or Australian culture are too diffuse, and do not refer to coherent and historically independent cultural patterns and grammars (Keesing 1987: 161). In just the same way the significance of primordial cultural invariants, such as language, religion, customs, beliefs and morals, can no longer be taken for granted, but rather have to be viewed as border-generating and border-crossing practices (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Wicker 1997). To understand contemporary cultural conditions, we must begin by looking at the cultural/linguistic space of a nation as a space of contingency of meaning applied equally to the definition of its culture(s) and most certainly to the notion of language(s).

Therefore, today, and even more so in the future, our understanding of culture and expression of ethnicity need to move away from notions of the original and the homogeneous and towards the inter-ethnic dialectics of negotiation, from national or objectified cultural identities to multiple identities, and from notions of large complex cultures to the notion of cultural complexity (Clifford 1988; Bhabha 1994; Gilroy 1992; Hall 1992; Hannerz 1992; Holliday 1999; Trinh Minh-Ha 1989; Spivak 1993; etc.). What we need is a framework that explains the complexity of inter- and intra-ethnic dynamics, that takes the border-constructing and border-maintaining mechanisms seriously enough and yet does not overlook border-crossing practices, that recognises the importance of location for one's cultural identity and yet sees dis-location as a new dynamic and constituent principle of culture. For this framework, using Ernesto Laclau's (1996: 65) words, "difference and particularism are the necessary starting point ... to open the way to a relative universalization of values which can be the basis for popular hegemony". In other words, we need a model that does not just negate the modernist concept of culture, but reworks it productively in new conditions. This can be done through examining the processes of cultural change in which new possibilities empower existing identities, and constantly redefine their relations to the constitutive cultural terrains.

1.1.1 Aporias within a shift from complex cultures to cultural complexity

To delineate recent trends and shifts in the frameworks of cultural studies, we must come back again to the 'volkisch' turn in anthropology. It is because this anthropological shift

"arose in tandem with imperialism" that the use of the concept of culture always had double directionality: in one way holistic, related to a nation-state, and in the other relativist, related to an attempt to locate and define modern culture by contrasting it to its non-Western and non-modern Other (Van der Veer 1997: 90). Modern cultural relativism "in a gesture prefigurative of postmodernism ... propose[ed] to pluralize the term 'culture'" in terms of "cultures of different nations and periods, as well as of distinct social and economic cultures within the nation itself" (Eagleton 2000: 13). The descendants of this tradition have been arguing against universalistic tendencies by pointing to the variety of unique characteristics of cultures, languages and psychologies. But plurality of cultures has been conceived as a range of totalities with clear boundaries, confined to their localities. In this sense, cultural relativism has also reflected changing paradigms of cultural politics in the world. Many 'unchecked' varieties of modern relativism that promoted frameworks of learning to coexist with difference often turned out to be political vehicles for perpetuating the tyranny of totalitarism, and of rationalising political and social inaction, complacency, and even oppression (Appleton 1983). Cultural relativism, then, implies a profoundly ideological position taking, in relation to inter-ethnic practices.

To illustrate this point, it is worth recalling a debate in the mid 80s with regard to the question of ethnocentrism. The debate is illustrative of the clash between 'modernist' and 'post-modernist' views of cultural relativity and difference. The modernist position on relativism, as it was formulated by Lévi-Strauss (1985), starts with an assumption of the cosmic and social ordering of truth and then proceeds, through the clear definition of cultural differences, to defend strong cultural identities as a source of cultural creativity. On the one hand, the ethnocentrism of this position suggests the need cultures have for self-assertion and self-definition. Lévi-Strauss (1985: 24) defends the controlled view of ethnocentrism against the shapeless multiculturalism or 'world culture' of UNESCO by saying that :

All true creation implies a certain deafness to the appeal of other values, even going so far as to reject them if not denying them altogether. For one cannot fully enjoy the other, identify with him, and yet at the same time remain different.

On the other hand, Lévi-Strauss goes further, suggesting that if cultures exchanged all their elements with one another on a continuous basis, there would no longer be any differences, and thus no mutual attractions. However, a post-modern advocate of cultural relativism in anthropology, Clifford Geertz (1986), objects to Lévi-Strauss on this point. He claims that no world-wide consensus is to be expected in fundamental matters at all, no facile exchange, and least of all no stolid coexistence of cultures. Instead of opposing cultures as if they were windowless monads, insight into and understanding between cultures should

be encouraged in order to gain knowledge of alternatives to one's own norms and way of life. Also, cultural diversity should be judged differently today, especially because cultures are not self-contained organisms but "social spaces whose edges are unfixed, irregular, and difficult to locate" (Geertz 1986: 123). Life in a community of this kind certainly neutralises differences, as Geertz points out. But, as Rorty (1986) says on this matter, it neither eliminates them nor does it divest them of their significance.

Multicultural coexistence and multicultural inter-actions explicitly require that differences be maintained. But even though it is necessary to take advantage of obstacles and conflicts that arise in the exchange between cultures, this should only be a transitory phase. It is crucial not to regard these obstacles as fixed barriers of ethnocentrism but as driving forces indispensable to cultural inter-action. It is through them that we are called upon to depart from the habit of regarding our own as well as foreign cultural positions, customs, texts, and identities only in the context of traditions, and instead to reassess and relocate them.

These theses present a great challenge to multicultural studies, whose traditional categories of description and (eurocentrist) concepts of intercultural transfer are in need of revision (McLaren 1994). Conservative multiculturalism (monoculturalism) explicitly reinforces the supremacy of one nationality. Its rhetoric reflects what Terry Eagleton (1990: 28) describes as "the metaphysics of nationalism," which "speak[s] of the entry into full self-realization of a unitary subject known as the people. As with all such philosophies of the subject from Hegel to the present", he continues, "this monadic subject must somehow curiously preexist in its own process of materialization." This, in my view, foregrounds the search of the conservative multiculturalists for the unique identity of a new nation and directly refers to a process of growth regulated by human rational self-cultivation. The eurocentric cosmopolitan narrative of modernisation presents a canonical understanding of complex culture (cf. Hegelian '*Bildung*') and provides the ethico-political rationale for positivist accounts of culture as a pre-given empirical object. This framework for dealing with the problem of multiculturalism is often used to justify social and cultural hegemony and the oppression of cultural minorities. On the other hand, the liberal multicultural agenda as an attempt to manage the crisis of universalism is foregrounded in the anthropological-relativist concept of culture. However paradoxical it may sound, the celebration of autonomy and uniqueness of local cultures by liberals often leads in practice to their displacement. An essentialist search for authentic cultural alterity, as Clifford (1988) indicates, destroys local cultural futures by 'museumising' cultural otherness.

1.1.2 Mapping a framework for the cultural Thridspace

To demystify conservative homogenisation and liberal reductionism in cultural studies, Bhabha (1994) proposes an exploration of the construction of cultural difference. He suggests that to break with the object-theory of culture common to both canonical and traditional-multicultural anthropology - culture as a self-identical and knowable entity, norm, or subject - we should attempt to articulate a political theory of culture as a process or production in language. Bhabha posits that if we view culture as something constructed by discourse or signification, then the subject of culture becomes the site of permanent contestation. He defines the space of contestation as a 'third space' in which both the pedagogical (understanding of signs) and the performative (understanding the process of signification) should be used. Bhabha (1994: 37) argues that "all cultural statements and systems of enunciation are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation". Similarly, Frantz Fanon (1963) calls this a 'zone of occult instability' where everything is called into question. Here, articulations of new cultural demands, meanings, and strategies in the present become practices of collision and resistance that challenge the notion of culture as a unifying force legitimised by an original mythic and utopian past.

Some very important issues arise from this position, ones that turn the whole theoretical framework of modern cultural studies on its head. I wish to briefly delineate just some of them here. First, as I have already mentioned in brief, modernist cultural studies focus on locations and cultural boundaries. By mapping territories and populations, modernist thought neatly classifies people and their customs as well as their continuity and homogeneity. But how then does this framework see massive dislocations of people (e.g. the institution of African slavery or the system of Indian indentured labour)? The processes of dislocation have been formulated as movement from one boundedness to another and explained in terms of cultural assimilation (Van der Veer 1997).

In contrast, the current shift in the intellectual terrain has been interested in how the dislocation and global movement of people, either from country to city or from one country to another, produces states and practices of cultural hybridisation. The current drive to discover national porosity, hybridity, difference, dissolution, interstitial space, and all those other positives Bhabha and like-minded critics speak of, stems not from some kind of new and definitive theoretical paradigm, a new canon law, but from the simple and practical reality in which many of us who are 'living in the same location' no longer represent the monocultural (which really was the norm in the 19th century and which has inevitably influenced and still influences cultural studies today). Hence, to paraphrase Wittgenstein (1967), a definition of culture as increasingly difficult to locate is not just an attempt to deal with questions which do not arise in the real world. On the contrary,

through a close examination of real processes - how the cultural has been located and how such characteristics as invariance, exclusive territoriality, cultural incommensurability, cultural bias and cognitive limitation are constructed - the current shift in cultural studies tries to map a new concept of culture.

A global tide in the affairs of the world has propelled into confusion old ways of making sense of things. The hybrid, the exiled, the dislocated, the multi-located 'postcolonials' have stepped into the breaches and the flows of the new economic and cultural order, both adding to and trying to come to terms with a network of disconcerting cultural complexity. Clifford (1988: 95) describes the current era as syncretic and "postcultural":

The privilege given to ... natural cultures is dissolving.... In a world where syncretism and parodic invention are becoming the rule, not the exception ... it becomes increasingly difficult to attach human identity and meaning to a coherent 'culture'.

Even though the cultural chaos arising from these mass movements has yet to be adequately theorised, it is clear that the object-theory of culture is unable to explain the very phenomenon of displacement, migrancy, exile and transnationalism outside of conceptions of the old cultural whole. Instead, the shift of focus on cultural fragments - multiple systems of cultural activities - reveals "constructed and disputed *historicities*, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction" (Clifford 1992 :101) in which social nomads (as we all to different degrees are) live in-between, actively and creatively - both shaped by the familiar cultural and making that familiar strange again (Bruner 1990).

Of course, the focus on cultural practices rather than on reified cultural essentials is accompanied by an interest in agency, actors and the actors' points of views (Van der Veer 1997). Hybrid culture, as Bhabha (1991: 51) suggests, is "the strategic activity of 'authorizing' agency; not the interpellation of pre-given sites of celebration or struggle." But when Bhabha emphasises the potential of migrants to reinvent themselves in the situation of cultural hybridity, it is not to invoke a romantic trope of the self-made individual. Any action that is agentically initiated always takes place from a sociocultural basis (Vygotsky 1978). And, as Clifford (1988) puts it, new identities are not something to be grasped outside discourse. Discourse as a sociocultural field constitutes identities in terms of preferred or subtle ways of thinking, perception and action. Discourse thus constrains and requires a negotiation potential of agency. Bourdieu (1998), for instance, employs the concept of habitus to denote intentional action that is socially constrained. However, if we see a culture as polycentric - a set of multiple discourses - and individuals as dynamic, we can arrive at an entirely new manifestation of cultural agency.

A cultural hybridisation model deals with intersystemic or interdiscursive practices - a third space of cultural semiotics. In this space, manifestation of cultural identity is not so much a matter of what was or what is but of what is *becoming*. Hybrid identity is not just another idealised (objectified) type of cultural identity but an agency that arises from the contingency of sociocultural formations and forms of symbolisation. This conception of the symbolic and fluid nature of identity presents a possibility of grasping the limits of its own situated perspective and of provisional and strategic transcending of discursive constraints. As Clifford asserts, identity is "never given but must be negotiated" and "made in new political-cultural conditions of global relationality" (Clifford 1988 : 273, 275). Hence, hybrid theorists urge us to rethink both cultures and identities - not as organically unified or traditionally continuous but, rather, as negotiated, present processes. The source of strategic agency could then be formulated as arising from a contradiction between relatively static cultural-historical representations and dynamic processes of individuation, resistance and change.

As pointed out by Edward Said (1978), cultural-historic representations demand the assumption of a dichotomy between familiar and foreign, Western and non-Western, Europe and the Orient. For centuries, this assumption set the tone of intercultural contact, reception and translation of the foreign. Its main function was for each culture to define its own cultural identity by the projection of a complete otherness, which was achieved by the construction of an imaginary unfamiliar and foreign (e.g. the Orient). In this sense, intercultural dialogue, as has been shown clearly by the *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus 1986) debate, has always been distorted by Western supremacy. In more recent debates, cultural difference has become the prime means of deconstructionist rejection of fixed referential meaning and clearly defined, organic cultural entities, in favour of negotiation processes. The emphasis on the hybrid re-invention of cultural identity extends the critical analysis of representations and discourses beyond the rhetoric of victimisation. Postmodern critique now attempts to formulate an account of agency that is aware of its artificially produced and 'written' (in the narrow sense) identity (Clifford & Marcus 1986).

An awareness of the constructed nature of cultural identity, Clifford (1988) argues, enables resistance both to assimilative cultural politics and to liberal cosmopolitanism. In relation to the former, such an awareness presupposes a view of culture as a set of practices. Culture itself does not construct attitudes to the foreign and the unfamiliar but those attitudes are discursively constructed in multiple cultural practices. They constitute a set of specific dispositions which permit reproduction and production of representations. In relation to the latter, awareness of constructed identities enables resistance to political claims based on a nostalgia for an impossible authenticity. Bhabha (1994), Clifford (1988), Gilroy (1993) and others criticise organic theories of local authenticity for their continuity

with nationalist ideology. Hence, the suggestion that new identities develop in contemporary social practices of hybridisation is foregrounded in theoretical antinationalism and in speculations about the imminent ethico-political inefficacy of discourses and representations that provide narrow essentialist views of cultural identity.

The alternative model for cultural-political agency, on the other hand, opens up possibilities for hybrid local futures through the practices of resistance to a narrow ethnocentrism, a "reflexive symbolic self-invention, [and] a strategic traffic with the processes of cultural meaning" (Clifford 1988: 273). Emancipatory cultural agency involves the outstripping of oppressive economic and political forces by cultural flux and activity. This notion implies that cultural stasis is a regressive product of oppressive forces, whereas sociocultural mobility is the basis of emancipatory practice. It generates stasis-disrupting forms of cultural transformation by refusing a monolinear view of people's trajectories inherent in such terms as 'assimilation', 'integration' or 'melting-pot'. Sociocultural mobility involves experiences of cultural pluralism, contingency and indeterminacy of meaning, in which meaning negotiation constitutes the birth of new consciousness. Indeed, the inventiveness of becoming, continuous transgression and co-operative cultural activity become social fields of cultural interaction, wherein "creolisation occur[s] with increasing frequency to produce culture in the form of new habits, and from which emerge the categories of a new public sphere" (Wicker 1997: 40). To reiterate Laclau's (1996) useful idea of popular hegemony from below, the topos of cultural hybridisation can be easily extended to formulate an alternative vision of multiculturalism-from-below, as a model for coexistence in conditions of cultural complexity.

Hence, a further important issue that arises from debates about culture concerns the system of education and pedagogies in multicultural conditions. In the next section I shall try to briefly address current directions in theories of learning that enable us to re-examine what would be seen as anomalies of education, and that have potential for the alternative educational design of multicultural classroom practices.

1.2 Problematising 'mind' and 'learning'

Education is one of a range of major public spheres concerned with "the production of a cultural identity" as "the way we learn to see ourselves in relation to the world" (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997: 27). And like other public spheres, the institutionalised system of education has "an entirely well-defined social function whose direction is defined always by the interests of the dominant class" (Vygotsky 1997: 56). This is to inscribe into the population an agreed purpose, mode of behaviour and set of knowledges. If we combine

these two definitions of education together, then we might say that the goals of education can not be expressed in general and abstract terms but must be formulated as particular ideological goals for shaping "the representations and the principles through which individuals construct subjectivities" (Popkewitz 2000: 266). While education is beset by political and ideological factions, often in bitter opposition, it seems unlikely that any of the disparate array of educational theories and practices would fail to concur that contemporary classrooms have rapidly changed and that their make-up reflects the increasing cultural complexity of society. However, the general statements of educational goals (such as meeting the individual needs of learners, promoting and enhancing the realisation of human potential, etc.) not only disregard ethnic, gender and class differences but also obscure the sociocultural nature of learning.

To say that learning is about the development of individual styles, skills, strategies and information processing techniques is to alienate the individual from the entire sociocultural sphere. Learning becomes a sequence of unique personal constructions and inventions of meaning - asocial and acultural, as it were. It is not a surprise, then, that ethnic minorities and students from non-English-speaking backgrounds are often referred to as 'at risk' or poor learners who lack individual learning skills or who are unable to effect the transfer of skills from their native language practices. Because the individualistic frameworks of learning exempt the system of educational practices from critique, they presume that each individual is responsible for her own difficulties (Alvermann 2001). Since each student can deal with learning in her particular way, any difficulties she may suffer are due to her learning style - not to the classroom practices and broader discourses themselves. It is clear, then, that any attempt to formulate multicultural education without acknowledging the cultural nature of learning perpetuates a system of education that is based on monocultural principles of domination.

Theoretical frameworks of individualistic learning (in)form educational practices, educators and those who teach the educators. Even though the multicultural composition of classrooms should direct attention to the individual learner, preaching the goodness of individual constructivist and student-centred approaches alone does not subvert the traditional pedagogic forms of knowledge transmission (Green 1998). Furthermore, the individualist view of learning promotes awareness about student diversity but identifies this in terms of 'typical' cultural features of different ethnic groups, such as values, worldviews, and learning styles, and hence implies a monolithic and harmonious view of culture (Artiles & McClafferty 1998). In this sense, rehousing cultural and learning differences and difficulties into individual minds not only reinscribes the power of predominantly white middle-class educators but also removes any intercultural problems (racism and xenophobia) unless those issues are raised by students themselves (Artiles &

McClafferty 1998). In short, multicultural education needs to shift its focus from individuals to sociocultural practices both to understand the complex interconnections between learning, culture and social justice, and to change the conditions that promote passive aggressiveness, open defiance or blatant racism in classrooms. For this reason, I argue, a sociocultural approach provides a powerful tool that can assist the reconstructive practices of teaching students and their educators alike.

1.2.1 Mind in social practice: A sociocultural paradigm of learning

I am using the term 'sociocultural' to delineate a multidisciplinary field of inquiry into the matters of learning and educational practices that represents a larger "social turn" away from a focus on individual behaviour ... and individual mind and toward a focus on social and cultural interaction" (Gee 2000a: 180). The common interest of sociocultural approaches in the 'embeddedness' of learning, knowledge production and making meaning of the world brings together theories as diverse as cultural-historical psychology and Activity Theory, cultural semiotics, sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, critical social and cultural studies of language and literacy learning. This common focus constitutes a unifying pattern that allows us to speak about the sociocultural approach as a 'movement', rather than seeing it as a fragmented and unworkable intellectual field. The aim of the sociocultural movement is two-fold. First, it problematises and critically reworks a so-called Cartesian split - a divide between 'inner' and 'outer', 'subject' and 'matter', 'individual' and 'social', 'nature' and 'culture'. For more than 350 years, since René Descartes published his *Meditations* and *Discourse*, this divide has obstructed an understanding of the complex links *between* the binary opposites by elevating internalism, individualism and rational scientism to a regime of truth. Another general aim of the sociocultural movement is to provide a close analysis of the technologies, discourses, processes and logics by which differential privilege is produced within public spheres, and to delineate possibilities of disrupting/transforming these.

This general project of the sociocultural movement has a long history. Since Immanuel Kant's attempt to make the crucial shift toward the intersubjective understanding of human reason and judgement, various cultural and social theories have focused on the cultural origin of mind and on how, during their lifetime, different individuals come to participate in shared practices and what this participation means for their development. Cultural inscription of psychological processes is a long-standing area of interest in cultural-historical theory. It represents one of the powerful oppositional traditions to the Cartesian divide within the current sociocultural movement. By relating language, practice and meaning, it studies practical and semiotic forms of life to understand the intersubjective and cultural nature of human consciousness. A distinctive idea of cultural-historical theory,

stemming from the seminal work of scholars such as Lev Vygotsky, Alexei Leont'ev, and Alexander Luria, is that learning has sociocultural origins.

These Russian scholars proposed that individual and social processes are interdependent. In fact, Vygotsky's (1978:57) genetic law of development clearly articulates that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)". By saying this, he alerts us to the fact that cultural relations and social context are not only influential in cognitive development but are in fact the *sources* of mind. Hence, psychological functions should be understood "as internalised relationships of the social kind that constitute the social structure of personality" (John-Steiner & Mahn 1996: 192).

This notion stands in sharp contrast to traditional theories which assume that cultural and cognitive development and learning unfold within the psyche of the individual. Cultural-historical theory asserts that individuals engage in goal-directed activities in cultural contexts while relying on others who are more experienced. As a person gains more experience and becomes better acquainted with the values, expectations, routines and norms of her community of cultural practice, she gradually takes on more responsibility and hence her participation becomes more active, creative and transformative (Rogoff 1990; Rogoff & Chavajay 1995). Even if we see culture as a set of activity systems with a differential distribution of power among them, the internalisation of values and beliefs continues to be an important part of cultural becoming. But this process must be freed from the unilinear cultural determinism that sees individuals as passive recipients of cultural knowledge. According to Engeström (1999: 35), "people face not only the challenge of acquiring established culture, they also face situations in which they must formulate desirable culture".

To reframe this principle in terms of multicultural education is then to recognise learners as active participants in the context-oriented appropriation of knowledge and significations, within the framework of guided participation. While their learning activity begins with an almost exclusive emphasis on the internalisation of knowledge, they begin to use it in novel situations in which disruptions and contradictions may drive critical self-reflection and lead to transformative actions. As Vasiliy Davydov (1999: 39) puts it:

The transformative and purposeful character of activity allows the subject to step beyond the frames of a given situation and to see it in a wider historical and social context. It makes it possible for the subject to find means that go beyond the given possibilities.

Transformative learning in multicultural classrooms may be precipitated by contradictions between multiple goals, semiotic means, the processes of moulding knowledges and the results of these. In other words, learning reveals itself as a deeply social, interpersonal activity in which a genuine dialogue is not a simple socialisation or enculturation of a culturally different learner in accordance with the aims and plans of a teacher. It includes the self-realisation of both participants at the same time. According to Vladimir Lektorsky (1999: 68), "successful communicative activity presupposes taking into account the positions and values of the other, an ability to look at oneself from this position and to perform an 'inner dialogue'". This theoretical position in cultural-historic psychology implies a shift in educational practices away from the transmissible perception of knowledge-meaning as something in itself, toward more dynamic and complex classroom dialogues of meaning negotiation, in which the voices of the co-interlocutors are invested with various degrees of defining power.

The practices of learning through classroom dialogues and meaning negotiation inevitably invoke the question of power, due to divergent and contradictory links between the social and the individual, or between socialisation to and individuation of a particular worldview and knowledge. A recognition of the space of cultural negotiation between the larger sociocultural plane and the plane of individuation requires the formulation of an interpersonal dialogical space. The theoretical complexity of the articulation of this space calls for emphasis on the practices of negotiation and renegotiation of meaning, rather than just a negation of the Other. Such negation means the end of dialogue and, by the same token, of learning and becoming. Hence, when the sociocultural plane is represented by large-scale narratives that encompass the dominant ideology (knowledge, values, beliefs, a moral code, etc.), and the individual plane is represented by the multiplicity of people's trajectories, then the space of interpersonal communication in the institutional context can be represented as small-scale everyday social actions in which negotiation of meaning occurs. Learning eventuates in between these two planes as the dynamic and contradictory interpersonal process leading psychological development (Vygotsky 1978).

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) accounts for the movement between the social and the individual planes (Blanton, Moorman & Trathen 1998). The ZPD is the "distance between the actual developmental level as determined through independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1978: 86). Sociocultural theorists, expanding the concept of the ZPD, increasingly conceptualise learning as distributed (Cole & Engeström 1993), interactive (Chang-Wells & Wells 1993), contextual (John-Steiner, Panofsky & Smith 1994), and the result of the learners' participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991; Rogoff 1994). It can also

be seen as a temporal-contextual space in which individuals cooperate and dialogise in their search for a problem solution. The cooperative activity in this space tries to resolve a contradiction between the imposed normative expectations and the current ability, prior knowledge and past experiences of individuals (Hedegaard 1998). Multicultural education, therefore, should capitalise on 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner, & Ross 1976) not as unidirectional guidance but as a complex interplay between the social and the individual, in which the results may differ from the expected outcome. Thus, effective assistance within the ZPD should produce, in Cazden's (1993) terms, performance before competence. This idea is especially useful for rethinking the ZPD in the multicultural conditions of contemporary education.

Sociocultural theory today has come to understand competence or knowledge as a looser realm of communal thought in which people of a given society participate. Knowledge is neither universal nor constant but it is (re)produced in practices by members of a collectivity at any particular historical moment (Toulmin 1999). It is a realm of contextual or situational meaning in or through which practical actions may be made intelligible at a given point in time, and for a given setting. Hence, knowledge in practice becomes an amalgam of seriously contestable codes and representations. The constellation of multiple practical cultural experiences and knowledges of students in a classroom - a creatively disjunctive mix of ideas and practices - places the privileged singular knowledge into a state of flux. It is in this sense that performative learning in the ZPD becomes meaningful only if constructed in the context of given 'forms of life' (Wittgenstein 1967). The ZPD then is a potential space - "a third area of living" and "the meeting point of union and separateness" - in which meaning is constructed and reconstructed in a shared activity of learning at the sociocultural boundaries (Leiman 1999: 426).

The reconceptualised metaphor of scaffolding students' learning also has another implication. Scaffolding implies not so much 'assistance' in acquiring fixed knowledge but the exhibition of a critical-reflexive practice in which both educators and students as sociohistorical individuals create possibilities of articulating a new politically-resonant knowledge, and associated set of meanings, identities and representations. The vision of scaffolded learning that helps students from suppressed and silenced communities performatively contest, explore and construct new meanings through emergent identities and revisionary enunciations figures prominently in the work of contemporary sociocultural researchers such as Kathryn Au, Elsa Auerbach, Lisa Delpit, Anne Haas Dyson, James Gee, Kris Gutiérrez, Colin Lankshear, Jean Lave, Peter Smagorinsky, Kelleen Toohey and others. Much of this work builds on Vygotsky's (1978, 1997) emphasis on students' active engagement in the social activity of learning, in which their

psychologies and their modes of participation are transformed. But how do we know that an individual's participation is changing?

Rogoff (1997: 280) explains that transformative participation can be observed in several ways. These include the alterity of positions and roles people play, such as emerging leadership and support of others, changing purposes for being involved, and changing attitudes toward involvement (interest in learning versus rejection of new roles and identities or protection of the status quo). Changes are also observable in the relation of participants' roles in an activity to those in other activities at school, at home or in different ethnic communities. Sociocultural research also points out that students' active participation is directly related to changes in the classroom community's practices. Lave (1996), for instance, argues that changes in participation are related to how identities of learners are constructed. Because these processes are central to learning, researchers and educators in the sociocultural tradition should be ultimately concerned with the analysis of classroom events in which students become someone else. That is, a particular emphasis should be placed on classroom communicative practices in which the unfolding of meaning-making and the transformation of students' identities occur. From this perspective, learners' identities are conceived as a major focus in analysing participation and learning in the context of social practices. Identities in those practices are fundamentally the result of dialogic processes mediated by cultural tools (Penuel & Wertsch 1995).

1.2.2 Semiotic mediation as a key

Semiotic mediation - a central concept in the cultural-historic theory of learning - allows researchers and educators to trace the influence of cultural tools on intersubjective activities of learning and, ultimately, on the possibilities of intrapersonal transformations. Vygotsky (1981a: 137) listed a number of examples of semiotic means: "language; various systems of counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; schemes, diagrams, maps and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs and so on". Other cultural artefacts, increasingly recognised in sociocultural studies, are the paint brush, the computer, calendars, symbol systems, etc. (John-Steiner 1995). While semiotic cultural artefacts are defined as simultaneously ideal (conceptual) and material (Cole 1996), they function in a Wittgensteinian sense (Wertsch 1991, 1998) as a socially provided 'tool kit' of semiotic means that both *afford* and *constrain* interpersonal social and intrapersonal psychological activities.

Due to the double material-ideological and outward-inward nature of semiotic tools, the consequences of their use for social individuals lie both in the regulation of others in

collective practices, and in self-regulation. The effects for social groups include both shared thinking and negotiated meaning (Blanton et al., 1998). The effects for particular individuals are the internalisation of concepts, ideas, discourses and practice patterns (rules and norms) which both shape and enable their thinking and doing. Thus, semiotic tools are not invented by the individual in isolation. On the contrary, they are products of sociocultural activities through which individuals are socialised by being actively engaged in the practices of their communities. Wertsch (1994: 204) elaborates on the centrality of mediation in the sociocultural approach by saying that:

[Mediation] is the key ... to understanding how human mental functioning is tied to cultural, institutional, and historical settings since these settings shape and provide the cultural tools that are mastered by individuals to form this functioning. In this approach, the mediational means are what might be termed the "carriers" of sociocultural patterns and knowledge.

The implication of the concept of semiotic mediation for multicultural education lies in our understanding that discourses, texts and other forms of semiotic representations (images, songs, toys, pictures, etc.) are sociopolitical tools for positioning people and for producing their subjectivities. They function also as a means for reproducing certain ideologies, desires and behaviours. In this sense, a critical look at how particular symbolic meanings are produced in practices of social institutions may reveal the formative mechanism of mass psychological phenomena such as racism, nationalism, gender discrimination, etc. (Ratner 2000). That is why Vygotsky (1997: 55) emphasised that it is meaningless to speak of abstract principles of educational psychology without discovering what underlies the goals of education, social relations and a "particular system of behavior we wish to realize in our students".

Important as it is, the formative power of mediational means in the sociocultural approach is just one part in the complex theorising of the concept. Mediation should not be understood one-sidedly as a framework of cultural (over)determination, 'purification' and reproduction (Latour 1993). It also implies a transformative potential as another side of material-semiotic action. For instance, Bruno Latour (1993, 1994) points out the complex nature of mediation by saying that there are many different kinds of artefacts (actants) that mediate human action, ranging from language, to frameworks of participation, to the affordances of particular activity settings. In fact, these multiple means of mediation get 'translated' or mixed together in social networks. As a result, we do not have, in reality, 'pure' mediating means, unless we 'purify' them. Instead, we operate with hybrid forms that mediate the productivity within social networks as well as lead to innovative changes on a larger scale. Latour (1993: 40) emphasises that we have to "consider the work of purification and that of mediation together" to understand the exclusion of hybrid forms.

As well, we need to consider 'translation' and mediation together in order to understand the productive and transformative power of the hybrid.

In this regard, the notion of hybridisation of the semiotic resources that mediate meaning-making and learning is especially topical for multicultural education practices. When we think, for instance, that a particular text carries a certain (pure) meaning and that meaning is or should be internalised without changes and transformations, we engage in wishful thinking. The purified meaning in practice is always 'translated' so that it becomes difficult to predict the consequences of textual actions (Wertsch 1998). Literate actions undergo 'detours' through mediation, leading to multiple semiotic connections and, ultimately, to a number of possible and often syncretised meanings. While the production of hybridised, innovative meanings creates a possibility for changes in classroom practices (e.g. culturally inclusive modes of collaborative learning), the work of 'purification', such as in literacy assessment, seeks to restore a singular, dominant way of meaning-making and hence excludes any possibility of intercultural 'mutations' in meaning-making.

To explain this contradictory nature of semiotic mediation, sociocultural theorists often draw on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986). He elaborated an intersubjective (dialogical) view of language mediation in an attempt to balance the dominant 'centripetalism' of his day, which was in the service of Russian nationalism and 'Slavophilism'. He set out to demonstrate how the processes of unification through national languages and ethnic cultures ('purification' in Latour) coexist with the social 'centrifugalism' of heteroglossia. Even though we may seek to unite dialect communities into a national language-culture state, we must still recognise that within any national language there are many distinct 'registers' and 'genres', which differ not only in form, but also in social positioning, institutional context, and value-attitudes. This internal diversity of a community, created by the very multiplicity of cultural and social practices, produces different social and institutional languages - the divergent social voices of heteroglossia.

Bakhtin takes an 'utterance' as the unit of analysis for a more encompassing vision of semiotic mediation. A dialogical utterance is more than just a unit of verbal exchange; it is "filled with dialogic overtones" (Bakhtin 1986: 102). For Bakhtin (1981), utterances embody the multiple meanings and uses made by distinct groups in past generations, as well as the intentionality and specificity given by the individual making of an utterance in the present. An utterance is always associated with at least two voices (Wertsch, Hagstrom & Kikas 1995). A speaker, therefore, is always appropriating a point of view (a meaning) through the voices of others. Bakhtin's intersubjective view of language mediation is a dynamic process of meaning-making rather than a simple transmission of a meaning to a certain location (i.e., the mind of a receiver). At the same time, individuals are not

expressing or interpreting meanings asocially, but, rather, in speech activity they are enacting differences in social values (Wertsch 1991: 51). Individual voices and utterances are organised and governed by social language - a "discourse peculiar to a specific stratum of society (professional, age group, etc.) within a given social system at a given time" (Holquist & Emerson, as cited in Wertsch 1991: 57). From this perspective, an interlocutor always summons a social language, which in turn both affords and constrains what her voice can communicate. This process involves a distinct type of dialogicality that Bakhtin termed ventriloquation, "the process whereby one voice speaks through another voice or voice type in a social language" (Wertsch 1991: 59).

How Bakhtin integrated the notions of voice, ventriloquism, and social language into the idea of semiotic mediation is seen in his concept of hybrid construction. He defines hybridisation as a speech process in which an individual utterance belongs to a speaker only "by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers" (Wertsch 1991: 59). In reality it is a mixture of at least "two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two languages, two semantic and axiological belief systems" (*ibid.*). From the point of view of sociocultural psychology, then, hybrid constructions might be related to the phenomenon of intraindividual heterogeneity, which refers to the tensions and contradictions between the social languages internalised by the individual who lives in a heteroglossic community (Cazden 1993). Hence, the Bakhtinian concept of semiotic hybridisation brings a concern with sociopolitical issues to psychological studies of semiotic mediation by the fact that hybridity arises in political moments of intersection among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting (Gee 1996a). Each individual utterance is embedded in, and is a part of, broader social practices of meaning and power relations, in which an outcome and a possibility of hybrid construction is the very moment of political tension within and across discourses and the conflicting claims of competing ideologies.

To sum up, then, I am arguing that we cannot readily accept received notions of cultural semiotic mediation in a multicultural framework of education because it bears the imprint of the overidentification of minds with a holistic notion of culture. In addition, we cannot underestimate the power of nationalist pedagogy to effect self-understandings even when this pedagogy may appear neutral most of the time. Neither can we present cognitive activity in terms of the rational choices individuals make among the culturally available multiplicity of forms and meanings. Instead, many contemporary researchers in the sociocultural tradition offer an important corrective to the cultural centripetalisms of modernist educational frameworks, with their dreams of unity, coherence, and universality. This corrective move draws on work in linguistics, cultural and literacy studies, and sociocultural psychology, that deconstructs any notion of uniform idealised languages, cultures and minds.

In this sense, the sociocultural approach studies how difference matters - especially difference in power, voice, resources and respect. It also explains how difference in speech, behaviour or thinking disrupts the seemly course of human affairs and provides a new view of the integrity of the world. It studies situated practices and activities in which cultural, semiotic and cognitive pluralism meets in the Thridspace of intercultural, intertextual and intersubjective dynamics (on the boundaries as it were) to create situations of hybridity (in becoming). Cultural difference, polyglossia and differentiated consciousness are important elements of a hybrid situation in multicultural classrooms. It is through the encounter of two or more cultures, social languages, and minds that the master codes in educational practices are decentred, dethroned and debased, and the possibilities for new pluralistic, more equitable practices in classroom communities are created.

I will briefly recap the important implications of the sociocultural movement for education. First, it tries to overturn mainstream theories of learning that are based on an unmediated notion of mind. Thinking processes are not the natural phenomena of reflection on the world. Rather, those processes originate and are possible only in the realm of social semiotic mediation. In many ways, systems of material and linguistic practices determine the ways we see the world. Second, the realm of sociocultural practices in which meanings are produced is not just a neutral set of rules, patterns, beliefs or even objective logics. Rather, sociocultural practice is an extremely important political and ideological question. It is at this point that I wish to turn this discussion to the social practices of literacy - the ways people read the world - that are never autonomous and pre-ordained but are socioculturally evolving and changing.

1.3 Problematising 'literacy'

In the sociocultural research tradition, literacy learning is one of its main fields of inquiry. But because literacy's centrality for human practices is recognised across the wide spectrum of educational theories and research, it becomes a point of intersection of divergent views and interests. No matter what issues are contested, the literacy debate in principle is backgrounded in the problem of how literacy should be defined. In fact, public debates over literacy have become in recent decades a battlefield of ideological views, political interests and epistemological perspectives that try to define and redefine literacy, and its role and meaning in the contemporary context of a rapidly changing world. While a conventional notion of literacy tends to be tied to such concepts as socioeconomic development, nationalism and cultural unification, the sociocultural approach "has began to show the richness and diversity of literacy practices and meanings despite the pressures for uniformity exerted by the nation state and modern educational system" (Street 1993: 1). In

the final part of this chapter I want to discuss two major research directions in the sociocultural approach to literacy studies - those with an historical interest and those taking an ethnographic direction.

1.3.1 Historiographic studies of literacy

The historical direction in literacy studies tries to sketch a sociocultural perspective on the nature of literacy to foreground an operational definition of literacy as historically changing social practice. An historical analysis contributes to practical knowledge about what it means to be literate, now, by providing background on current understandings of literacy. It contextualises the present situation, in terms of which such concepts as 'literacy', 'literate', 'reading' and 'writing' have no obvious or 'right' definitions. Rather, they are presented as "socially contested terms" (Gee 1996a: 27) related to value-laden epistemological, cultural, institutional and linguistic practices in social history. In this sense, as Carl Kaestle (1995: 330) puts it, "history cannot tell us the answers, but it may provide some understanding of the problems". That is, an historical projection serves first and foremost not to show that something has been missed in a definition of literacy. It is, rather, an attempt to explicate the historical meanings of literacy on the time-scale of social, cultural, and political projects or, as James Gee would put it, to show the hidden work of the social.

Indeed, when one takes a quick look in the literature on literacy historiography (e.g. Graff 1987; Green 1993; Popkewitz 1987, Street 1984, etc.), it turns out that, like many other terms that have currency today, 'literacy' has been subject to changes, to some extent in its meaning, and certainly in its significance. The term 'literate' is quite an old one and, according to Hillerich (1976: 50), it has no universally accepted definition but an acceptable definition is rather associated with the desirability of its socio-political meaning. The history of literacy, both in western and oriental societies, is one of power and control, whether by the state, by certain social groups with vested interests, or by the church. The ancient Greeks, Chinese and Indians, for instance, perfected the skills of rhetoric as a means of persuasion and social control. Oral communication was considered as a more powerful way to influence another person "at a specific time in a real setting which include[d] always much more than mere words" (Ong 1982: 101). At the same time, writing was denounced as encouraging mental laziness and forgeries (Clanchy 1979).

However, these arguments also presented a rationale for limiting access to literacy on the following grounds. First, literacy was conceived as detrimental to those who work and, second, as the written word could be interpreted in many ways other than those intended, it therefore should be controlled. As a result, literacy became realised as a gendered and

elitist practice restricted to two classes of men: the upper classes of society such as rulers, priests, scholars; and the military and the middle-class such as traders (Gough 1988). Such uses of literacy reflected various power relations (civic, religious, military and gender) within society. Even though historical evidence suggests that in ancient Greece and Rome schooling and literacy expanded considerably, predominantly male citizens rather than females, slaves or people living in the countryside were competent in 'minimal literacy' (Fägerlind & Saha 1989). Hence, from the beginning, the state took control of institutionalised education so that the acquisition of literacy was not to be left up to chance, to informal training, or indeed made available to the wrong persons.

Division of labour, social stratification, relations of power and the differentiation of the respective values of the spoken and the written word led to further compartmentalisation of participation in literate practices. For instance, as Street (1984, 1995) and others have explained, during the Middle Ages, England made a slow and gradual transition from a society dependent on oral traditions to one dependent on written practices. The criteria for validation of legal rights (e.g. land rights) shifted during this period from the oral testimony of 'twelve good men and true' to bureaucratic rules as applied in written records. The sworn verbal oath was replaced by the written contract. Of most interest is the fact that individuals skilled in the technical aspects of print, such as letter formation, spelling, and reading aloud, were minor, low-prestige workers who did nothing more than inscribe words and then render them into speech at the behest of more powerful Others, like kings and knights. These Others had much more important things to do than waste time learning to print or decipher words; they were engaged in making sense of messages. During this period, when a powerful individual remarked that s/he planned to 'read', it was meant that s/he planned to listen to a literate person (scribes and decoders) who read the word aloud.

The age of the Renaissance brought yet another shift in the meaning of being literate. By the Middle Ages, the definition of a literate person - one that was acquainted with letters - had come to mean a person who was learned. The rebirth of learning and education, related to rapid changes in the scientific and political life of the Western states, impinged on the social distribution and cultural conditions of literacy (Graff 1987). While in general the expansion of literacy was encouraged by the Protestant Reformation and related to the increased publication and circulation of books, educated people represented mostly the upper-middle class. Precisely this stratum of society was able to 'cultivate mind' and the 'supremacy of rational knowledge' - the ideas of Descartes - without worrying about the removal of statecraft obstacles to the literacy development of other social groups. Only minimal literacy was required from those who worked in factories, and even middle-class military, teaching and administrative occupations were learned on the job (Fägerlind & Saha 1989).

With the quickened pace of industrialisation, the pressure to improve educational systems increased. Spreading social mobility and the growth of criminality in urban centres required schooling as a new measure of social control, inculcating discipline and a respect for one's place in society. In this period literacy was put to what can be seen as more nefarious uses, in order to accomplish specific political results. Schools for the poor were established primarily for disciplinary purposes rather than for those of vocational training. The provision of literacy that aimed to produce respect for one's place in society also resulted in the denial of access to specific content knowledge (e.g. in ladies' curricula and Slave Codes [Willis & Harris 2000]). Even though, with the expansion of schooling, literacy was seen as a basic human right, education was not designed to match the increasingly complex stratification of modern states. In practice, its function has been conservative in terms of maintaining the social structure. In the period of industrialisation, schools were not considered as agents of social change but, rather, in individual, disciplinary and elitist terms.

Drastic changes in the world at the beginning of the 20th century, after the First World War, and the emergence of newly independent states and technological advancements in the post Second World War period, fuelled a new wave of scientific and political considerations about the role of education and literacy for the socio-economic development of societies and the well-being of their individuals (Fägerlind & Saha 1989). Adult literacy and access to education, along with such indicators as the national level of gross domestic product (GDP), annual GDP growth, income distribution, life expectancy and child mortality, became the index of economic, social and political (under)development (Handelman 2000). In this period 'literacy' acquired yet another meaning - as a solution to socioeconomic problems. This meaning of literacy has been deeply entrenched in discourses of development and modernisation that suggest a movement from traditional (less literate) to modern (literate) societies as an upward progressive trajectory toward democratisation and economic well-being. But it also became clear that the post-war liberal agenda which justifies educational expansion in order to raise the (inter)national level of literacy has been seen as an essential component for educating 'flexible', compliant and adaptive individuals in the new times of rapidly changing technologies, the world economy and political systems.

While the discourses of modernisation and national development imply a socio-categorical distinction between illiterate and literate individuals, with a progressive movement toward literacy, the social making of literacies has produced the third category - "no longer illiterate but not yet literate" (de Oliveira & Valsiner 1998: 5). This phenomenon has challenged the progressivist value invested in literacy. As Weiler (1978: 180) once put it,

"educational expansion ... does not necessarily make people or countries more prosperous; instead it may, and does, leave the former without jobs and the latter with increasingly burdensome claims on public funds". In addition, the socioeconomic situation in the 70s, 80s, 90s and today has shown that the days of never-ending economic growth are gone, along with the freedom of literate individuals to manoeuvre the economic market. Unemployment of literate persons is a serious social problem in many contemporary societies (de Oliveira & Valsiner 1998). Thus, the framework of universal literacy as the ability to read and write and the politics of educational access have succeeded in the restricted provision of literacy to the general population - sufficient for some professions and insufficient for others. Even if a country is considered fully literate in terms of some general criterion, only some persons within that country may be given opportunities to enter into the training for restricted professions, to be prepared for specific social roles, and to master the social languages of power and prestige.

It is clear in this context why the generic, non-contextualised discourse about literacy as a solution to social problems and a guarantee of development is misguided. Even though expectations regarding how much formal education people need tend to increase literacy standards with each generation (Resnick & Resnick 1977), the hierarchical systems of social institutions produce "social needs" for different levels of literacy. Consequently the models of instruction aim at attaining differential standards by emphasising low literacy levels for large numbers of people (universal basic literacy) and by promoting high levels for an elite few. Expectations for high literacy levels for large numbers of people remain, by and large, merely discursive vehicles for social debate, rather than goals themselves (de Oliveira & Valsiner 1998).

In this regard, the historiographic approach to literacy studies has shaken the confidence of literacy researchers, educators and language policy planners by indicating sociopolitical processes, sometimes gradual, sometimes swift, in which literacy has never been a fixed neutral concept. Even a brief analysis of the distant and not so remote past may provide contexts in which meanings of literacy have varied, from the capacity to speak and to use spoken language eloquently for public purposes to the ability to encode and decode messages of the others, to sign one's own name on a land deed or to sign one's complete name in a registry book as a prerequisite for voting. Literacy has been framed as a means for cultivating mind and as an ability to function in certain societal practices such as at church or at work. In all possible meanings, literate practices have never been neutral but political acts that attested significance for power, authority and social differentiation. Very often social practices that required literacy excluded rural people, poor people, people of colour, and women. Hence, even now when literacy is formulated as a basic human right and a prerequisite for socioeconomic development, we should be mindful of what kind of

literacy is meant to fulfil those universal humanistic demands. One way or the other, historical inquiry provides an important context for current debates in which it is all too easy to neglect the cultural and power structures of society (Street 1993) by being engaged in the mere (re)invention of teaching Method.

1.3.2 New ethnographic studies of literacy

Another aspect of the sociocultural approach to literacy studies - the new ethnography - concentrates on synchronic studies of literate practices. This direction takes a broader research perspective that overcomes the traditional orality-literacy divide by associating literacy not primarily with reading or print, but with language embedded in social practices in the world (Barton & Hamilton 2000; Street 1993). Scholars interested in what people actually do with literacy in sociocultural contexts have argued that literacy cannot be treated as an autonomous, singular, or ethnocentric construct. They maintain that there are *literacies*, i.e., many specific social and cultural practices involving print (Cope & Kalantzis 2000; Heath 1982, 1983; Scribner & Cole 1981). Brian Street (1993) further contends that literacy must be viewed from an ideological perspective which includes issues of how literacy practices relate to dominance and differences in power between groups. From these perspectives, literacy cannot be analysed merely as a set of isolated skills or abstract abilities; rather, what people do with print must be studied in actual social, economic, and political contexts.

The new ethnographic studies of literacy have formulated a new unit of analysis - 'literacy practices'. Barton and Hamilton (2000: 9) have elaborated the unit as consisting of three components by saying that "literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these are observable in events which are mediated by written texts". This unit of analysis allows literacy researchers to focus on how people engage in cultural and social activities that involve written language. Engagement in multiple sociocultural practices and activities involves an understanding of literacy as in fact multiple literacies that occur in different social and institutional contexts, such as educational settings (Lee & Smagorinsky 2000), families (Pitt 2000), neighbourhoods (Heath 1983), religious settings (Bloome 1989), and prisons (Wilson 2000), among others. Furthermore, the interest in local literacy events in the past two decades has provided detailed accounts of the everyday uses of literacy within local communities (Barton & Hamilton 1998) and delineated differences between schooled literacy practices, on the one hand, and vernacular literacy practices, on the other.

Schooled literacy has been seen by some schools of thought as a tool for the development of language awareness and cognition. That is, according to Olson (1995: 113, 97), learning writing systems brings verbal forms into awareness as "children ... introspect their

language in terms of their alphabet" and acquire "a model for thinking about speech and language". It is claimed that forms of writing alter cognition and consciousness because writing systems function as an autonomous semiotic machine which arranges rules, categories and concepts for thinking about the structure of the spoken language and the world in general. Learning writing systems in this way, then, prioritises the knowledge of syntax and this "permits the combination and recombination of symbols to express a broad range of meanings" (Olson 1995: 104). Reading, too, is formulated in terms of a personal discovery of script, in which learners "find and detect aspects of [their] own implicit linguistic structure that can map onto or be represented by that script" (Olson 1995: 115). Hence, the task of literacy education in schools, according to the assumption outlined above, is primarily concerned with learning certain graphic conventions and learning to 'hear' oral speech in a new way.

This abstract or "decontextualised" view of literacy edits out the question of language practice which lies in the heart of the sociocultural tradition and relegates the real-life experiences of learners to the margins, if not pushing them out of classroom practices completely. By contrast, research on local literacies shows that neither reading nor writing have autonomous properties. Rather, due to the situated nature of everyday literacy, people depend on others in their community in many ways to accomplish literacy tasks (Barton & Hamilton 1998). On the other hand, learning within the situated practices of families or communities also involves teaching, but this is not 'pedagogised' to extreme degrees of decontextualisation and individual alienation (Street & Street 1991). Rather, teaching and learning in situated literacy practices take place in a different mode of social relationships - dialogical apprenticeship (Rogoff 1990). Moreover, by arguing that meaning is produced through and between semiotic systems, sociocultural researchers insist on the ideological approach to literacy rather than seeing it as a natural and neutral process. In this way, schooled literacy might well produce a meta-awareness of language, not in terms of its phonocentrism or structuralism, but in terms of an awareness of how signs carry a history of meaning, and how they are used in different ways in different contexts to produce meaning (Voloshinov 1973).

1.3.2 Towards a 'Thirdspace' for bridging literacy practices

By emphasising the differences between a schooled model and a situated model of literacy, however, the sociocultural approach does not attempt to produce yet another divide in literacy studies. Sociocultural researchers argue that schooled literacy learning frameworks would only benefit if their relationships to everyday practices, as well as to the modes of teaching and learning in these, were taken into account in schools. As Street (1993: 9) acknowledges, "the ideological model ... does not attempt to deny technical skills or the

cognitive aspects of reading and writing, but rather understands them as they are encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power". In that sense, the sociocultural approach to literacy subsumes cognitivist research rather than rejects it, and tries to overcome the polarities that a Cartesian Divide has left almost in every field of inquiry. In so doing, a sociocultural model of literacy is open to the syncretism and hybridity of literate practices, which is documented in research that investigates interactions between schooled and situated literacy practices. Such researchers as Scribner and Cole (1981), Ogbu (1991), Street (1993), Willet and Bloome (1992), Dyson (1999), etc. have provided rich new ways of analysing and interpreting the practices of complementing, opposing, assimilating or adapting different literacy uses. Sociocultural researchers argue cogently for the educational value of recognising and supporting hybridity as a basis for literacy learning. This body of work focuses particularly on learning practices which involve ways with words and textual practices that are socioculturally and linguistically different from the dominant practices and conventional literacy values.

Following Bakhtin's (1968) notion of hybridity and carnival, and Lotman's (1990) notion of an historical mixing of styles and cultural traditions, we can distinguish two types of literacy hybridity. Bakhtin (1968), for instance, distinguished organic (unconscious) hybridity, that is especially linguistic creolisation, from intentional hybridity, to which he ascribed a political function - that is, the ability of one voice to ironise and unmask the other within the same utterance. Thus, organic literacy hybridity involves the processes of covert adaptations, such as the adaptation of literacy practices to those of a dominant and powerful group, as described by Kulick and Straud (1993) in a Papua New Guinean village. On the other hand, intentional hybridity serves to undo authoritative discourse and is, in fact, a form of opposition. For example, Ogbu (1991) argued that oppositional literacy practices by African-American students try to subvert dominant ways of identity construction.

It is clear that seeking a single space, a *single* voice, becomes increasingly problematic in multicultural conditions. Its rejection is perhaps the key to teaching literacy in multicultural classrooms and the means by which we can move toward textual practices that address contradictions in meaning-making. In contrast, by recognising the necessity and value of hybrid constructions that interweave cultural and linguistic practices from students' lifeworlds, inside and outside school, such researchers as Gutiérrez and Stone (2000), Gutiérrez, Rymes and Larson (1995), and Kamberelis (1998) emphasise the need for classroom spaces (Thirdspace) where students can appropriate knowledge, texts, and identities through the blending of school practices with practices of home, community, and popular culture. Furthermore, as Solsken et al. (2000) and Bloome et al. (2000) maintain,

research in literacy hybridity provides a valuable support for critical pedagogies that seek to transform the knowledge, texts and identities of the school curriculum. These researchers argue both for culturally responsive pedagogies (those that attempt to make instructional practices more congruent with children's home practices) and for critical literacy frameworks (those addressing deep tensions and barriers in school and broader social discourses). Hence, literacy research and a pedagogy of 'Thirdspace' values a constructive dialogue between the margins and the centre. In this dialogue, tensions may produce uncertainties but may also allow for dynamic, strategic and political constructions of multiple literacies, identities and cultural meanings.

In sum, sociocultural studies of literacy draw our attention to the multiplicity of literacy practices and meanings. In this sense, they represent a broader shift toward an analysis of contextually situated and historical practices in which individuals participate in order to understand how social relationships, conditions and ideologies affect the production of meanings, identities and minds. To study literacy in this way means to accept the multiple functions that literacy has served in past and present social and cultural activities. Looking at different practices in which literacy is used makes it clear that literacy is not the same in all contexts. Social and cultural power dynamics involve the enactment of particular sets of literacy practices in specific social situations, and thus delineate a relativity of meaning production across different contexts. However, research into local literacy practices is not only showing how literacy can be different from one location to the next. Local literacy uses involve processes of complex blending of multiple textual practices. Whether the focus of research is on community, family or classroom literacy practices, these are not to be approached as units with a single centre. Rather, multiple sociocultural practices with texts interpenetrate local or situated literacy practices creating nodal points of their interaction and tension (e.g. school literacy interpenetrates family literacy events and vice versa).

1.4 Structure of thesis

Problematising three domains - 'culture', 'mind' and 'literacy' - through the metaphor of Thridspace in this chapter is a starting point for the more ambitious project I have begun in this thesis. This concerns the conceptualisation of the dynamic nature of learning how to read and write in English as a second language in conditions of cultural complexity and in an 'in-between reality' marked by shifting psychological, cultural, and territorial boundaries. The chapters following this introductory chapter examine the theoretical arguments in a greater depth. By drawing on Vygotsky's core assertions, an attempt is made to extend and to sharpen his theoretical tenets to meet the social and cultural challenges of literacy learning in new times. This is undertaken by cross-fertilising the

Vygotskian perspectives on ESL literacy learning with current advances in the New Literacy Studies as well as with those in cultural semiotics, Activity Theory and (post)critical pedagogy. An outline of each chapter follows:

Chapter Two reviews the current situation in second language acquisition (SLA) research to advance propositions about how language and literacy learning is shaped by social circumstances rather than by the properties of individual minds. Two metaphors of learning - 'acquisition' and 'participation' - are discussed here both to organise a review of the field and to construct a rhetorical argument in favour of practice accounts of L2 learning. 'Acquisition' is presented here as a conduit metaphor of innatist and cognitivist studies of SLA preoccupied predominantly with explanations of learning as obtaining private possession of language and knowledge. On the other hand, the metaphor of participation underlies those studies which address a wide range of social issues in the process of becoming literate in L2. This body of studies represents a major statement of the current research being conducted on the learning of L2 from sociocultural perspectives. In a word, this emphasises the complex problematics of learning in social practices.

Chapter Three examines Vygotskian uses of the dialectical method for the analysis of language and literacy learning. It is argued here that the Vygotskian dialectical approach to the mind-social world binary leads to the recognition of the third category - social semiotically-mediated practice, in which the previously separated categories of mind and social world converge. This third category provides a foundation for understanding the nature of psyche and learning as socially mediated. Meaning as a unit of analysis of thought-language interaction opens up new vistas on the psychological development of individuals in social practices. It reveals the contradiction between two tendencies in meaning-making - intersubjectivity and alterity. The focus on this contradictory nature of meaning is an important step in transforming the static view of literacy learning, as the processing of ultimate meanings, to a dynamic view of literacy, as the tension between a generalised meaning and a particularised sense, scientific and everyday concepts, the grammar of language and the grammar of life, first and second language practices.

Chapter Four argues for a complex heterochronous analysis of the role of language and other semiotic artefacts in learning-leading-development. Since people use semiotic means from previous generations, Vygotsky advanced an historical approach to the study of psychological functions. As such, four time-scales are identified from the literature for a more encompassing analysis of learning and knowing: the time-scale of *general history*, concerned with the role of language and secondary systems of semiosis (e.g. writing) in the evolution of forms of thinking distinctive from other species; the time-scale of *cultural phylogeny*, concerned with how some meanings, knowledges and literacies become

privileged and naturalised by cultures; the time-scale of *ontogenesis*, concerned with the life-trajectory of a particular individual (an historical person) who appropriates and integrates mediating means in intersubjective activities with others; the time-scale of *microgenesis*, concerned with changes over a relatively short time span, i.e., in dialogical events of practices. All four time-scales of analysis are elaborated with regard to literacy learning and with a focus on the recognition of difference.

Chapter Five attempts to radicalise Vygotskian cultural-historical approaches to language and literacy development by drawing upon the cultural-semiotic, postcolonial and sociocultural literacy scholarships. In doing so, the metaphor of semiotic ecology is used to outline the main points of literacy learning in conditions of multiculturalism. In particular, such concepts as 'semiosphere', 'bipolar asymmetry' and 'boundary' between multiple centres and peripheries are used to formulate the processes of intercultural communication, bilingual translation and semiotic border-crossing (Lotman 1990). An ecological approach, which tries to be sensitive to power relations within and between cultural-semiotic systems, is conceptualised to analyse the complex dynamics going on between what are thought to be the central and the peripheral textual practices. The processes of semiotic hybridisation, occurring on the centre-periphery borders, provide grounds for formulating this phenomenon as Thridspace literacy. This consists of literacy events in which two or more cultural practices with texts intermingle. Thridspace literacy appears to include both unconscious (unintentional) and conscious (intentional) types of cultural-semiotic hybridisation.

Chapter Six aims to uncover the role of modelling for a systematic analysis and instructional design of literacy-learning environments. For this purpose, an overview of the three generations of cultural-historical Activity Theory (Vygotsky-Leont'ev-Engeström) is provided to emphasise their respective implications for modelling literacy learning in cultural activity systems. While all three models are fundamentally based on cultural-historical principles, each also emphasises particular foci of analysis. Vygotsky's model represents learning as a culturally mediated, interpersonal process of communication in which mediating artefacts signal specific social and institutional contexts. Leont'ev's model concentrates on the analysis of an object-oriented social activity and explains that the psychological activity of an individual has fundamentally the same structure as the social activity in which individuals are embedded. Engeström's model incorporates these ideas of Vygotsky and Leont'ev and extends the components of an activity system to include the community, rules and the division of labour. As such, modelling literacy-learning activity systems embodies the notion that literacy activity is carried out within a situated, social context or specifically in a community. Analysis of a literacy learning activity system reveals contradictions and disturbances within and between its components (community,

subject, object and, mediating their relations, spheres - semiotic resources, division of participation, and rules, norms and patterns of activity).

Chapter Seven explores the possibilities of Thridspace pedagogy for literacy education in multicultural conditions, one that interrogates commonly-held assumptions about the acquisition of cultural literacy and, related to this, social, political, and historical perceptions of cultural-linguistic difference. By drawing on the concept of Thridspace, an attempt is made to deconstruct dichotomising tendencies in the literacy education of migrants and minorities, with the aim of locating literacy pedagogy in the borderland or on the fault line between cultures. In developing the concept of Thridspace pedagogy, the argument is made to consider pedagogic practices in terms of the trialectics of three pedagogic spaces: the *pedagogic Firstspace*, concerned with the material-semiotic organisation of classroom activities; the *pedagogic Secondspace*, concerned with the organisation of intellectual activities (such as learning in the ZPD); and the *pedagogic Thridspace*, concerned with the dialogical organisation of literacy learning and the recognition of difference. A political strategy of 'thirding' in classroom communities of difference is emphasised in all three pedagogic spaces to suggest that Thridspace pedagogy is a radically open practice inclusive of diverse cultural resources, perspectives and voices - a pedagogic space of semiotic, cognitive and cultural pluralism.