

Description (1459 words):

The empirically driven multidisciplinary study presented in this proposal takes a *socioculturally oriented post/decolonial* perspective on language, identity and learning. It is framed at the intersections of Communication Studies, Literacy Studies and Educational Sciences traditions on the one hand, and the identity research domains of Deaf Studies, Gender Studies and Ethnicity Studies on the other. My interest in this proposal is twofold: first, I will make visible the work that individuals and institutions “do” inside and outside institutional settings in a global North context and contrast this with data from a global South setting. Second, my interests relate to illustrating how analyses across time and geopolitical spaces allows for revisiting the ways in which language categories get *talked-and-written-into-being* and how identity positions and culture become framed in and through social practices and textual accountings. Thus, focusing upon representations of the analysis of the data itself constitutes an important way to make visible some significant issues in the Language and Educational Sciences.

The research presented in the paper has a multidisciplinary and multi-field focus and displays an interest in everyday life and social practices that can be characterised by the use of more than one language variety, modality or register. Conceptual ideas that arise from explorations based upon empirical analysis of *situated* and *distributed* bi/multilingual oral talk, signed interactions and literacy communication are discussed. Using *social action perspectives* on language varieties and identity positions, analytical findings from traditionally segregated fields of study are juxtaposed. An overarching concern here is framed by the continuing dominance of structural linguistic positions that bear upon educational settings generally and didactical thinking particularly, especially in geopolitical settings like Sweden since the 1990s.

A key theoretical idea that frames this study derives from the mediational role attributed to cultural tools that have emerged phylogenetically and are appropriated ontogenetically (Säljö 2005, Wertsch 1998, Vygotsky 1934/1962). The recognition accorded to the symbiotic relationship between cultural tools, including language – the “tool of tools” – and humans in concert with one another, accounts for the composite (and thus hyphenated) concepts, seen in sociocultural writings. Here the *bounded nature* of individuals, communities, technologies is challenged analytically through the explicit focus upon the irreducible inter-connections of humans and mediational means or cultural tools. Learning and communication, encapsulated in the hyphenated concept “individual(s)-acting/operating-with-mediational-means” (Wertsch, 1998:24), gives rise to an important *analytical-methodological stance* significant to the analysis here: in order to understand languaging, including identity, the research enterprise needs to focus (in a parallel irreducible manner) on the concert of individuals-in-(inter)action-with-tools across scales. Naturally occurring *languaging* instead of language or some attribute like functional dis/ability, place of residence, gender, or elicited information from actors (eg., interview data), thus become the irreducible unit-of-analysis, at micro, meso and macro-ethnographic scales of this attention.

An overarching aim in this study is to present explorations of bi/multilingualism *from bi/multilingual multimodal perspectives*. Focusing the ways in which individuals' *language*, in public spaces, schools and work spaces, makes visible the performative work that participants (and institutions) do with semiotic resources. Language is empirically accounted for not as the sole property of an individual, community or geopolitical state, but rather as an intrinsic performatory dimension of both *interlinked language varieties and modalities* and *humans in concert with tools* in face-to-face, textually, including digitally mediated spaces. Focusing social practices – *what* gets communicated and the *ways* in which the same occurs – allows for problematizing dominant hegemonic epistemologies related to language, identity and learning.

This proposal builds upon juxtaposing data from three large ethnographic projects at the CCD research group at Örebro University, Sweden (www.oru.se/humes/ccd). The micro, meso and macro scale analysis builds upon (i) video-recordings of *mundane activities*, (ii) *diaries*, (iii) *data-prompted discussions* and (iv) *archives and policy data* related to institutions in the geopolitical spaces of Sweden and Mumbai, India where individuals have access to a number of language varieties. Furthermore, mundane oral, written and signed data from public spaces in these two geopolitical contexts are scrutinized. The aim of bringing together a diverse sets of data in the analysis is to highlight the incongruence that has emerged in previous studies from these separate ethnographic projects between (i) individuals and institutional *accountings* in a global North setting (as opposed to individuals talk and institutional accountings in a global South context), and (ii) the *performance* of language, identity and culture in the global North setting (as opposed to individuals and institutional accountings of language, identity and culture in the global North setting).

Alternative decolonial vantage positions together with multisite, multi-scale data from the three ethnographic projects center stage *othering* through “isms” and some of its related metaphors like bi/multi/plurilingualism, multiculturalism, “superdiversity” that currently collate towards reinforcing oppressive boundaries that produce newer “webs-of-understandings” in the Language and Educational Sciences (Bagga-Gupta 2012a). Together with an “oral language bias” in academic reporting (Bagga-Gupta 2012b), these webs-of-understandings reinforce dominant monolingual-monomodality positions in addition to monological essentialistic colonial perspectives on language, identity and learning. The analysis highlights that ways of conceptualizing, reporting and “talking about bi/multilingualism” and “diversity” are not in sync with mundane languaging or ways-of-being-with-words, or peoples engagement in everyday “bi/multilingual communication” inside and outside institutional settings. The findings have major relevance for reframing both educational as well as societal agendas in the global North, but also in the global South, not least given the increasing flows of intellectual ideas from the North to the South.

In other words, the study presented in this proposal challenges dominating understandings of language, identity and culture generally, including the organization of “special” support for “immigrant” and “special education” adults and children in the global North more specifically. Issues are also raised regarding the “technification” of language and diversity.

Evidence presented questions the simplistic positions and problematic webs-of-understandings that frame mono-bi-multilingualism and mono-bi-multiculturalism in the global North. Providing emic understandings of how accountings constitute a core dimension of “collective remembering” (Wertsch 2002) of “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991), the paper illustrates “alternative voices” (Hasnain et al 2013) in the Language and Educational Sciences (Bagga-Gupta 2013, 2014). This endeavor calls for a major shift in analytical perspectives, viewings from decolonial positions, instead of the dominant viewings that build upon Eurocentric northern hegemonies that currently frame discourses of globalization. The work presented here highlights concerns regarding established concepts like “bilingualism”, “codes”, “superdiversity” and suggests more emic and relevant alternatives like “chaining”, “linguaging”, “fluidity” and “visual orientation” that emerge from micro, meso and macro analysis of empirical data from ongoing and concluded projects.

While an “imagined and pure homogeneity” with regards to both language and identity are privileged in policy in the global North setting of Sweden, understanding linguistic competencies and language teaching in educational settings on the one hand and linguaging on the other hand are very different phenomena. There thus exists a tension between human beings *ways-of-being-with-words* i.e. their actions and orientations in social practices and human beings *ways of understanding* and conceptualising *humanhood-humanness* on the one hand and *mono-bi-multilingualism* in educational settings on the other. The work presented here furthermore contributes to the academic domain of bi/multilingual research *from bi/multilingual perspectives*. This adds to my specific long term interest in highlighting the role of research and its discourses in the reproduction of selective understandings related to language generally and language learning specifically.

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