

The Interactional Experiences of English Language Learners in the Malay Community: A Malaysian Case Study

Joanne Rajadurai

Virginia International University, USA

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore how learners of English who desire mastery of their second language negotiate for access, participation, and acceptance in their various communities. To this end, it draws on the concept of communities of practice and constructivist notions of identity to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the process of adult second language learning beyond the classroom in non-native societies. By focusing on the situated experiences of a group of Malay learners gleaned through the use of first-person narratives in the form of student journals and focus group discussions, the study seeks insights into learners' beliefs and experiences as they negotiate their way through conflicting ideologies and practices in their world. Such stories, which are seldom heard and rarely analyzed, offer an important contribution to research on second language learning and teaching, and can help educators bridge the gap between classroom learning and real world experiences.

Key words: *identity, Malay learners of English, narratives*

Background

Issues of identity and the second language learner have been the subject of much study and debate in recent years. In current research practices, learning a second language is seldom simply regarded as a skill acquired through persistence and practice as was traditionally maintained. Instead, utilizing constructivist frameworks, scholars have highlighted the complex social interactions and power differentials that engage the identities of language learners. Many of these studies have investigated adult learners of English in the traditional native-speaker countries like Canada, the United States, Australia and others (e.g. Norton, 2000; Miller, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003; Morita, 2004; Haneda, 2005). There have been fewer attempts to study how learners of English in non-native countries construct and navigate their identities in multilingual contexts. If identities are conceptualised as fluid and multi-faceted within constructivism, and language regarded as the site of identity construction, then multicultural heterogeneous societies present particular challenges that merit further exploration (see Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

One such multi-ethnic, multi-lingual country is Malaysia: a post-colonial nation that has been categorised as an 'Outer Circle' country (Kachru, 1985). This label indexes Malaysia as a country where English has a long history of institutionalised functions and is used intranationally among fellow-citizens. The demographics of Malaysia show that the *Bumiputera*, the vast majority of whom are Malays, make up 65% of the population, the Chinese 26% and the Indians 7.7% (National Census, 2000). Consequently a number of languages flourish in the country, and these include Malay (the mother-tongue of most ethnic Malays and the national language), English, a number of Chinese dialects, Indian languages and other minority languages. In the midst of this complex linguistic setting, English commands considerable prestige, and demonstrates an impressive range of intra- and international uses.

This sets the sociolinguistic background for the present research study, which uses narrative accounts to explore the learning of English as a second language as a process of identity negotiation, and a struggle for participation, acceptance and legitimacy. This struggle is especially evident when it comes to the dominant ethnic group in Malaysia, the Malays, and particularly for those learners who seek higher levels of proficiency of the English language. Among the factors responsible for this are the historical resistance of the Malays towards the British colonial government and, by extension, the co-

lonial language, English, and its perceived threat to their own culture and language. In the words of the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamed (1986: 43), "In the struggle to uphold their language, the Malays were forced to oppose and cast aside the English language". Other studies have also demonstrated a deep-seated reluctance among Malays and Muslims to engage with the English language (Washima *et al.*, 1996; Ratnawati, 2005). Compounding the situation is the religious, cultural and linguistic identity ascribed to the Malays in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, which defines them as people who practice Islam and the Malay culture, and who speak the Malay language. If the Malay student's identity is interwoven with his or her medium of communication, how, where, when and with whom is he or she to use English, and what are its consequences?

As a public university lecturer in a program that trains Malay students to become proficient users and subsequently teachers of English, I have often been privy to my students' struggles. I have been allowed to enter into the inner world of their feelings, often of distress and despair at not being able to practice English in their home communities, and not being accepted as legitimate members of a new English-speaking community of Malaysians. There is a need to better understand how these learners and users of a second language participate and negotiate membership in their communities, both the L1 and the target language groups. The research questions that guided my inquiry are as follows: How do the ideologies and practices of the community hinder or facilitate learners' access to English? What kinds of responses or roles do these learners negotiate in the community? How do the opportunities and conflicts encountered impact upon learners' sense of identity?

To address these issues, the paper begins with a brief discussion of the communities of practice framework, and the constructivist exposition of identity. This is followed by a description of the research methodology, focusing on the case study design, techniques for triangulation, research instruments and data analysis. The paper then goes on to analyse how a group of Malay students from a TESL program in a university in Malaysia negotiated their participation and membership in their communities, and it concludes by considering the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings.

The theoretical framework

Communities of Practice

Unlike the conventional view of second language learning as the acquisition or internalisation of a body of linguistic knowledge, the community of practice perspective offers a different standpoint that foregrounds the social nature of language learning. Proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) working within an anthropological framework, it is mainly concerned with the relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs; a relationship they refer to as situated learning. Learning a language then is seen as a social process by which newcomers gradually move towards fuller participation in a given community's activities by interacting with more experienced community members. Lave and Wenger call this process 'legitimate peripheral participation'. Hence, it is through a process of legitimate peripheral participation that newcomers interact with old-timers in a given community setting, gain access to information, resources and opportunities for participation, become increasingly experienced in the practices that characterise that community, and gradually move towards fuller participation in that community. In this sense, if second language learners are to be successful, they have to be given sufficient legitimacy for potential membership, because "only with legitimacy can all their inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect or exclusion" (*ibid*: 101).

Over the years, this original model has been expanded to address the fact that at any given point in their lives, individuals participate in multiple communities (Wenger, 1998). These could include the classroom setting, the L1 community, the target language community, and even imagined communities (Anderson, 1991), defined as socially-constructed communities to which learners belong, to which they aspire and in which they invest their language learning behaviour (Murphey, Chen & Chen, 2005). This draws attention to the individual agency of speakers who navigate their way within and across communities, and it suggests that tensions may exist or emerge within communities (Haneda, 2005). To better consider these aspects, I now turn to recent work on identity.

Identity

In theorizing identity within constructivism, there is a clear move away from essentialist, unitary, static definitions; rather, identity is seen as constructed, fragmented, fluid and contradictory. In Wenger's (1998: 149) view, identity is described as "lived" and "becoming" through negotiated experience and participation with others. This complex relationship between the language learner and his social world is also captured by Norton (2000: 11): "When language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world". This stance recognizes that identity is not a given, priori-social fact; for learners of a second language, identity is routinely socially constructed from the roles, relationships, norms, discursive practices and expectations of the communities in which they participate.

On the one hand, L2 users' subject positions, defined as an intersection of factors that position individuals such as their race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other affiliations, can mediate their access to linguistic and interactional resources available in the L2 (Pavlenko, 2002). But, on the other hand, language learners are not passive recipients, nor are they held captive by ascribed identities and prior practices. On the contrary, they can actively engage with the world, position themselves and construct their own identities in interaction with others. Positioning, a process through which speakers adopt, negotiate, accommodate, challenge and resist representations, recognizes human agency as a key factor in second language learning. Studies (e.g. Norton, 2000; McKay and Wong, 1996) have demonstrated that L2 users can create new positions for themselves by reasserting their subjective positions, challenging the inequalities of power, and thus improve their interactional opportunities. Within this theoretical framework, learners of English in Malaysia are not merely learning a linguistic system. They are learning a diverse set of sociocultural practices and negotiating multiple identities that are best understood in the context of wider relations of power.

Research methodology

Research Design

This paper explores the struggles of Malay learners of English in Malaysia and their complex negotiation of identities through the narratives they use to describe themselves. In this sense, this study centralises the perspectives and perceptions of the learners and their stories of language learning in their social context. A multiple case study approach was employed to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of learners' lived experiences and perspectives. Triangulation was used to enhance the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the study. This involved the use and analysis of twelve case study journals, as well as data from focus group discussions. However, in the interest of space, in this paper only data from two cases are presented, although the overall interpretation draws on the entire corpus of data.

Participants

In line with the aims of the research, three main criteria were used for the selection of cases. First, participants had to be students of Malay ethnicity, second, they had to have attained a certain level of proficiency in English, and third, they should have the desire to use English in a variety of contexts outside the academic setting. These criteria were suitably met in a group of Malay TESL students of a public university since they could be expected to have some proficiency in English and would be more motivated to use English in interactions in the real world, given that English is their major.

In order to select the participants for this research project, the researcher used a simple questionnaire that requested students to report on their use of English, their English achievement, and their willingness to participate in the research project. Sixteen participants were initially selected for this study. However, four students who participated in the first phase, i.e. the diary study, but not the second, i.e. the focus group sessions, were not included in the final analysis of data. Hence, twelve cases were studied and their data analysed qualitatively. Throughout this paper, pseudonyms are used to represent the participants. However, in the interest of space, only detailed data from 2 representative cases are reported, although the overall interpretation draws on the entire corpus of data.

Data Collection

The first phase of data collection involved the use of student journals, which offer immense advantages. Pavlenko (2002) argues persuasively that they allow for learners' voices to be heard on a par with those of researchers. As a result, researchers can gain rare insights into learners' motivations, investments, struggles, losses and gains, as well as into the language ideologies that affect their learning trajectories. There is also evidence that the telling of learning experiences is in itself empowering as it offers learners the opportunity to engage in reflection, and provides an avenue to express new selves and longings previously considered untellable (McMahill, 2001).

In this study, a group of TESL students were asked to keep a reflective diary over a period of 3 – 8 months to record their experiences and feelings as they sought to learn and use English in daily life. Participants were particularly encouraged to write during semester breaks when they left the university and went back to their respective home communities. All diaries were collected at the end of the first data collection phase and analysed.

The second method of data collection involved the use of focus groups. Different from group interviewing, focus groups rely on insight and data produced by the interaction between participants: it enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences. Goss and Leinback (1996) point out that the opportunity to have their experiences validated, to be valued as experts, and to be given the chance to work collaboratively with fellow-students as well as researchers can be empowering for many participants.

Two focus group sessions were held, one with 5 students and the other with 7 students. Each lasted for about an hour and a half, with the researcher acting as moderator. All sessions were tape-recorded, and the recorded data were later transcribed orthographically and analysed qualitatively.

Data Analysis

For each case study, all entries in the student journal were read carefully and repeatedly, as were the transcripts of the focus group sessions. Following the tradition in qualitative research, data analysis was primarily inductive: categories and themes emerged mainly from the collected data, and preliminary hypotheses about the settings and participants were devised, tested against further data, and revised accordingly. 'Within-case analysis' (Merriam, 1998) led to the creation of a comprehensive profile of each student, and 'cross-case analysis' led to the formulation of conceptual categories and constructs, patterns and relations that revolved around themes like opportunities, conflicts, strategies, and so on. This formed the basis for the reports drawn up. The next section includes a number of excerpts from the journal entries as well as from the focus group discussions of two participants, one from each of the focus groups, to allow for an examination of the narratives these learners use to describe themselves, and also to enable the participants' voices to be brought into the analysis and text. All verbatim quotes, grammatical or otherwise, from the diary entries and interviews are italicised in this paper.

Case Study 1: Nora

Nora is a 20-year old TESL student, who lives in a small village, a distance away from the urban areas. As she describes it in her journal: I live in a community where English is not spoken at all. The community perceives English as inappropriate and it is not valued at all. When we speak English here, we are seen as snobbish. It is very hard for me to begin to speak English here ... the community think that speaking English is a form of showing off. Sometimes some of the people are offended when you speak English to them because they think that you are underestimating them ... they perceive speaking English as a form of rudeness. In one of her journal entries, Nora writes about how she attracts stares from her neighbours or even sales people in shops whenever she speaks in English. They look at me as if I was some kind of alien. Reading through the pages of her journal, it becomes obvious that Nora has been scarred by the negative reactions she has received. Sometimes, just thinking of their reactions to me speaking English makes my stomach ache. Nora's narratives echo the stories of the other participants in the study. For these Malay learners, the path towards learning and speaking English in their home communities, and in society at large is a lonely and difficult one and; the struggle is genuine.

It is not only among strangers that Nora feels alienated; even her friends give her

the cold shoulder for speaking in English with them. She records that these hurdles and the feelings of uncomfortableness between me and my friends ... are very hard for me to handle. It is true that speaking English can alter one's relationships ... I just don't want my friends to think I've changed to a snobbish and arrogant person. These conflicted inner desires portray Nora's investment in the target language. She feels that she needs to use English as much as possible to gain proficiency and mastery of it. It is to her credit that she does not simply give up and resort to using solely Malay in order to avoid social stigmatisation and the heartache of rejection. It is hard but I will do my best to speak English, at the same time, not being perceived as a rude person to the people here ... I'm prepared to face these kinds of situations when I speak English. Sometimes, I think that when you are speaking English, it is as if you are in a battle where people all around are against you.

Nora further notes that her ethnicity as Malay and her religious affiliations as a Muslim only add to her problems in using English in the community. She observes that because her mother is Chinese and looks Chinese (albeit adopted into a Malay family, and a practicing Muslim), her use of English is rarely questioned by others. Articulating a view that received support from other participants in the focus group session, she asserts that if one is Chinese or thought to be a Chinese or Indian, then speaking English is certainly acceptable, but not if one is Malay. Moreover, Nora also expresses the belief that her tudung (the head covering worn by some Muslim women) also seems to dispossess her of the right to converse in English. This assessment was again met with resounding support from others in the focus group, who added that the head covering also seemed to erect an immediate barrier when in the company of others, including non-Malays, sending out signals that they should not or could not speak in English. In a remark tinged with irony, Nora quips: so basically, looks do matter when it comes to speaking English in Malaysia.

Case Study 2: Farah

Farah is a 22-year old TESL student in her final year as an undergraduate. The first entry in her journal reads as follows: Holidays started, and I waited for the time when the opportunity for using English would occur. And I waited, and waited ... only then I realised that that has a small chance of ever happening. For Farah, once she had left the TESL academic setting the chances for a conversation in English in her home community were few and far between. Musing on this in the pages of her journal, she identifies several factors that she feels are to blame for this state of affairs. For starters, she notes that, by and large, the younger generation of Malays adamantly refuses to speak in English. To illustrate this, she writes about her younger cousins: Even when I speak to them in English, they answer in Malay. Their English ends the moment they say "Thank you, teacher" at the end of class.

Another observation that Farah records is that there is an unspoken but widely accepted axiom that Malays should only speak Malay, and in many of the entries in her journal, she points to an unseen but very real force that coerces them into conforming to this expected behaviour. She writes about a time when she called McDonald's delivery service, and started speaking in English to make her order: Then suddenly I switched to Malay. I don't know why but when I realised that the operator was Malay, I started to get self-conscious and somehow could only speak in Malay ... This always happens ... People – myself included - have this perception that Malays only speak in Malay. They are not comfortable speaking in English. Farah maintains that the other ethnic groups in the country are aware of this too. She recalls an occasion when a Chinese salesgirl was speaking in English while promoting her product to the customers around. But when she turned to me, she automatically spoke in Malay. Analysing these incidents a little more critically, Farah writes that they seem to convey the impression that Malays can't speak English. As much as she takes exception to these unfair generalisations, she also concedes that there is a great deal of truth in such perceptions. The truth is, we do not want to speak English ... So, perhaps people should not be so mad when others say that Malays can't speak English. What do you expect people are going to say when you don't speak it? That we're silent English geniuses? Perceptions, sometimes, arise from our own behaviour.

Farah's journal musings paint a picture of community perceptions and practices. Even in encounters and occasions when English could and would normally be used, the opportunity would likely be withdrawn if one interactant is Malay, thus effectively removing English from spheres of interaction involving Malay learners. This could be a signal of respect for the speaker's first language – Malay - which is also the national language. But, it could also be an unconscious face-saving gesture to spare the interactant the embarrassment of expected incompetence: of not being able to understand or respond in English. It is also suggestive of how the doors to new communities and practices are barred to some, and how membership in these communities is structured and conditional.

Farah declares that it is particularly the Malay community that refuses to use or entertain English as a means of communication. Farah has discovered that her desire to use the English language has not gone down well with her peers and elders in her home community. They say, you know, I'm such a show off, and that kind of stuff ... like this girl is either trying to, you know, trying to act as if she's better than her mates ... it makes it very hard. She has learnt the hard way that her home community is resistant towards uses of English despite acknowledging its importance. She records: It looks like the only 'people' I can speak English to without being judged are myself, my cat and my plants!

Students, like Farah and Nora, who desperately want to use English in the real world in order to develop competence and become part of a new community of practice need to navigate their way carefully and adroitly through a minefield of conflicting ideologies and practices. These students' accounts foreground the ambiguities and complexities in the learning process for the adult Malay learner of English: on the one hand they believe that extensive practice of the target language are essential to its mastery, yet on the other hand, they live in home communities that resist and oppose English use.

Discussion

Having explored the narratives of two of the case studies investigated, I now draw together the various strands and consider the findings of the study in relation to my initial research questions.

Community ideologies and practices

All twelve case studies analysed repeatedly pointed to the dearth of opportunities for Malay students to practice the English language outside the classroom setting and in their respective home communities, and the cold reception accorded to learners who try. They were often thought of as rude, offensive, showing off, patronizing, and arrogant. In a community that prioritises collective identity, loyalty and traditional values, the learning trajectories and aspirations of these students were often marginalised, ignored and constructed from an indigenous point of view, resulting in their new, evolving identities as bilinguals - speakers of Malay and English - being snubbed or spurned.

Not only were the opportunities to use English in the students' home communities denied to them, but there is also evidence that they were kept as outsiders or at best on the peripheries of the target language community of English-speaking Malaysians. The data suggest that the English-speaking society in Malaysia is not always tolerant or welcoming to Malay learners' attempts to interact in English. Instead, there is a tendency to switch to speaking in Malay with them, unless they have first demonstrated that they are indeed proficient and comfortable in English. This also means that a typical learner, lacking the necessary proficiency is likely to be dismissed, neglected or excluded from participation. In such cases, the power relations in this community of practice will have served to prevent his or her access to crucial resources necessary for legitimate peripheral participation.

Learners' responses

In order to deal with the practices and perceptions in their environment, several responses and strategies can be discerned among the participants of this study. Students sometimes limited their English use to the sheltered confines of the TESL institutional community, where they knew they would be accepted and accommodated. This was their place of refuge.

Students' journal entries also revealed a disproportionate use of receptive learning strategies, like reading and listening to English songs, given the lack of opportunities and encouragement for more productive language skills to be employed in their home communities. In fact, some students wrote about using rather strange and unusual tactics: using English to talk to their cats, to their plants, and even to themselves! While these may seem rather bizarre, they are indicative of a growing sense of desperation and deprivation felt by these learners over the lack of opportunities to converse in English during their semester breaks when they left the academic network and went home to live in their respective communities. At the same time, it also signals these learners' refusal to be silenced, and their inventive ways to keep their English alive.

Another strategy that these Malay TESL students had developed in the face of overwhelmingly negative reactions to their English use was to position others in rather less-than-flattering ways. In their journals and interviews, these learners repeatedly verbalised the generalisation that in Malaysian so-



ciety *Indians and Chinese speak English, but Malays speak Malay*. They also expressed their belief, tinged with discernible disgust, that speaking in poor, broken or halting English was typical of the Malay community. Furthermore, the participants had formed rather pejorative views of those who avoided speaking in English or who denigrated those who did speak in English. In both the focus group discussions and the journal entries, such segments of their community were frequently labelled *conservative, very Malay, nationalists, close-minded, rural, village-ish, uneducated* and even *mad*. While these glib assertions and stereotypes may derive from a sense of self-preservation and act as a defence mechanism against perceived threats to their self-image, they also unintentionally and unfortunately function to reinforce charges of arrogance and separateness, and furthermore, they gloss over the reproduction of inequity.

Learners' Identities

One aspect that emerged as significant in the analysis of the data was how the opportunities to use English were related to the identities that learners construct and make salient at different times. All participants in the study agreed that their position as TESL students was a facilitating feature as there was greater tolerance of their forays into English use. The community was more inclined to forgive and overlook their penchant to use English, attributing this to their status as TESL students. Others were regarded as English teachers by their communities, albeit pre-service ones, and this too lent some latitude, paving the way for their use of English in certain domains in the community.

On the other hand, students unhesitatingly pointed to their ethnicity as the biggest obstacle to their ability and opportunity to practice English in their communities. *Malays are expected to speak Malay* seemed to be the oft-repeated mantra. Aside from ethnicity, religion was identified as an important factor as students related incident after incident when they were shunned and called *kaffir* (infidels, or un-Islamic) for speaking in English. The other associated feature that functioned to constrain the female participants was the scarf that some of them used as part of their Islamic beliefs. Female students who donned the scarf claimed that it seemed to strip them of the will and right to speak in English.

The study thus problematises the position of Malay learners of English in Malaysia, raising questions about the conditions under which they can speak English, the manner in which their identities are constructed by others, and the ways in which they perceive themselves, their histories and their desires for the future. These students wrote and talked about their longing for communities where their ethnic, religious and linguistic identities could live in harmonious interaction, and where they could display competence in English while simultaneously affirming their mother tongue, religious beliefs, local affiliations and national histories. It may be said that the case studies reveal in a compelling way that these students' investment in English is an investment in new identities and possibilities for the future.

Implications

This research has benefited from the framework predicated on multiplicity that has facilitated the examination of the ambiguities and complexities in the second language learning process in multicultural societies. By recasting language attitudes as language ideologies, the negative attitudes of the Malay community towards these English-speaking young adult Malay students can be explained through the ways in which social practices even in today's world routinely present English as foreign, pagan and even evil, and its speakers as rude, snobbish, arrogant, un-Malay and un-Islamic (see also Ratnawati, 2005). It suggests that perhaps to a greater degree than is true for the other ethnic groups in the country, the category 'Malay' is still moored as an essential identity implicating non-negotiable linguistic, religious and cultural loyalties. Such a stance constructs speakers' use of their L1 as unmarked and normal, and naturalises the connections between language, national origin, culture and ethnicity.

This paper also contends that it is only through an adequate understanding of the everyday struggles of learners as they use the second language outside the safe places of the classroom and seek to become legitimate bilinguals, and members of multiple communities of practice that pedagogy can begin to address their concerns, and focus on ways to help them respond to and act in appropriate and effective ways. By exposing the lack of space in public discourses for Malay learners to use English, the paper suggests that for many learners the classroom may be the only place where any English use takes place, and this may prove to be inadequate to develop higher levels of competence in the language. If proficiency in a second language is understood as a process of becoming a full mem-



ber of a new community of practice, then this requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, and to information, resources and opportunities for participation beyond the ESL classroom. There is also some evidence that access to target language speakers who form a new community of practice is also guarded, mediated and sometimes altogether blocked. These factors serve to foreground the problems of access to linguistic resources, and call for an examination of various gate-keeping ideologies and practices linked to ethnicity, religion, class, gender and others in Malaysian society.

Nevertheless, the research also clearly shows that for the Malay TESL students studied, it is the classroom, and the corridors of the TESL site that provide a supportive environment for practising the target language. Given this insight, learning institutions need to provide 'safe houses' (Canagarajah, 1997) for students to experiment, make mistakes and practise using the L2 without the fear of being judged, scorned or derided. At the same time, teachers need to help prepare their learners for life in the real world. Students need to be equipped with some degree of perseverance, mettle, and the will to succeed, and navigate their way in the various communities of practice – an undertaking that has been shown to be both complex and tricky. On the one hand, teachers can help empower learners to position themselves differently and to reframe their relationships in order to construct powerful identities for themselves, and thus claim the right to speak. On the other hand, learners need to develop and exercise the sensitivity to foreground and downplay certain aspects of their identities in the light of conflicting forces, and thus calibrate their identities according to the social constraints most salient on any occasion. Perhaps teachers might encourage learners to think of themselves as living in multiple communities, including the classroom community, the L1 community and the target language community. As teachers help learners interrogate their investments in their various communities, with their unique possibilities and limitations, they may simultaneously address the risks and sacrifices of participation and of membership in their various communities of practice.

References

- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York: Verso.
- Canagarajah, S. (1997) Safe houses in the contact zone: Coping strategies of African American students in the academy. *Composition and Communication*, 48(2): 173-196.
- Goss, J.D. and Leinback, T.R. (1996) Focus groups as alternative research practice. *Area*, 28(2): 115-123.
- Haneda, M. (2005) Investing in foreign-language writing: a study of two multicultural learners. *The Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 4(4): 269-290.
- Kachru, B. B. (1985) Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk and H.G. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11-36). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahathir, M. (1986) *The challenge*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.
- McKay, S. and Wong, S. (1996) multiple discourses, multiple identities: investment and agency in second-language learning among Chinese adolescent immigrant students. *Harvard Educational Review* 66(3), 577-608.
- McMahill, C. (2001) Self-expression, gender And community: A Japanese feminist English class. In A.Pavlenko, A. Blackledge, I. Piller, and M. Teutsch-Dwyer (Eds.), *Multilingualism, second language learning and gender* (pp. 133-174). Berlin: deGruyter.
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jose-Bass Publishers.
- Miller, J. (2000) Language use, identity, and social interaction: migrant students in Australia. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 33(1): 69-100.
- Morita, N. 2004 Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities, *TESOL Quarterly* 38(4): 573-603

- Murphey Murphey, T., Chen, J. & Chen, L. (2005) Learners' constructions of identities and imagined communities. In P. Benson and D. Nunan (Eds.), *Learners' stories: Difference and diversity in language learning* (pp. 83-100). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- National Census (2000 *Press Statement - Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics Report*. Retrieved on 28 January, 2003 from <http://www.statistics.gov.my/> English/pressdemo.htm.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. London: Longman.
- Pavlenko, A. (2002) Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in second language learning and use. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Portraits of the L2 user* (pp. 275-302). Clevedon Hall: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Pavlenko, A. (2003) I never knew I was a bilingual. reimagining teacher identities in TESOL, *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 2(4): 251-268.
- Pavlenko, A. and Blackledge, A. (2004) Introduction: new theoretical approaches to the study of negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts. In A. Pavlenko and A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts* (pp. 1-34). Clevedon Hall: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Ratnawati, M. (2005). English and Islam: a clash of civilizations?', *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 4(2): 103-118.
- Washima, C.D., Harahita, A.H., & Naysmith, J. (1996). English and Islam in Malaysia: resolving the Tension. *World Englishes* 15(2): 225-234.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Community of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.