

What Counts as the Social in a Social Practices Approach to the Study of Children's Engagement with Electronic Media, Language and Literacy in a Context of Social Diversity?**Mastin Prinsloo and Polo Lemphane****Introduction**

Reading and writing are often understood, particularly in educational studies (Adams 1990; Moats 2007), as the efforts of individual minds where readers and writers are seen as more or less efficient processors and producers of particular kinds. In this view, their social positioning, their background and interests, only have bearing on how successfully they are able to learn the skills involved, as if learning to read and write were in the end something like learning how to use a knife and fork. As Harris (1995, p. 6) pointed out, such approaches to literacy “treat the sign as something externally given, an object already provided by society for the learner to ‘acquire’ and utilize.” However, we are reminded from our observations of people (children included) who make and take meaning on and through electronic media resources (laptops, mobile phones, tablets and so on) that reading and writing are always as much about social engagements of varying kinds, by way of various discourse resources, as they are about basic coding activities. Meaning does not reside autonomously in the text itself. The denotational meanings of words, images and sentences are only one aspect of a text or utterance and it is the more connotational, contextual and interactional meanings that are usually critical—for example, what is signalled by a switch to a different style or register and how such a switch is relevant to the activities and social relationships at play.

In the approach criticized by Harris, above, meaning is thought to lie autonomously in the surface features of the text, which offers up its unequivocal messages to a skilled reader. In contrast, the research that has been loosely collated under the term Literacy Studies and also often referred to as the New Literacy Studies turned to the study of reading and writing as cognitively, historically, socially, culturally and institutionally variable activities (see for example, Barton 2001; Baynham and

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Prinsloo 2009; Barton and Hamilton 1998; Gee 1999; Pahl and Rowsell 2006, 2012; Street 1995). The Literacy Studies point has always been that the ways in which the signs and objects of writing get inserted in social actions and get produced within social activity can differ significantly, with the result that there can be differences in what these forms *do*. As Luke and Carrington (2002, p. 232) summarized it,

it is an axiom of the New Literacy Studies that how literacy is shaped as a social practice is linked to larger social structures. How those linkages are established is in part an ethnographic and in part a discourse analytic question: pursued through local analyses of the power relations, knowledges and identities built through literacy education and everyday life.

While a strength of this Literacy Studies approach is its emphasis on attention to the goings-on of social life and how these shape particular instances of literacy engagement, this chapter addresses concerns with some key theoretical and methodological aspects of Literacy Studies in the light of research on children's early engagements with electronic media resources in South Africa. In particular, we examine the concept of literacy as social practice that has been the core theoretical resource of Literacy Studies (Barton 2001; Baynham and Prinsloo 2009; Street 1995) and ask how the theorization of practices happens with regard to the relationships between particular instances of digital literacy actions and activities and their wider social meanings. We are interested in the question of how big or how small the social appears to be in our conceptions of practices; how such large constructs as *globalization* or *the global* and 'small' constructs such as *the local* apply in digital media research with what kinds of relations with each other. The following brief data extract from a study of particular children's early experiences with digital media is indicative of these concerns, as they relate to data analysis.¹ The youths in this extract are the children of Sotho-speaking migrants from the Eastern Cape, living in a shack in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, with their parents, neither of whom was regularly employed. These children had no access to personal computers or the Internet and were allowed only limited play-time on their parents' mobile phones, in particular because prolonged play with the phone caused the battery to run down and also because their mother, at least, did not see any educational value in children's digital play. The conversation below starts to illustrate this point. The exchange is between their father, Mr. Mahlale and a visitor, Mr. Lebaka, who came to borrow a music CD. They are speaking Sesotho. The Mahlale home is a shack made from corrugated iron sheets and masonite, about 3½ by 4½ m².

1. Mr. Lebaka: This phone of yours really works! It does not have a free day
2. Mr. Mahlale: (*Soffly*) It will exhaust the battery
3. Mr. Lebaka: If it is left there on the charger, and they see it ... (*giggles from the children*)

¹ The data reported on in this chapter was recorded by Polo Lemphane as part of her research for her Masters minor dissertation (Lemphane 2012) and is also reported on in Lemphane and Prinsloo (in press). The data is translated into English. All names of research participants used here are pseudonyms. This work is part of a wider research project on children's home and school literacies that is partly funded by the National Research Foundation, South Africa.

The children had taken the mobile phone off the charger when their father was not looking. The children had two strategies to get hold of one of the phones: one was to wait for a phone to be put on a charger, so that they could take it and play with it; the other was to ask visitors to their home if they could "see" their phones. When they "saw" a phone, the children played with it to see what games it had, how its recording mode worked, as well as examining the different ringing tones it had. The children's mother was even more reluctant than their father to give them access to the phones (see Lemphane 2012).

The conversation below was between Thabang, Mrs. Mahlale and the researcher:

1. Lemphane: Are you not playing with the phone today?
2. Thabang: Father's phone is not there.
3. Lemphane: Don't you use your mother's?
4. Thabang: (*Nervously*) We use it.
5. Mrs Mahlale: They know that I am not like their father. I am strict.

As Lemphane (2012) and Lemphane and Prinsloo (in press) described it, the children were never seen to make phone calls nor send SMSes. The parents' restrictions regarding children's use of mobile phones, as they protected these costly resources, gave the children limited access to digital play, in contrast with their middle class peers. Not only was their access restricted but the conditions of play were also constrained by the limited space available in their home, as well as the parents' attitudes to children's noise. When they played inside, the children often had to play silently so as not to annoy their parents or their visitors in the crowded collective space which they all occupied. The children's digital play consisted mostly of silently playing, or silently watching each other play the one available game on the cheaper and older Vodafone 150 phone, to which they had greater access than the better phone of their parents. The situational details here point us to what we call 'the social life' of digital media engagements; the ways that their uses are socially shaped and distinctive with regard to their embedded uses in particular settings. The question arises of how to make research sense of the data on children's early digital engagements when they are not in the mainstream of contemporary social life, and where their engagements are not 'successful' in the ways that are frequently identified in studies of children as 'digital natives' and rapid learners by way of electronic engagements (Gee 2008; Warschauer and Matuchniak 2010). What conceptual resources are at hand that are suited to the task of pursuing this question further?

The Social Life of Digital Writing: Events and Practices

We arguably live in worlds where writing and writing artefacts are part of the 'glue' of social life and for very many people those resources are electronic ones. The spread of networked, electronic media have intensified the extent to which literacy, texts and their influences saturate everyday and institutional life in many settings. Secondly, these resources are used in diverging social sites, which challenge us to

account for how they are taken up and taken hold of in similar or diverging ways across settings (Prinsloo and Rowsell 2012; Prinsloo 2005; Snyder and Prinsloo 2007). Media resources, including software programmes, get interpreted and made sense of in particular contexts. The interests, histories and ways of being of the users will sometimes be different to those of the designers and programmers, who bring their own interests, assumptions and expectations to their design work. Children of migrants, such as the Mahlale children here, encounter media resources that, too, have migrated and arrive at this site with the intentions and expectations of their designers and distributors already embedded in them. How they have affect and have meaning in this new site is not a straightforward matter. Such observations turn our attention to the resources from Literacy Studies for studying literacy as situated social practices.

A methodology for the study of literacy as variable social activity emerged in the work of Literacy Studies researchers in the 1980s and 1990s, in particular, and has been widely employed since for the study of literacy and more recently for the study of digital literacies or electronic media engagements. For the Literacy Studies researcher, the social in the study of literacy as socially embedded activity is constituted by *events* and *practices*, which can be studied by way of ethnographic enquiry. This focus on events as a methodological strategy in Literacy Studies is commonly traced back to Heath's (1982, 1983) extended study of the home and school language and literacy practices of Black and White working class and middle class local communities in a southern USA region, at a time when legal desegregation was still fresh and racially integrated schooling a relatively new phenomenon. *Events* provided a resource for empirically analysing differences in ways with literacy across different social settings, Heath describing them as "the occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies" (Heath 1982, p. 50). She followed Hymes in insisting that what counted in effective communication was not a generalized competence (e.g., being able to "speak English" or "code and decode letters") but a situated, communicative competence. Such insights lend themselves readily to the study of electronic media communicative practices. For Heath, patterns of language and literacy use varied across local communities (and across social classes) and were consistent with other cultural practices, such as "space and time orderings, problem-solving techniques, group loyalties, and preferred patterns of recreation" (1983, p. 344). The observed instances of writing-based or writing-linked interaction were the events, which were the unit of analysis for researchers and what underlay them were the social practices. Her work, together with that of Street (1984) and Scribner and Cole (1981) pointed Literacy Studies to the ways situated, distinctive types of actions and meanings were shared by groups of people who sustain them as part of their collective social activities and how these particular "ways of knowing" and accompanying ways with words and writing were endorsed or discounted in schools, at work and in other settings. This research showed that the worlds revealed through the detailed study of writing used in particular contexts were those of social relationships, "orientations towards persons, roles, statuses, rights and duties, deference and demeanour" (Hymes 1996, p. 45), not universal

functions of writing abstractly conceived, nor of particular written language forms. Prinsloo has previously drawn on these ideas to study digital media as *placed resources* in particular social settings, on the grounds that

what might look like the same multimedia text on screen is not functionally the same in a different setting. It follows different meaning conventions, and requires different skills for its successful use in situated social contexts for particular purposes, as part of different human activities. (for example, Prinsloo 2005, p. 90)

In this view, digital media resources operate "as artefacts and as signs that are embedded in local relations which are themselves shaped by larger social dynamics of power, status, access to resources and social mobility" (Prinsloo 2005, p. 96; see also Prinsloo and Rowsell 2012). However, the specification of how these differences are construed and have effect has been a challenging one. As one example, the relation between the social and language was formerly comfortably embedded in the sociolinguistic concept of *speech community* but that is no longer the case. Within sociolinguistics *speech community* as a key construct linking the social and linguistic has been foundational, contested and changing since Hymes (1974) first described it as key to the sociolinguistic enterprise:

Speech Community is a necessary, primary concept ... It postulates the unit of description as a social, rather than linguistic, entity. One starts with a social group and considers the entire organization of linguistic means within it. (p. 74)

However, the view of speech communities as relatively homogenous and populated by stable linguistic subjects has increasingly been challenged in recent times (De Fina and Perrino 2013). Rampton (1998, 2010) suggested that the focus in ethnographic research on a relatively small number of subjects is likely to deliver detailed accounts of an internally differentiated but coherent group and their distinctive speech practices. He offered an alternative view where community belonging could be treated as a product created in interaction, with emphasis on the part that social action plays in the production of small, new "communities." Patrick (2002, p. 593) argued that "the *speech community* should not be taken for a unit of social analysis" and that we should not assume *speech communities* "exist as predefined entities waiting to be researched, or identify them with folk notions, but see them as objects constituted anew by the researcher's gaze and the questions we ask." This concern takes us back to look again at what we mean when we talk of practices and social practices, concepts that have been foundational resources in social views of literacy and digital literacy. We are challenged to clarify what we understand as the literacy-language-social linkage, rather than to assume a functionalist relationship between concepts of language and culture.

Social Practices in Literacy Studies

In "practices theory" (variously associated in its foundations with Wittgenstein, Bourdieu, Foucault, and others) the social is found in social practices, not, firstly, in individual minds nor in discourses nor in symbolic interactions. In this view

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it is through action and interaction within practices that knowledge is constituted and social life is produced, maintained and changed. Within Literacy Studies as Street (1995) explained it, the concept of social practices has served as a resource to handle the patterns of activity around literacy actions and interactions "by linking them to something broader of a social and cultural kind, enabling the description and analysis of such events at a 'higher level of abstraction'" (p. 2). However, the specification of this "something broader" has been a challenging and contested one.

At the broadest level, practices are understood as those habits and dispositions which are acquired and not explicitly learnt or taught and which characterize our everyday interactions with things and people. The micro-skills of writing or conversational competence are often referred to as one example of how much background knowledge makes up practices, including the feel for occasion, style, register, tone, strategies of turn-taking, affirming, politeness and silence that are involved in bringing off a conversation or exchange in speech, writing or in online written or multimodal communication. Practices refer to such pivotal but taken-as-given and implicit resources of background knowhow and commitments, as well as aspects of consciousness such as intentionality and rule-following, and also of embodiment—how we are bodies in certain sorts of ways. Practices, in this view, are not based on or explicitly communicated as beliefs or rules, and they are passed on through interaction and activity. Practices are thus historical, situated and hard to pinpoint because they include elements that are both profound and trivial, stated and implicit. This raises challenges for their theorization and their use in research analysis. Nonetheless, practices have been a key resource in attempts in contemporary sociology for explaining social reproduction, or the endurance of social inequalities, in non-determinist ways. Starting from Marxist conceptions of *praxis*, practices (habits, dispositions, background knowhow) are the ways that stratified societies are reproduced, providing resources for personal identity work and social place through processes of interpellation (Althusser 1994) and embodiment (Butler 2005), that make available and reproduce the major social cleavages of class, gender and race.

Following these influences, but struggling with the broadness of the concept, Literacy Studies researchers have given varying emphases to what count as practices in their research, and disagreed with each other (e.g., Luke 2004), often focusing on the everyday and, at most, only inferring political processes that lie beyond these. How 'the local' is constituted and located within larger dynamics has remained a question that has troubled this research, and has become increasingly prominent as a concern. In many contemporary urban environments around the world, not least in European cities (Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Jacquemet 2005), local communities are increasingly coming to be seen as characterized by diversity or even "superdiversity" (Vertovec 2007) in the origins, backgrounds, commitments, interests and languages spoken of their inhabitants, many of whom have migrated to these centres and bring languages and associations from elsewhere. African cities can be seen as similar sites of linguistic and social diversities, though such diversity has a longer and a different history. These are therefore not homogenous speech communities such as Hymes perhaps had in mind, nor are they spatially contained

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the way that Heath's local neighbourhoods were seen to be. Social networks under these circumstances are translocal and often transnational as people maintain social relations with friends and families in other countries and regions.

Macro and Micro in Scales Theory

The recent work of sociolinguists who use *scales theory* (Blommaert 2007, 2010; Blommaert et al. 2005; Collins et al. 2009) provides a set of conceptual resources for retheorizing social practices and for understanding the way power relations on a global scale shape the uptake of language resources in specific local contexts. Drawing on social geography and World Systems Analysis (Wallerstein 2001), along with the perspective of Bourdieu and sociolinguistic arguments on indexicality, scales theory in sociolinguistics asks how an analysis can account for the effects of large scale, for example institutional, national, transnational features, on the dynamics of face to face interaction and offers the argument that sociolinguistic and discursive phenomena are "essentially *layered*, even if they appear to be one-time, purely synchronic and unique events" (Blommaert 2007, p. 3). The scales model suggests that each context (local, regional, national, global) has its own "orders of indexicality" which assign meanings, values and statuses to diverse codes. These values or indexicalities are organized hierarchically at a global level in a world that is systemically organized in terms of scales from top to bottom. While local scales are momentary, situated and restricted, the codes and literacies of dominant groupings are valued at a translocal level because they are resilient, highly mobile and they can "jump scales" (Blommaert 2010, p. 36). Scales theory thus provides a metaphor to analyze the way language resources retain or lose social value depending on where they are placed along spatiotemporal lines within social contexts, where power relations shape the uptake of language resources. A sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2010) working with this model of the social as a world system pays attention to language hierarchy and processes that are seen as holding across situations and transcending localities. Children of poor or out-of-work parents might possess language and meaning-making resources but these are different to those required by the hegemonic centre and are thus devalued.

This analysis aims to account for large-scale features of language and literacy, particular, for example on institutional, national, and transnational levels, as well as their impact on the dynamics of face to face interaction (Blommaert 2007, 2010; Collins et al. 2009). Interaction between different scales is a crucial feature for understanding the socio-linguistic dimensions of such events and processes, because language and literacy practices are subject to social processes of hierarchical ordering.

The model is a social practices one in that the key concept of indexicality points to the inherently contextualized nature of language within orders of normativity and secondly that such contexts are arranged systemically: Unique instances of communication point towards "social and cultural norms, genres, traditions, expectations—

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phenomena of a higher scale-level" (Blommaert 2007, p. 4). Scales theory in sociolinguistics follows Bourdieu in thinking about literacy, language and the new media as carrying social capital in situated ways within specific social economies. However, the scaled model might not be an appropriate resource for making sense of the complex ways that children and youths encounter new media in situated contexts, including on the so-called social periphery, as we go on to discuss.

One of the troubling problems about conceiving of globalization as systemic and hierarchical is the in-built assumption that complexity is synchronous and scaled, that higher scales are more complex and that lower scales and peripheries are simpler forms of social organization, with developments at the "top" or the core of the world system simply having effects at the "bottom"; for example, observations that developments in the field of internet communication have effects on other, "less sophisticated" forms of literacy in the periphery. The problem with such observations is that they do not take account of how these socially constructed resources are taken hold of or refigured as placed resources and as assemblages in particular networks of association. The suggestion that sophistication is a characteristic of one site and not the other would appear to be a judgment made from "the centre", based on the assumption that sophistication (which we might read here as a synonym for complexity) is intrinsically an upper-scale phenomenon.

A telling example is Blommaert's (2010) discussion of "grassroots literacy" as constituting the normative genre employed by the mass of hardly schooled Africans, a writing practice he says is characterized by "heterography"—the deployment of graphic symbols in ways that defy orthographic norms: words are spelled in different ways, often reflecting the way they are pronounced in spoken vernacular varieties rather than following conventional orthographic norms or prestige language forms. Blommaert also finds an uncertainty about linguistic and stylistic rules, as well as a common use of drawing as well as writing. Examined from beyond the local, these texts appear as inferior examples of writing, pointing to the low status of these persons on a larger stage. What is lacking in this perspective for us, however, is attention to the various purposes, interactions and activities that might be variously served by the variety of social activities of which particular pieces of writing are a part. Complexity and specificity get lost in this approach, and it can be said that "grassroots literacy" works best as a concept when instances of writing are viewed in relation to how they are seen from "a higher level". But such a perspective loses touch with the complexity of the located and specific. Close up, the picture is different, both more specific, more complex, more varied and more diverse than scales theory would suggest.

An alternative view to the systemically ordered account of globalization presented in scales theory is that presented through the idea of *global forms* and *global assemblages* in sociology, as an alternative to the categories of local and global (Collier 2006). Global forms are widely distributed conceptual and organizational resources that are assembled and adapted in distinctive ways at local and regional levels so as to work in those contexts, articulated in specific situations—or territorialised in *assemblages*, or as placed resources. These assemblages define new material, collective and discursive relationships. Global forms, such as those that

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might be disseminated electronically, interact with other resources and elements in particular contexts, in contingent, uneasy, unstable interrelationships. In the space of assemblage, a global form is simply one among a range of elements. An assemblage is the product of multiple determinations that are not predictable by a single logic. These interactions might be called the *actual global*, or the global in the space of assemblage. The assemblage is not a "locality" to which broader forces from the global are counterposed. Nor is it the structural effect of such forces (Collier 2006, p. 380). The term *global assemblage* suggests inherent tensions, forms that are shifting, in formation, or at stake, heterogeneous, contingent, unstable, partial and situated. Such an orientation argues against the macro/micro conceptual frame of scales theory, or at least suggests that we attend to multiple scales with no single scale treated as foundational or determinant. Thus we can look at how youths and electronic resources position each other by drawing on both widely circulating sociohistorical constructs as well as locally developed constructs of value, status and identity. What such an orientation leads to is a concern less with grand theorising but with small and focused research into the *actual global* in particular settings. In illustration, we turn back to the children in Khayelitsha as they talk while one of them plays a game on their parents cellphone. They share a desire for a "Playstation".

1. Thato: Some children take PlayStation to school and play with it
2. Thabang: You are lying
3. Nthabiseng: No Mputi
4. Thabang: It is connected to a TV
5. Thabang: How much is PlayStation?
6. Thato: Ninety rand
7. Thabang: Where?
8. Thato: There at the Chinese shop
9. Nthabiseng: At the Chinese shop
10. Thabang: Yes, in order to play it, it needs many things, it needs to be connected to a TV. When someone needs to play, make him/her pay and make money
11. Nthabiseng: You buy fat cakes
12. Thabang: For electricity which they play with
13. Nthabiseng: No, I buy pirates T-shirt
14. Thabang: Anyone who wants to play, plays the PlayStation for one rand
15. Nthabiseng: Yes, they will enter with one rand
16. Thabang: Because electricity
17. Nthabiseng: Yes, electricity is expended; you have to enter with one rand

This extract offers us a provocative example of children's situated engagement with digital media artefacts. "PlayStations" as objects of desire are not part of their parents' frame of reference at all so their discussion is not framed by inherited practices or orientations. Why do they talk of these resources and artefacts in the way that they do and what does this signal? Firstly, they imagine them as resources in terms of their *exchange* value rather than their *use* value, contrary to what one might be inclined to expect. They also imagine them as collective resources, likely to be

distributed in their use across children in their neighbourhood. There are clear differences here as to what one might see middle-class children saying and doing with these digital 'writing' resources, and again, the question is how we as researchers interpret these differences and what we make of them.

What the children have to say about the PlayStation could be taken as an indicator that they have no real sense of how they would play with it, as they quickly turn to invoking more familiar desires—having fatcakes and getting a Pirates T-shirt. But the PlayStation, it turns out, is more accessible than it might have seemed to be and is not what the reader might first take it to be. What they have in mind is actually a cheaper, more limited electronic toy with only a few basic games on it that is sold locally, costing only R90 (US\$ 9) at the local "Chinese shop" in the shack settlement, where immigrant Chinese merchants sell cheaply-made low cost versions of all sorts of items and goods. In this version of globalization, the "PlayStation" is not that far out of reach. The children already have a TV in their house, one of a few in the neighbourhood, frequently used as a common resource by their neighbours, mostly for watching one religious video, in particular, in a crowded, collective and vocal room (Lemphane 2012). The children's imagining of their sharing of the PlayStation with their friends draws from this familiar activity of collective and active participation in media entertainment. Lastly, their sense that the PlayStation could be a potential money-making artefact reflects their wider environmental location: In a neighbourhood where few people have reliable income sources and everything that has value is considered tradeable, they draw from these influences in identifying the PlayStation as a tradeable resource. These details are about a complexity that is specific and assembled in particular kinds of ways in a mix of global constructs and more localized discourses and preoccupations. A practices approach that looks up to study youths' engagement with digital media in these contexts as a scaled activity loses touch with the heteroglossia (Bailey 2007) and specificity of the *actual global* and the sometimes unexpected nature of localized connections to other places and practices that we see here. We must expect the mobile global resources of language, literacy and digital media to be distributed, assembled and adapted in distinctive ways in particular contexts, where they are assembled along with locally developed categories, values and activities, in shifting and often unpredictable combinations.

Implications of These Contrasting Conceptual Orientations

A review of how such a perspective translates into research in literacy and digital media in schooling might be helpful at this point, and we turn to relevant research that follows both a scales theory approach and to contrasting orientations like the one we have outlined here.

An alarming aspect of South African schooling is the huge gap between the small number of schools where students from middle-class homes are doing well, going on to university study, on the one hand, and the large majority of schools, on the

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other, where pass rates and school completions rates are very low indeed. Comparative analyses of national test results in reading and maths for Grades 1 to 6 show around 20% of students excelling and 80% doing very badly indeed (Taylor 2011, p. 12), as if there were two separate schooling systems operating within the public schooling system, one for the children of the elite and the other for the large majority of students. This situation is of great concern in a country that is dealing with the legacies of racialized inequalities as well as various kinds of skills shortages.

A number of studies have addressed this question and we focus here on the contrast between an approach that brings the idea of 'scale' to the study of literacy across diverse settings (Blommaert et al. 2006; Blommaert 2010), on the one hand, and research that is critical of this approach. The scales theory approach to literacy studies as we have described it, suggests that language and literacy practices are subject to social processes of hierarchical ordering. "Societies marked by deep inequality characteristically produce different layers and niches in which very different ways of life are developed on the basis of rules, norms and opportunities not valid elsewhere" (Blommaert et al. 2006, p. 378). In their study, carried out at a Cape Town township school they identified students' writing as featuring grammatical, spelling and other deviations that characterize "grassroots literacy" and found the same features in teachers' writing, evidence of what he calls "peripheral normativity." Suresh Canagarajah has since carried out a study of his own in a similarly poorly resourced Western Cape township school setting to that of Blommaert and colleagues and he has disagreed with aspects of Blommaert et al. (2006) analysis (Canagarajah in press). Canagarajah disagrees with Blommaert et al. treatment of literacy and language regimes as somewhat autonomous and separate, with their own logic, cut off from others. He argues that while particular communities might display characteristic writing forms, they are not necessarily "stuck" or "locked" at "one scale-level" in the way suggest by the use of scale theory in the Blommaert et al. analysis. Canagarajah's own study finds in the texts of the students a *recognition* of different norms at different scale values. In their writings on a school Facebook site, students' heterography is evident in their mixing of English and isiXhosa, abbreviations and icons. He identifies their writing here as a hybrid form of literacy activity, combining oral and literate resources and diverse languages. In their classroom written work, however, students don't mix codes in the same way and Canagarajah suggests they have shifted to a translocal norm, approximating to Standard Written English and with an emerging sense of the genre requirements of school essay writing. While student writing displays the types of grammatical problems that Blommaert identified, Canagarajah sees teachers as selectively correcting these as they move students to the developing of their translocal English-language writing resources, from a constrained starting point. He argues that it might be more productive to see social spaces as *contact zones* than as separated ones, with diverse semiotic resources in the same social space. Much depends, he says, on how people negotiate these mobile resources.

A view of practices which stresses a global logic appears to be both necessary and problematic in that such an approach sometimes finds it hard to pin down heterogeneous people, things and processes in a non-reductionist way. Featherstone

(2006) points to the indeterminacies that follow, paradoxically, from the concept of globalization as a socio-economic, political and cultural phenomenon of the contemporary world. He suggests that "the management of uncertainty, task predictability and orderly performances were much easier to facilitate in the 'relatively complex' organizations of modern industrial societies" (p. 391). A global society, on the other hand, he writes "entails a different form of complexity: one emanating more from microstructural arrangements that institute self-organizing principles and patterns" (p. 391). Wortham (2013) and Wortham and Rhodes (2013) offer an approach to the study of language, literacy and educational processes which rejects the macro/micro framework which attends to multiple scales with no single scale treated as foundational or determinant. Wortham shows how students and teachers position each other and construct identities that draw upon widely circulating sociohistorical models as well as locally developed categories of identity, and the curriculum itself. Wortham and Rhodes' study of one migrant girl shows her, her family and other actors combining heterogeneous resources in contingent ways, as she navigates an emergent literacy identity for herself. The *actual* global, in this view, is only apparent from focused research in particular settings that shows the creative or contingent reworking of received goods—language, literacy and socially available identity resources, in school contexts and outside of those.

Such arguments draw our attention to the ways that events and practices, as we discussed them earlier in this chapter, fit a macro-micro paradigm "with typical events supporting generalizations about the macro and interactional work exemplifying the micro" (Wortham 2013, p. 128), whereas, Wortham suggests, we need to look beyond the speech or literacy event, "studying the cross-event chains or trajectories required to explain social identification, cultural change, and ontogenesis (Agha and Wortham 2005)" (p. 129). He cautions that the researcher needs to pay attention to more than microlevel contexts of use because of the ways that social relationships are signalled by language and literacy use. Local contexts are not intelligible in themselves. But such research needs also to attend to the emergence of contingent and unexpected models, behaviours, and ways of relating.

Through the engaged work of Literacy Studies researchers over several decades (see Prinsloo and Baynham 2013) we have learnt to see school literacies as particular versions of socioculturally embedded activities and as socio-political, or ideological activities. Print literacy as an idea and an activity continues to rely on the interactive dynamics between teachers and students in schools within particular schooling systems to produce particular ways with writing. As Cook-Gumperz (2006, p. 4) showed, it is through the processes of "classroom exchanges, learning-group formation, through informal judgments and standardized tests and all the other evaluative apparatus of schooling that a *schoolled* literacy is formed". Children's and youths' digital literacy activities, however, raise new challenges. It would be hard to argue that schools are the gateway to digital literacies and technologies in anything like the way they have been access routes to respected forms of print literacy (Sefton-Green et al. 2009, p. 109). A distinctive feature of the digital literacy activities of children and youths is their "bottom-up" nature, in that young people tend to gain most of their experiences and knowledge in relating to digital technologies outside the for-

mal institutions of knowledge building. In the case of digital literacies, schooling has far less symbolic and actual control on their acquisition and use than has been the case with print literacies. Our brief engagement with children's engagements with digital media in Khayelitsha makes the point that researchers should be careful not to rush to judgment as to what pattern these 'bottom-up' processes follow across different contexts, nor what their consequences might be.

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Chapter 10 Shack Video Halls in Uganda as Youth Community/Literacy Learning and Cultural Interaction Sites

George Ladaah Openjuru and Stella Achen

Introduction

Uganda is one of the five East African Countries, the other four being Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Kenya. It is a landlocked country surrounded by South Sudan in the North, The Democratic Republic of Congo in the West, Tanzania in the South, and Kenya in the East. Uganda is a multilingual country with over 40 different languages. It is also a country where the use of Kiswahili is limited compared to all the other East African countries and English is the predominant language used for government business and daily life.

English and Education in Uganda

English is mostly learnt while at school and there are very limited or no formal arrangements for learning English outside of schools in Uganda. This is because English is the language of instruction (LOI) in Ugandan schools. However, a new policy has been put in place for the use of local language in the initial three years of primary school education, although the question of choice of local language is still a problem in some multilingual areas with both minority and majority populations (Ward et al. 2006). After the first three years of primary school education, the language of instruction changes to English and local language is studied as a subject. This continuous use of English for most of a person's school life is the only opportunity that a person has to gain English fluency. Those who are not able to stay in school long enough have no other opportunity to gain such proficiency in both spoken and written English communication. This means people who drop out of school

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