

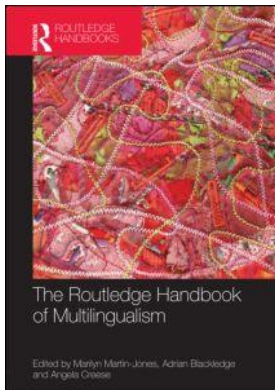
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Multilingual literacies

Doris S. Warriner

Introduction

Although multilingualism is a centuries-old phenomenon, debates about the value of multilingualism and multilingual literacies in social, educational, and workplace contexts continue to attract great interest in scholarly and public conversations worldwide (Hornberger 2009). This is especially true in geographic contexts where the constant movement of people, goods, ideas, and practices has become increasingly commonplace, and this is clearly demonstrated by the significant body of research conducted on literacy and biliteracy among (emergent, partial, and fluent) bilinguals from a range of linguistic, cultural, and national backgrounds. Over the past three decades, the research conducted on bi-multilingual literacies has provided nuanced accounts of the non-linear dimensions of literacy development, including how multiple literacies interact, and the socially situated ways in which bi-multiliteracy might facilitate language revitalization efforts, intergroup connections, and academic achievement. In addition, research on multilingual literacies has added to our understanding of the relationship between transnational processes, social practices, and the social identities of multilingual learners themselves. At the same time, the field remains relatively new, and so we are still actively trying to identify the actual processes by which the transnational movement of people and ideas contributes to language contact and change, influences the relative prestige and power of local languages and literacies, or impacts the interactional dynamics and educational opportunities of multilingual peoples. Of particular interest is the influence of literacy in and through two or more languages on the locally specific ways that multilingual peoples might live, work, and learn together. The field also continues to wrestle with the many logistical and pedagogical challenges that arise when attempts are made to enact educational policies that would support, foster, or curtail multilingual literacies, especially in a time of increased standardization and accountability worldwide.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of research on multilingual literacies in order to historicize and contextualize such developments and challenges, to highlight foundational theories and key developments in the field, to synthesize recent work, and to indicate promising directions for future research. I begin with early developments in the study of multilingual literacies, move to a discussion of theory and method, outline the policy implications of recent

research, and provide an overview on new research directions. The chapter not only addresses the large amount of research conducted since the 1980s on the topic of multilingual literacies, it illustrates how theoretical advances might inform both methodological approaches and pedagogical practices. By highlighting representative work on multilingual literacies, I demonstrate how influential theories and advances in methodological approaches have informed the investigation of social practices and situated processes that are highly consequential for bi-multilingual individuals and communities worldwide. I also highlight conceptual advances that have been made in recent work, while identifying some of the central tensions/questions that remain under-theorized or unexplored. In addition to providing an overview and update on representative work in the field, the chapter will inform the ongoing work of educational researchers, educational anthropologists, and/or applied linguists who seek to examine the actual practices and processes by which multilingual literacies are promoted or sustained in an increasingly interconnected world. Drawing on exemplary work in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, educational anthropology, and language planning/policy, this chapter will be of interest to educational researchers, policy makers, and practitioners (teachers and administrators) who are committed to providing more equitable learning opportunities for the large and growing number of students from multicultural, transnational, and multilingual backgrounds.

Before embarking on this journey, however, I wish to provide a few definitions and clarifications. First, it is important to note that I draw on Hornberger's (1990: 213) definition of biliteracy/multiliteracy as "any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing." Further, I understand multilingual literacies to be instances of social practice that are situated in specific local contexts but also influenced by a range of social, cultural, political, institutional, ideological, and interactional factors. Multilingual literacies are therefore uniquely realized in specific situational contexts *and* subject to influences (material, discursive, and ideological) that are broadly defined and widely circulating (Warriner 2009). For this reason, the topic of multilingual literacies provides an ideal basis for examining the complex relationships, tensions, and contradictions that exist in the spaces between locally situated practices and historical influences (Warriner 2004a, 2007a, 2009; see also Holland and Lave 2001).

In addition, I would like to clarify the intended scope and focus of this chapter. Although some might include mention of any work about multilingualism (without a focus on literacy per se) and/or the work on literacy as a socially situated practice (without explicit reference to biliteracy or multiliteracy) in a chapter such as this, I have decided to narrow the scope and focus on work that explicitly addresses questions about literacy development, literacy practices, and the consequences of literacy as experienced by bi-multilingual individuals and in communities.

Early developments in the field

Starting in the mid-1980s, Edelsky (1986) and Hornberger (1988, 1989) produced groundbreaking research on the reading and writing practices of bilingual or multilingual students living in the American Southwest and Peru. Although coming out of different research contexts, both researchers identified similar kinds of phenomenon in each of their respective settings. For instance, both recognized that something distinct and noteworthy was occurring among the students they interviewed and observed, particularly with regard to their efforts to read and write in two languages within contexts heavily influenced by ideologies of language that devalued minoritized languages and their speakers. With a focus on the role of reading and writing in two languages in fostering emergent or existing bilingualism, their work provided powerful examples of the crucial role of biliteracy in both maintaining and strengthening the languages, the

identities, and the communities of immigrant and Indigenous students. With regard to “the experimental bilingual education project of Puno [Peru],” Hornberger (1988, 1989) found that the active promotion of a minority language such as Quechua in local classrooms served as a critical mechanism by which community members might strengthen the language’s value and prestige in other community domains. At the same time, she also found that the ideologies of language held by teachers, students, and parents were very resistant to change. Edelsky (1986) also found that myths about language proficiency, biliteracy, and bilingual education were difficult to dismantle, even though her first-hand participant observation and analysis of documents from the site demonstrated powerfully the positive educational consequences associated with actively fostering biliteracy among students in the first-, second- and third-grade classrooms that she observed.

Hornberger would soon develop the *continua of biliteracy* framework in an effort to identify a methodological approach that would allow researchers to explore the nature (and educational consequences) of bi- and multiliteracy among immigrant and refugee learners. This framework was informed by her work in Peru and her subsequent research with Puerto Rican and Cambodian students living in Philadelphia. First proposed in 1989, the framework has developed and expanded over the years to become what Hornberger (2003a: xii) now describes as a “comprehensive yet flexible model to guide educators, researchers, and policy-makers in designing, carrying out, and evaluating educational programs for the development of multilingual learners, each program adapted to its own specific context, media, and contexts.”

Also during the 1980s, and taking a more anthropological perspective, language socialization work examined the processes by which bilinguals (emergent, partial and fluent) learned to read and write in two languages. Through rich ethnographic detail, such work demonstrated how language learning and identity construction go hand in hand, as well as the social processes that influence how speakers learn to be a member of a group in and through using the language of that group (see Schieffelin and Gilmore, 1986; Ada’s 1988 work with Spanish-speaking parents in the Pájaro Valley, California; Au’s 1993 description of literacy instruction in multicultural settings; Hudelson’s 1994 account of the literacy development of second language learners; and a study by Jiménez *et al.* 1995 about three children reading strategically in two languages).

The work that was conducted in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s on processes and practices of biliteracy helped to move the study of second language acquisition, bilingualism, and language socialization forward in significant ways. Researchers understood that although first language learning/literacy and second language learning/literacy were distinct processes, there was also a relationship between them and this relationship had a significant influence on the educational experiences of many second language learners whether they were emergent, partial, or fluent bilinguals. The volume edited by Martin-Jones and Jones (2000) illustrated the influence of multilingualism on literacy, and the influence of literacy on multilingualism. The collection included chapters that laid definitional or conceptual groundwork (e.g. Barton 2000; Martin-Jones and Jones 2000; Street 2000), as well as reports of ethnographic work on multilingualism in urban communities in Britain. For instance, Gregory and Williams (2000) described “unofficial” literacies in the lives of two East London communities; Blackledge (2000) explored issues of power in the socially constructed notion of literacy and illiteracy by focusing on the experiences of Bangladeshi women in Birmingham, and Ran (2000) examined the experiences of Chinese children who lived in Britain learning to read and write at home. By examining the locally situated nature of language and literacy practices in relation to questions and observations about global processes (e.g. immigration, transnationalism, globalization), this kind of work highlighted the value of theorizing the language–literacy–culture–power intersections from an ethnographic perspective. Such work also demonstrated the range

and variation of practices that might be considered literacy and, in doing so, inspired later research on the locally specific (sometimes contested) manifestations of multilingual literacies in complex linguistic ecologies.

Key issues of theory and method

Since the early days of research on literacy/biliteracy in multilingual settings, key work in the field has viewed the language and literacy practices that second language learners bring with them to school as a resource. Building on Schieffelin and Gilmore's (1986) language socialization work, this work identified and documented the abilities and resources that multilingual families and communities had, rather than the abilities, resources, or proficiencies it did not have (e.g. Bayley and Schecter 2003; Zentella 2005). Whether highlighting a community's "funds of knowledge" (González *et al.* 2005; Moll *et al.* 1992; Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg 1992) or documenting the Spanish-language resources of a minoritized group in California (e.g. Valdes *et al.* 2006), this kind of approach has had at least two significant implications for teacher education and qualitative research alike. As a result of this research, teachers and teacher educators now appreciate the need to understand and build on the capacities of the students they teach, and this awareness has inspired curricular innovations and pedagogical practices that have improved the educational achievement and biliteracy development of many bilingual students. Unfortunately, however, the "funds of knowledge" work has also been used less productively, by some practitioners, to over-generalize the characteristics and potential contributions of groups or learners that are internally quite diverse.

Recent research has drawn on these various perspectives (language socialization, ecology of language, and funds of knowledge) in examining teaching and learning processes in multi-ethnic and multilingual classrooms in the UK (Martin-Jones and Saxena 2003); in reconceptualizing the literacies of Latina/o youth (Martinez-Roldan and Franquiz 2009); and in documenting biliteracy development among Latina/o and especially Puerto Rican youth in New York City (Mercado 2003, 2005). Additionally, there has been research conducted with Latino families to identify and build an understanding of the multiple kinds of resources, proficiencies, and knowledges that are present in family literacy practices (e.g. Orellana *et al.* 2003; Reyes and Moll 2008; Reyes *et al.* 2009; Zentella 2005). Importantly, recent work on multilingual literacies has explored the complicated dimensions of the language and literacy brokering/translation work performed by immigrant youth and re-positioned such youth as capable, resourceful, achieving, and contributing members of classrooms and communities (e.g. Orellana *et al.* 2003; Orellana and Reynolds 2008; Sánchez 2007).

Another approach to the study of multilingual literacies is captured by the continua of biliteracy framework (Hornberger 1989, 2003a, 2003b), a model that has been used to identify a range of individual-level, institutional-level and societal-level phenomena that influence (bi) literacy practices for bi-multilingual speakers across a range of contexts, in response to diverse audiences, with various purposes, and through different media. The continua of biliteracy framework has clarified the many dimensions of language learning and identified the processes that influence educational achievement (and assessment) and the socially situated nature of such processes. It has also revealed where intersections and tensions exist between and within languages, speakers, locations, and contexts. Although many assume that there is a relationship between the languages and literacies that multilingual learners access and use (e.g. Gort 2006; Reyes 2006; Reyes and Azuara 2008; Reyes and Moll 2008), more work needs to be done to better understand the actual processes and practices involved in bi-multilingual literacies. In particular, the complicated relationship between first language literacy and second language

learning/literacy promises to become an important future direction for the field, in large part because the exact nature of that relationship is still little understood (August and Shanahan 2006; Berriz 2000; Caldas 2006; Lanauze and Snow 1989; Martínez-Roldán 2006; Pérez and Torres-Guzmán 2002). An important focus of this future work will be on whether two sets of literacies might interact during literacy/biliteracy development, the nature of this interaction, and the potential implications for language policies, pedagogical practices, and theories of learning and language learning (e.g. Dworin 2003; Jiménez *et al.* 1995, 1996; Moll and Dworin 1996; Valdés 2004).

Other approaches to the study of multilingual literacies involve the exploration of the connections and relationships between individuals, groups, institutions, systems, or ideologies (e.g. de La Piedra 2006; Ernst-Slavit 1997; Garcia *et al.* 2006; Garcia and Bartlett 2007; Hornberger 2003b; 2006b; 2009; Martínez-Roldán 2006, 2004; Watahomigie and McCarty 1996). The examination of such relationships has often relied on an explicitly or implicitly ecological perspective. For some, the goal has been to recognize and value certain interactional dynamics between speakers as representatives of particular communities of practice. In such research, there has been an increased and demonstrated commitment to understanding how processes—individual, social, ideological, material—are intimately connected, mutually influential, and yet also sometimes internally contradictory. The assumption is that multilingual literacies are influenced by individual actions, interactional dynamics, educational policies, societal norms, language ideologies, institutional constraints, and material realities.

At the same time, and in spite of the emergence of new directions, there continues to be great interest in questions that have challenged the field of literacy studies for some time. These are questions such as what counts as literacy, under what circumstances, and according to whose definition, whose literacy counts, and how we should conceptualize the relationship between literacy and social, economic, and political change (Bartlett 2008; Robinson-Pant 2004; Rubenstein-Avila 2007; Street 1984, 2000). Increasingly, recent work on multilingualism and multiliteracies has taken up these and a range of other questions about the processes involved in the transnational movement of people, goods, ideas, and practices (e.g. Bartlett 2007; Rubenstein-Avila 2007; Sánchez 2007; Warriner 2007a, 2007b, 2009). For instance, Rubenstein-Avila (2007: 571) explores “how living in a transnational space affects immigrant students’ literacy practices and their values, perspectives, beliefs, and actions in relation to literacy.” Also, Bartlett (2007: 215) paints a detailed portrait of one transnational student from the Dominican Republic and how she “drew upon the locally defined model of school success to position herself—and be positioned—as a successful student through bilingual literacy practices.”

The work on multilingual literacies described here shares an orientation to literacy and biliteracy as situated, contested, social practices—where languages (and linguistic competencies) are more related than distinct, where orality and literacy are viewed as related points on a continuum rather than polar opposites, where context is defined not only situationally but also interactionally, and where the analysis of contemporary linguistic ecologies takes into account questions of discourse, ideology, and power. As a result, it is clear that any effort to investigate how bilinguals become biliterate, and with what consequence, takes place within an exceedingly complicated terrain. Moreover, newer questions have arisen from more theoretically grounded approaches and newer, more robust methodological approaches are being developed.

Policy issues

Within this context, researchers, policy makers, teachers, and parents face increasingly urgent and controversial questions about whether and how educational policies might be used to

promote the linguistic resources of (im)migrant or Indigenous learners in order to facilitate their educational, social, and economic inclusion and opportunity. A number of scholars have pursued such research agendas and made a variety of valuable contributions to our collective understanding of how multilingual literacies are fostered and maintained across a variety of contexts. In Tollefson and Tsui's (2004) edited book, contributors explore how the "medium of instruction policies" in various national contexts has managed to promote language learning and literacy development in ways that foster language revitalization, bilingualism and biliteracy, or ethnolinguistic nationalism. Zakharia (2008, 2009) too describes the language policy implications of medium of instruction debates in contemporary Lebanon in relation to questions of nationalism and identity. In the USA there has been a focus on the influence of national initiatives such as Reading First and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on multilingual learners' language learning and literacy development. For instance, Caldas (2006) explores how bilingual–biliterate children are being raised in monolingual cultures; Rivera and Collum (2006) examine state assessment policy for English language learners; Menken (2008) examines the ways that the standardized testing craze operates as a de facto language policy that dramatically influences the educational and language learning opportunities available to English-language learners in US schools; and McCarty (2009) examines the impact of high-stakes testing practices (e.g. those found in NCLB) on Native American learners.

Hornberger (2003b) has described multilingual language policies from an ecology of language perspective with a focus on the ways that biliteracy development is context-dependent and therefore subject to the influences of local power relations. In recent work she has used this framework to explore a number of language policy issues such as the roles of voice and biliteracy in indigenous language revitalization efforts in Quechua, Guarani, and Maori contexts (Hornberger 2006a); multilingual language policy and school linguistic practices in India, Singapore, and South Africa (Hornberger and Vaish 2009); and ten "certainties" about multilingual education policy based on ethnographic work done with Indigenous teachers and learners across multiple continents over the past three decades (Hornberger 2009). Hornberger (*ibid.*) argues that "multilingual education is in its essence an instance of biliteracy" (2009: 198) and describes the very central role that literacy plays in Indigenous language revitalization to support this claim.

García *et al.* (2006) have proposed that we should reimagine bilingualism and biliteracy as critical components of multilingual schools in an age of "glocalization." Their edited volume showcases recent work by prominent scholars in the field and focuses on issues such as the creative construction of identity through multiliteracies pedagogy (Cummins 2006); the process of "reimagining multilingual America" by examining the lived experiences of Native American youth (McCarty *et al.* 2006a, 2006b; McCarty and Zepeda 2010); "monolingual assessment and emerging bilinguals" (Escamilla 2006); US language education policy from *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) to the present, including No Child Left Behind (Hornberger 2006b); multilingualism and Indigenous education in Latin America (López 2006); and questions of class in relation to mother tongue education in India (Mohanty 2006).

New research directions

One exciting development in the study of multilingual literacies has been a demonstrated interest in exploring different kinds of movement (of people, ideas, goods, and practices) in relation to literacy practices, identity issues, and educational opportunities. Drawing on insights from semiotics, the anthropology of space and place, sociology, sociology of language, and cultural studies, literacy scholars have recently examined the local manifestations of intersections and

contestations inherent in, and constitutive of, far-reaching global processes. Contributions to a special issue of *Linguistics and Education* on “Transnational Literacies: Immigration, Language Learning and Identity” examined the specific ways that literacy and identity trajectories might be traced across time and space; how multiple literacies—and identities—could be created, narrated, and transformed by individual actors living in particular contexts; and the importance of thinking and writing in “spatial terms” while investigating such processes. In the “Introduction” to that special issue, I wrote: “By examining the literacy practices of different immigrant learners across contexts of home, school and community through a transnational lens, the authors make visible the specific ways that literacy practices, as one type of ‘situated cultural practice’, influence and mediate situated learning, social identity formation and transformation, and historically structured processes” (Warriner 2007a: 213).

A rapidly growing body of work has explored questions of transnationalism and transnationality in relation to migrants’ use of digital technologies and their digital literacies (e.g. Black 2007, 2009; Jacquemet 2005; Lam 2000, 2006, 2009, Lam and Rosario-Ramos 2009; Lee 2007; McGinnis *et al.* 2007; Yi 2009). The focus in such work is on literacy practices that are used to create transnational social and information networks by immigrant youth (Lam and Rosario-Ramos 2009); the “development of multiliteracies in the context of transnational migration and new media of communication” (Lam 2009); and the attendant identities that are often negotiated through participation on online processes (Yi 2009). In addition, some of this work has examined the specific ways that English-language learners design digital futures and identities through participation in online fan fiction (Black 2007); how new media and technologies might influence “modern configurations of imagination, identity, communication, and writing” (Black 2009); and the “text-making practices” that are evident in instant messaging (IM) (Lee 2007). Collectively, this growing body of research on information communication technologies has enhanced our understanding of multilingual literacies by illuminating the various ways that transnationalism and globalization might be investigated through the lens (empirical and theoretical) of digital literacy practices. This work has also highlighted the complicated relationship between movement (of people, ideas, practices), digital literacy practices, and the situated identities of immigrant youth living in increasingly interconnected and globalized contexts. Finally, it raises questions about certain definitions and methodological approaches used to examine such practices. Jacquemet (2005: 257), for instance, calls for a “reconceptualization of what we consider the communicative environment” in order to better understand “communicative practices based on multilingual talk (most of the times exercised by de/reterritorialized speakers) channeled through both local and electronic media.”

On other fronts, important work is being done on the complex linguistic ecologies that contribute to, or stand in the way of, language shift. A recent special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (vol. 195) was devoted to the sociolinguistic and subjective aspects of Welsh in Wales and its diaspora, aiming to understand some of the factors contributing to its relative strength and ethnolinguistic vitality. Of particular interest here is the article by Martin-Jones *et al.* (2009: 39) that describes “how the young people’s language choices and literacy practices were shaped by the nature of the land-based enterprises they were involved in.”

Reporting on circumstances with a more worrisome outcome, contributions to a special issue of the *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* report on ethnographic work in communities undergoing rapid language shift (Lee 2009; McCarty and Wyman 2009; McCarty 2009; Messing 2009; Nicholas 2009). Although the context is North America, where language shift to the dominant/colonizing language has been both recent and rapid, this work highlights

new directions in research on Indigenous youth and bilingualism, and the implications of this research for understanding the survival and vitality of Indigenous languages and communities worldwide are vast. Calling their work “explicitly praxis-oriented,” the contributors to this volume provide a useful “three-pronged look at contemporary Indigenous youth language practices, communicative repertoires, and language attitudes and ideologies” (McCarty and Wyman 2009: 279).

Concluding comments

Limitations of space have allowed only a brief mention of the vast amount of scholarship on multilingual literacies that has been conducted over the past three decades. My hope is that the reader will find at least some of their interests represented in what I have discussed here and will decide to pursue those interests independently by consulting some of the many references included in the bibliography at the end of the chapter. Although the study of multilingual literacies began decades ago, it remains an exciting and active area of study with far-reaching implications for educational policy and practice as well as theories of second language learning, bilingualism, and literacy development. Drawing on a variety of disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches, and rejecting deficit views of multilingualism and multiliteracy, recent scholarship has contributed important insights into the social, educational, and economic benefits and advantages of multilingual literacy practices. I expect that the study of multilingual literacies will continue to address issues of curriculum, pedagogy, policy, and opportunity by drawing on relevant insights and contributions from the many fields that inform and expand the study of literacy in two or more languages, including anthropology, sociology, literacy studies, applied linguistics, and education. The study of multilingual literacies, in all its complicated and contradictory manifestations, remains an exciting and promising area of research, and many years of fruitful discovery lie ahead.

Related topics

Indigenous contexts; Indigenous education; linguistic diversity and education; regional minorities, education and language revitalization; multilingual pedagogies; multilingualism and social exclusion; multilingualism on the Internet.

Further reading

Baynham, M. and Prinsloo, M. (eds) (2009) *The Future of Literacy Studies*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

(Introduces what the editors say is “the current third generation empirical work which is pushing the boundaries of literacy research in a number of key directions” (2009: 2). Viewing literacy as social practice that is situated locally and globally, textual, and aesthetic, the authors of this edited volume raise questions about and assert new directions for the future of the field, where mobility, digital literacies, and new modes of meaning-making influence language learning and literacy practices in important ways across a range of geographic contexts.)

González, N., Moll, L. C. and Amanti, C. (eds) (2005) *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households and Classroom*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

(Provides a theoretical and methodological overview/guide to conducting research in local communities in order to identify, document and build on the knowledge and life experiences students from such communities bring with them to schools and classrooms. Attempts to alter the perceptions of working-class or poor communities by viewing their households primarily in terms of their strengths and resources, rather than their deficits.)

Hornberger, N. H. (ed.) (2003) *Continua of Biliteracy: An Ecological Framework for Educational Policy, Research, and Practice in Multilingual Settings*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

(Includes a comprehensive history of the development of the continua of biliteracy and explains how the model might guide the design, execution, and evaluation of educational programs for the development of bilingual and multilingual learners. Scholarship draws on the continua framework to analyze instances of biliteracy, programmatic concerns, or policy implications of biliteracy across a range of contexts.)

Martin-Jones, M. and Jones, K. (eds) (2000) *Multilingual Literacies: Reading and Writing Different Worlds*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

(Draws on the theories and methodologies from literacy studies and the study of bilingualism to provide compelling portraits of how speakers from a range of contexts read and write in two or more languages. Focusing on the language and literacy experiences of adults and youth, the chapters illuminate the complicated relationship between language, literacy, culture, and identity in multi-ethnic contexts.)

Zentella, A. C. (ed.) (2005) *Building on Strength: Language and Literacy in Latino Families and Communities*, New York and London: Teachers College Press and CAFE.

(Examines the role and nature of language socialization in Latino families and communities from a historical, political, and cultural perspective. Demonstrates the diversity within Latino communities while contributing to an enhanced understanding of the conflicting cultural processes that influence language socialization practices.)

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