

evidence in relation to the outcomes from this kind of bilingual education (Krashen 1999). I fear the same will evolve here. One Literacy says that to be equal minorities must be like the rest, part of One Australia. But surely the condition of sameness for in exchange for equality is truly an 'unacceptably low standard' given the reality of difference; and doomed to failure given the pervasive association of social background factors with educational attainments.

WHAT IS ONE LITERACY'S PROBLEM?

All languages are what English is: forms of speech and community expressed in practices of communication which are possible to be written down and that have a possible kind of condensation in script and text. More than one is better than one.

Critical literacy theorists are strenuous in their arguments about the socially transformative potential of critical literacy; arguing that literacy teaching which focusses on code-breaking literacy is basal in pedagogy as well as in social ambition. We can extend this to the logically doubly socially transformative potential of intellectualised and academically sustained bilingual critical literacy⁴.

It is clear that One Literacy is not much concerned with languages in general. It is equally clear that it is very concerned with programs that only occur in particular kinds of languages and for particular kinds of Australian children. The Policy as Discourse of One Literacy seems to mean that these children should be like everyone else: English speaking monolinguals learning a foreign language.

Communities that aim to transmit literacy in and through non-English languages, first, seem to trouble One Literacy because of the presumed damage that this effort will have on English literacy. This time-on-task preoccupation is unproductive in bilingual contexts where bilingual additive enrichment is imperatively justified by the social environment of children's lives. Worse, for One Literacy and its alter ego and intellectual progenitor, One Nation, to keep a language alive, and to transmit it intergenerationally, requires certain kinds of institutions and social space for the speaker communities. It is an established principle of socio-linguistics that these social and language domains must be for the principal occupancy of the minority language for it to flourish. Given the power disparities between English and minority languages in Australia these domains will be invaded rapidly by the exclusive use of English if

energetic compartmentalising arrangements and efforts are not made to retain active and non-ritual use the other language. Eventually language shift would take place and these domains would give way totally to English.

The problem for One Literacy is that the institutional space that minority languages and communities require for intergenerational language transmission must be community controlled or at least subject to the interests and influence of minority language communities and the pace and nature of change regulated by them. The validation of progress and learning must be judged against norms internal to the community; negotiated alongside mainstream institutional expectations. This requires the control of resources, influence over institutional structures and arrangements that would establish community norms in association with wider social and economic parameters as benchmarks of success.

It is inevitable (social and economic forces make it so) that in such environments the demand for English literacy will be insistent and high. Despite its self-characterisation, One Literacy is not a response to community demands for giving minority language children control over society's most powerful semiotic code. One Literacy is a caricature, a set of simplifications of literate practice with a desire to standardly impose these onto all of public education. The forthright rejection by the great majority of indigenous communities in late 1998 of the narrow criteria for judgment of bilingual education's results indicates that One Literacy does not emerge from community concern about English literacy achievements of minority pupils. Its prescriptions are a cultural, economic and social price too high to pay.

I share the skepticism that Martin Nakata (1999: 16) expresses about the abuse of 'cultural preservationist' arguments that seek to regulate the kind of attention to English literacy achievements that indigenous, or for that matter, all, linguistic minorities seek. The key word is abuse. Language and traditional culture are not all there is to identity. And the bi-part of bilingual and biliterate education provides ample space for Nakata's justified insistence of enhanced English literacy pedagogy. In my critique of One Literacy I share Nakata's caution against paternalistic policies that offer a kind of palliative identity. When he argues that "the teaching of English is geared down, down to functional purposes" we would do well to recall that it has been minority language communities (see Cahill 1996) who have been in the forefront of advocacy for appropriate and adequate attention to English teaching for minorities in Australia. It is indeed an abuse for something called 'cultural

preservation' involving the teaching of traditional languages to be "... used to undermine the arguments for teaching English (Nakata 1999:17).

First language cognitive abilities (especially if the measures employed to track these abilities include verbal performance indices) relate to second language cognitive and academic language performance in *interdependent* ways; the two languages of bilingual children are not brain-separate but intimately connected.

It is salutary to read Cahill (1996) for the long history of pre-multicultural educational inequality (when English-only is all there was, and when One Literacy was ontology). We can only describe that educational practice as neglectful submersion. A buoyant secondary labour market absorbed immigrant young people for whom schools did little and for indigenous children the general societal apathy and indifference meant intergenerational neglect of extreme proportions.

Public advocacy, even militancy, for cultural diversity grew **from and out of a prior and connected** commitment to justice and equality in the education of minorities. Socially transformative objectives emerged from an initial focus on the life chances and opportunities for children whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds correlated with social and economic disadvantages and which had resulted in decades of assimilative pressure, and educational neglect.

Is it a mere coincidence that among the educational interventions most damaged by One Literacy has been ESL?

DOUBLE POWER

I have argued against One Literacy and called its prescription narrow and damaging. I advocate a different kind of literacy.

I advocate *Australian Literacies*. This involves the mastery of the *multiple codes* (languages and other semiotic systems), *diverse modes* (print, electronic and other) and *plural meanings* (participatory notion of citizenship within a united but multicultural polity) of literate practice in contemporary Australia. These codes, modes and meanings involve Australian English, indigenous varieties of Australian English, and other community and foreign languages; literacies of language and non language literacies plus critically engaged kinds of writing and reading for power and a citizenship of participation.

Academic-literate English objectives and pedagogical practices are intimately part of Australian Literacies.

Monolingual English literacy would deprive Australians of insights into worlds fashioned outside of English thinking (worlds activated daily by millions of others including other Australians) and in a time of rapid and almost-complete globalisation, worlds profoundly relevant to Australian public policy. Language literacy alone would deprive Australians of technological, artistic and other hybrid and non-print literacies. And, making low order routines synonymous with literacy and the objective of Literacy Policy would deprive Australians of critical engagement with texts that don't, after all, simply and unproblematically carry the world's messages, but which shape, fashion, create and constrain the possible worlds we inhabit. Critical and productive literacies, readerly and writerly literacies, literacies for active and participatory citizenship is a more appropriate literacy goal than One Literacy.

Mandaway Yunupingu said it better when he pointed out that '...becoming an educated, literate person in and across two cultures, Yolngu and Balanda' gives Double Power.