

Epilogue

Hybridizing scapes and the production of new identities

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Applied linguistics is usually on the receiving end of theory. Theories developed in other fields – such as *communities of practice*, feminist post-structuralism, sociocultural theory, and post-colonial theory – often provide departure points for research questions, and they often help to explain the findings at a more macrolevel. This book arguably continues this tradition to a large degree, for it was inspired by theories of the self and identity, and because it is organized around Appadurai's work on scapes and globalization. Scapes allow us to argue that the global flows of people, technology, money, and mediated cultures are shaping the identities of more and more people around the globe in similar ways. However, the work presented in this volume also seeks to contribute an empirical basis to research on identity in applied linguistics as it relates to new millennium globalization. As the detailed case studies and ethnographic approaches across the volume show, when ideoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ethnoscapes, and mediascapes intersect and collide, the result is that new contexts for identity formation are born.

As Saxena and Omoniyi (2010) argue, Appadurai's work may at first be seen as supportive of the McDonalidization thesis (Ritzer 1993) of globalization, which posits increasing cultural and linguistic homogenization around the globe. This is a reasonable claim since the five scapes he outlines emanate from the west, and because these global flows are theorized to be increasingly salient in people's lives across the globe. This relates well to Held et al.'s (1999) discussion of the *hyperglobalist* vision of globalization, where western forms of politics, culture, and media are spreading steadily across the globe. However, as the content of this volume repeatedly illustrates, these flows are not always or entirely west-based. Moreover, language learners often transform and reshape these flows, incorporating them into their own local contexts, and they also create their own new spaces for negotiating identity amidst these flows. Hence, the volume argues strongly for the *transformationalist* approach to globalization, which asserts that we are currently

experiencing a period of significant reshaping not witnessed before in the history of global interconnectivity (Castells 1997).

In asking “what’s new?” about identity construction in the new millennium, then, the volume directs us to focus our attention centrally on context – what is *underneath* and *around* language learning and use – that allows for new identities to develop. The answer, as I see it, is globalizing contexts in the form of shifting and intersecting scapes. Across the chapters of this book, the authors show how global and local flows of people, ideologies, and media create new contexts for identity formation. In accord with Pennycook (2007), who writes about Global Englishes within the context of such globalizing flows, the research presented here strengthens the point that “we need to be move beyond arguments about homogeneity or heterogeneity, or imperialism and nation states, and instead focus on translocal and transcultural flows” (p. 6) as opportunities for constructing the self. In Appadurai’s terms, this means exploring how various scapes are intersecting in new ways, investigating how the scapes themselves have changed, and examining the consequences for language learning and identity formation.

Part I explored how the ideoscapes of political and cultural borders in the form of nation states and “target” communities are being revised because of the changing ethnoscape of many transnationals. Moving past ideologies of assimilation, acculturation, and integration, the four chapters in Part I indicate that learners are finding alternative zones for identity construction, including in-between identities and transnational identities that are more closely tied to others who share their experiences, rather than to members of the dominant culture. Instead of searching for belonging in “target” communities, many of the individuals depicted in chapters 2–5 find a sense of belonging in communities made up of transnational people like themselves, and through maintaining connections with people from their prior places of residence.

What does this say about shifting scapes? It calls attention to shifting attitudes and perspectives among transnationals. While “classic migration” can still be found in many nations, which refers to people crossing borders primarily to improve their economic prospects, leaving their pasts behind them in the process, new theories of migration have developed in the past decade to account for “multilevel migration systems” (e.g., Faist 2000; Castles and Miller 2003, as discussed in Block 2007: 31). The multilevel migration system examines the relevance of global economics at the macrolevel and the desire for different life conditions at the microlevel. In addition, however, we have the mesolevel, which focuses on the social ties that migrants have with others who share their experiences in the communities where they reside.

As Block (2007) summarizes, “there are progressively more and more . . . individuals who in much of their lives feel more allegiance and affinity to these communities than they do to the national states in which they reside” (p. 32). Such changes indicate shifts in the affiliations people have with the concept of nationality and cultural borders as a focal point in identity formation in the new millennium. These changes also indicate that the ideoscapes connected to the concept of the nation-state are shifting, at least for many transnationals.

Part II examined whether and to what degree sojourners and expatriates come to inhabit the *third space* (Bhabha 1994) of intercultural awareness, ultimately leading to the development of an *intercultural self* (Byram 2008). Different from transnationals, who often shift their primary residency in a more permanent manner, the individuals studied in this Part of the volume are temporary sojourners whose engagements with other cultures and languages are central to their objectives and goals as travelers. Chapters 6–8 demonstrated how intercultural perspectives developed among learners as a result of participating in the ethnoscape of border crossing for the purpose of study abroad and work, where they encountered ideoscapes that differed from their own. We also saw that some individuals resisted the development of an intercultural perspective, and remained tightly identified with their national cultures, thus leading to a lack of language learning opportunity. On the other hand, those who decentered from their home language and culture typically experienced deeper opportunities for language learning and self-development. Rather than having merely cross-cultural experiences, or developing bicultural perspectives, with worldviews neatly compartmentalized by culture, language, and place, the chapters in this section showed that many sojourners developed new viewpoints as a result of contact with another cultural group. In this case, the act of joining ethnoscapes as sojourners provided the means by which ideoscapes could be altered.

Of course, it makes sense that cultural contact could lead to such an outcome. However, in the new millennium, it is important to note the increasing numbers of individuals who contribute to the fluidity of the ethnoscape through study abroad and expatriate living and who potentially form their own intercultural spaces in the process. For example, students who study abroad from the United States have increased fourfold since the 1980s (US Department of State 2009), and programs in the United Kingdom are now being established to provide British university students with the opportunity to study for up to two years (Paton 2011) in BRIC¹ nations, indicating a connection with the global finanscape of the new millennium as well. Similarly, the number of expatriate workers from western nations in developing

countries has steadily increased since the economic reforms of the 1980s began to create development jobs for many foreign workers and free market economics cleared the way for multinational corporations to take root around the world. More research is needed on the language practices of expatriate populations in all contexts, particularly in nations with high numbers of expatriates such as Dubai, where expatriates outnumber UAE nationals by 80 percent, and Singapore, where over one-third of the population are foreigners.² One intriguing example of such an expatriate third space can be found on a Facebook group titled “Stuff Expat Aid Workers Like,” where one of the posts states: “*the expat hierarchy: never being seen in public with english teachers or volunteers.*” Such are the indicators of a clearly defined identity without reference to borders or cultural connections.

Part III of the volume explored what new identities are formed as a result of experiences in the mediascape. The global spread of popular culture and increased access to the Internet have been central to producing new spaces for new millennium identities to develop. The consumption and appropriation of popular culture and greater participation in cyberspace-based social practices have given individuals more opportunities to connect their imagined selves with opportunities for additional language learning and use. As Appadurai (1996) writes, “The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order” (p. 31). New identities become available to learners as a result of the new spaces afforded to them in their imaginations, and in actual spaces – whether online (as in the case of fanfiction writers, as discussed by Black) or in face-to-face encounters with others who share their zeal for particular practices (as in the case of immigrant African students in Canada discussed by Ibrahim). As several of the chapters in this Part have shown, new identities can also become available due to conscious efforts on the part of educators to invite the mediascape – and its attendant opportunities for facilitating identity construction-into the formal scape of the language classroom.

Though many language teachers often use pop culture and the Internet as ways to motivate students or provide them with authentic materials, a concentrated focus on the mediascape as a mode for learning points to a new direction in language education. Direct engagements with the mediascape mean that educators are engaging with learners’ identities first, rather than primarily with the target languages, as key considerations in the language classroom. In doing so, learners and their teachers can imagine language learning as the negotiation of the self through language, in addition to the acquisition of linguistic competence. This change is in line with Kramsch’s

(2006: 251) assertion that “it is no longer appropriate to give students a tourist-like competence to exchange information with native speakers of national languages within well-defined national cultures . . . [Since] language learners are not just communicators and problem solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities,” they should acquire *symbolic competence*, or the “ability to produce and exchange symbolic goods in the complex global context in which we live today.”

The limits of changing scapes

Thus far, my discussion of identity paints a picture in which language learners enjoy a great deal of agency in their identity construction and use of new languages. Across the chapters, we have seen that learners may be drawn toward non-standard and hybrid forms of language because of the identity affiliations they have with those forms of speech. We also see that learners create their own new communities of practice with their own norms for interaction. However, as Blommaert (2010) reminds us, linguistic resources still carry with them associated socioeconomic values shaped by their spatial distribution, and the result is that transcultural flows and their consequential linguistic forms are constrained by the sociolinguistics of mobility. Despite the liberating elements of forging new identities in new spaces, Blommaert soberly points out that languages used in periphery, contact zone, or transcultural contexts are often devalued vis-à-vis center, standardized varieties and hence, they are treated as deficient. Though “peripheral normativity” (p. 23) might be achieved as a result of language development in new identity spaces, such use of language outside of the periphery or transcultural context would likely be deemed “errorful” or otherwise problematic. Hence, Blommaert encourages us to view the transformationalist thesis of globalization with some precautions. Even as continued mobility and global flows produce new forms of language, culture, and social life in the new millennium, modern ideologies about standard varieties of language, national identities, and clear cut notions of ethnic and cultural identity will still continue to circulate.

The point to be made here is that while the hybridization of scapes arguably provides learners with the opportunity to adapt their new languages for their own purposes, appropriating them for their own local contexts, in the future, we must explore what happens when such learners use their languages in contexts where modernist ideologies operate in powerful ways. We know

that learners might localize languages at the linguistic level, imbuing them with their own cultural nuances, or blending additional languages such as English into their existing linguistic repertoires. However, how such adaptations and appropriations play out in conversations with L1, monolingual language users remains to be investigated. Similarly, we know that learners are free to become members of online communities where additional languages are used in context-specific ways. Transnationals may also use the Internet and other resources to maintain ties with fellow globe-trotters and with friends and family, and they may also forge their own transnational communities on the ground, where they live and work among others who share their first languages and cultures. The issue to explore in the future is whether and to what degree additional language users can – or even need to – move between appropriated forms of language and identity and more traditional forms of communicative competence that are more rigidly tied to the notion of a concrete “target” community with a narrower set of notions about language and identities.

Notes

1. Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
2. United States Library of Congress. 2007. Country Profile: United Arab Emirates (UAE).
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/UAE.pdf>;
<http://www.justlanded.com>