Identity and Agency in Primary Trilingual Children's Multiple Cultural Worlds: Third Space and Heritage Languages

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1. Mapping cultural worlds

> Language is like a door, which enables you to learn the world. When you learn one language, you get to know one part of the world. When you learn other languages, you will get an opportunity to know other parts of the world (Interview with Mrs. Li, a Chinese immigrant parent in Montreal).
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> The spatial dimensions of our lives has never been of greater practical or political relevance than it is today (Soja, 1996:1).
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> The notion of traveling through space is integral to the unfolding of history and the development of the individual's consciousness with regard to the past. The voyage over geographic space is an expanded metaphor for the process of one person's coming to know who she is (Willis 1985:220).

This paper contributes to an emerging body of qualitative/ethnographic research that seeks to develop textured understandings of the relationships between language learners, their socio-cultural worlds and identity construction (Cummins, 1996; Gee, 2001; Holland, 2000; Maguire & Graves, 2001; Norton, 2000; Rampton, 1997). Since the early eighties, my work has focused on and respected bilingual primary children's generativity, their abilities – embedded always in nested contexts of collective and personal meanings and social relationships – to imagine and create new ways of being (Maguire, 1987; 1994). In the mid nineties, my curiosity about how multilingual children from non mainstream backgrounds negotiate multiple literacies and multiple school experiences led me to focus on their knowledge, agency, identity and cultural positionings and worlds (Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Graves, 2001). In previous studies, I have documented how young children's literate actions reflect multiple interacting spheres of influence – the socio-historical, interpersonal and individual - and how these spheres connect to a complex politics of recognition (Taylor, 1994:25) and construction of diverse textual worlds. I conceptualize children's biliteracy development as socio-historically mediated activities which are always embedded in the language of others from previous contexts (Bakhtin, 1990).

This paper is exploratory; it emerges from a larger on-going heritage language project on multiliteracies, multilingualism, identity politics and multilingual children's cultural positionings and cultural worlds in Montreal, Quebec. We use ethnographic tools of interviews with children, their families and teachers, participant observations of home and school literacy practices and textual analysis to examine the roles of heritage languages as they interact with children's multiple school experiences (1). Every individual is embedded in material and social contexts. These contexts have spatial dimensions. They are not just physical arrangements of material things or catalogues of physical facts. They are spatial patterns of context-specific social actions and social practices as well as embedded historical conceptions of space and the world (Lefebvre 1991). Like identity, spaces and places are interrelated, contextual, contested concepts and sites of struggle (Norton, 1997). The concept of space, central to social and cultural studies and human geography, can range from socio-cultural locations, real or imagined, to ideological positioning to

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geographical imagining and representations. This includes representational spaces and emotional conditions of being and dwelling in the world.

In this paper, I explore the varied roles space plays in trilingual/multilingual children's multiple culture worlds in three heritage language contexts – Armenian, Chinese and Japanese. I present an argument for the importance of considering lived dialogic experiences and the notion of third space as critical aspects of conceptualizations about identity construction, heritage languages and multilingualism. To frame this argument, I focus on three interrelated concepts of relevance in understanding the role of heritage languages in primary trilingual children's multiple cultural worlds. Connecting concepts such as identity, agency, and diaspora to third space offers theoretical and methodological possibilities for movement beyond binary conceptualizations of literacy and illiteracy and deficit views of multilingual language learners and their social worlds. To understand how multilingual learners are embedded in material and social spaces, I draw on the Lefebvre/Soja tradition within the theoretical landscape of critical human geography. Specifically, I use Soja's concept of third space – a new space between cultural collectives and individuals and historical periods – as a heuristic frame for understanding multilingual literacies, identity politics and children's cultural positioning. While schools may position children, so too children align and position themselves as they construct their own reflexive projects of selfhood in particular places (Ivanic, 1998).

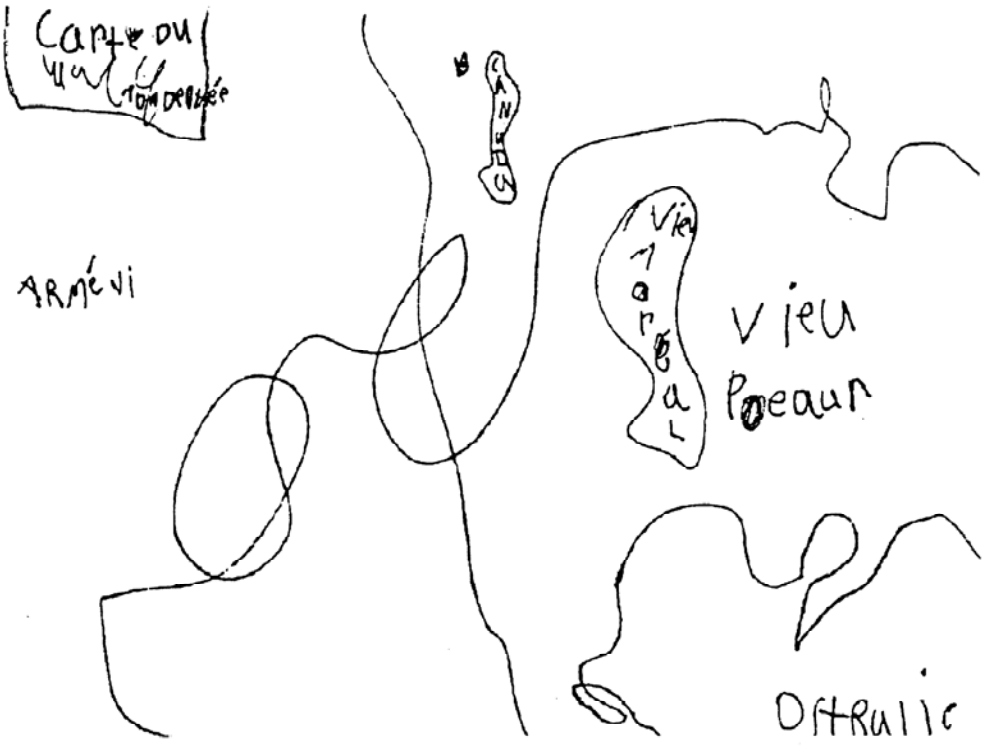
The empowerment and recognition of heritage languages are not only major societal issues but also present challenges to past and present mainstream power and political arrangements. Within the context of international immigration, the politics of place and place-making must be historically appreciated and locally and globally situated. Places are both physical territories with clearly defined borders and culturally constructed spaces through intricate social networks of social relationships. Hall (2003:236) argues that cultural identity is a "matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. … It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories." I start from a fundamental assumption that becoming and being triliterate or multiliterate is a complex, context-specific, dynamic, relational and spatial process (Maguire & Beer, 2002). It is relational in that is always involves dialogue with self and others (Bakhtin, 1990). It is spatial in that socio-spatial positioning manifests itself in every action, real or imagined. Thus, understanding multilingual children's identity construction, identification and appropriation of multiple literacy practices is a recursive process that necessitates a double perspective – looking at the local literacy moments in their day-to-day living and the more global political discourses in which they may be embedded and historically rooted. What roles do places and different types of spaces play in multilingual children's lives and multiple cultural worlds?

1.1 Types of spaces

Take the first example, a map drawn by six year old Karine, one of the trilingual children researcher Diane Baygin is following as she observes Karine learning English, French and Armenian in her home and school contexts. Diane, a member of our research group, is also trilingual in these three languages and teaches Karine French in a trilingual Armenian school in Montreal that is credited and partially subsidized by the Quebec Ministry of Education.

Figure 1: Le monde entier (The entire world)

Words on drawing, clockwise from top left: Carte du mond(e) entier (Map of the entire world); Canada; Vieu(x) Montreal (Old Montreal); Vieu(x) Port (Old Port); Ostralie (Australia); Arméni(e) (Armenia).



Diane explains that six year old Karine "has already demonstrated an awareness of her cultural and historical positioning". She also sheds light on the intricacies of the literacy practices of a new generation of Armenian children who live and dwell in multiple places and spaces.

> When I was a baby and I started to speak. I started to speak like my mother, in Armenian. When she was born, she was in Lebanon. But when I was born, we were already in Canada, because there was a war in Lebanon and my mother was afraid to have me there. When we came from Lebanon, we looked for a house, but we could not find one. So we went to Deguire. It's an apartment building. So we went there and when someone left from a house in Montreal, we went to take their house … we celebrated my five year old and six year old birthdays (Baygin, 2001*).*

Karine's personal memoir and map illustrate many aspects of the histories and experiences of other cultural groups who have immigrated to Canada and moved neighborhoods. The concept of Diaspora as displacement and movement is deeply embedded in Armenians' immigrant experiences. Historically, Armenians have often found themselves living in Diasporan communities, especially after the Armenian Genocide in 1915 that forced most of the survivors to scatter to different areas of the world.

In mapping her environment, Karine demonstrates her ability to bring together her different literacies, the territories she knows and her knowledge of French, her second language, to represent her own view of the world. Karine entitles her map 'Le monde entier'. She has included Australia, Armenia, Canada, Old Montreal and the Montreal old port. She has included all the geographical sites that were important to her in June 2001. Diane's visit with Karine's family revealed that the family had received a tablecloth with a map of Australia painted on it and which Karine had taken great pleasure in reading and discovering. Armenia is her 'homeland' and Canada is where she

locates herself now in her everyday activities at one of the three Armenian day schools in Montreal. Deguire street is located in a transient, culturally and linguistically diverse Montreal neighborhood. Karine's mother reflects on her daughter's awareness of the multiple languages around her:

> I was staying home with {Karine} her. I always went out or went visiting. Very early she noticed that there were different languages, because with those neighbors. I used to speak different languages than what she knew. And she would ask me "why are those things that I am not understanding?" And I would tell her that there are different languages.
>
> (Diane's Interview with Mrs. X, an Armenian parent in Montreal, Bagyin, 2001*)*

During Karine's early literacy encounters she was exposed to French, English, Spanish, Armenian. French has become the lingua franca in her school life. At home, both Armenian and Arabic are used.

Karine's map conceptualizes home as a concrete location – a place in a geographic/cartographic sense and offers a third space circumscribed by past memories and cultural, historical boundaries. In these excerpts from interview and text data in our project, Lefebvre's three different kinds of spaces become relevant. His first notion of space - *espace perçu* - perceived space includes the kinds of discursive social practices that humans impose on their worlds such as "speaking different languages." Second space which he calls conceived space - *espace conçu* - is full of representations and mappings of material places such as Old Montreal, the Old Port. Third space which he defines as *espace veçu* – space as directly lived - is the space of' 'inhabitants' and 'users' in particular places. This lived space as experienced by its users includes meaning contexts and not just geometrical representations of a particular physical location.

1.2 Third space and identity

This space offers new possibilities for exploring relationships between places and identity politics. Canadian literacy research can be historically located within the contexts of power relations between majority and minority language groups, the lived experiences and spaces of members of culturally diverse communities in different places and their visible or invisible presence during different periods of immigration. Identities are "possibilities for mediating agency and the key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them" (Holland, 2000: 51). Identity construction is a process of negotiation between sites of agency and locally and globally perceived, conceived, or lived spaces of possibilities for belonging and establishing cultural dialogues. Yoyo's comments provide an example of how identities can be constructed, contested and or even resisted in local conversations in different places and spaces.

> If I don't speak French at the Zhonguo school, the other children will think that I am stupid or "xin yimin" (new immigrant). It is very bad if they think I am a "xin yimin" because it means that I am poor and don't know anything and don't understand anything. I would try to use my broken French to communicate with other children at (Shonguo) school although I speak Chinese much better than some kids, but I was afraid to be an outsider, and I didn't want to be an outsider and I didn't want the others to think I was stupid (Xiao-Lan Interview in Chinese with Yoyo, 10 years old).

This utterance emerges from Chinese researcher Xiao-Lan's conversational interview with Yoyo as she reflects on her negotiation of multiple languages and social spaces. A recent immigrant to Quebec, Yoyo attends a Chinese Saturday language school in Montreal. Yoyo, a very competent speaker of Mandarin, is concerned about not wanting to be an outsider in the Saturday Chinese school context or recognized as a certain kind of person, a xin yimin". In this elusive, local literacy moment, Yoyo is positioned between resisting negative representations of herself as "immigrant, other or outsider" and her educational desire to open a third space of strategic engagement with others – her classmates - who attend a French school during the week. Her

comments resonate with an argument I have been making about children's agency, capacity for social reflexivity and the need for contextualized understandings of their positionings and representations of self through their talk and texts in multiple language contexts in Quebec- a unilingual French province and Canada – a country with a policy and an action plan for two official languages (Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Graves, 2001; The Next Act, 2003).

Canada is frequently portrayed as a multicultural society. This portrait of diversity is a result of centuries of and different waves of immigration patterns. When multilingual children like Yoyo confront questions such as who they are or where they come from, they are either tacitly or explicitly asking about their past, present and their future (Appadurai, 2003:30). Yon employs the term "elusive" to suggest the fluidity in the different ways cultural processes work in schools and relationships through which culture, race and identity are constructed (Yon, 2000: x). Thus, identities are discursively constructed. I use discursive here to mean particular ways of being, talking and writing about or performing one's practices that are coupled with particular social settings in which those ways of being, talking, writing and being are recognized as more or less valuable (Maguire & Graves, 2001). Third space then is an open text offering differing and multiple possibilities for selfhood and dialogue with others in particular places.

Multiple languages and literacies assume multiple paths, trajectories and contexts for learning. However, multilingual literacy portraits are not very visible within the hegemonic discourse of second language acquisition research and practice -- at least in Quebec and Canada. Although the phenomena of heritage languages and schools have long been commonplace knowledge, the languages and schools themselves have largely remained invisible within the public and private discourses of schooling and financing of schools. In 1991, the Canadian Education Association viewed Heritage Language Programs as a way to enhance the linguistic vitality which is seen as valuable resources for the Canadian Multicultural Mosaic. Yet, heritage languages have not been the focus of mainstream theories of and research in second language education, teaching and learning. Indeed, language choices, maintenance and identity construction in these multilingual contexts are journalistically reported as diverse, multifaceted and ever changing. For example, a curiosity of the 2001 Canadian census is why immigrants who speak English, not French are among the fastest–growing groups of newcomers to Montreal, a largely francophone city? (Heinrich, Gazette, Saturday February 8, 2003). This reported trend contrasts with the massive exodus out of the province in the mid seventies when the separatist party Partie Quebecois came to power, enacted legislation that mediated who can access English and French schools and caused disruptions within and/or voluntary displacement of many families throughout the Canadian landscape and beyond.

Identities must be viewed as connected to the nuanced multidimensional workings of historical and institutional forces and political discourses that in turn influence what Bakhtin (1990) calls one's ideological becoming. Bakhtin's vision of self fashioning which Holland calls the 'space of authoring' resonates with the literacy portraits emerging in our inquiry about multilingual children's identity construction and identification. Identities are shaped by context, history and political climates. Yon (2000) maintains that "the passion for identity takes shape as assumptions about sameness or difference between selves and communities are brought into question and people begin to reflect upon who they are or worry about what they are becoming" (p. 2). Hybridity has become a common leitmotif in postmodern discourse in cultural studies, second language learning and research on identity politics. Hybrid identities may reflect plural language affiliations and cultural allegiances that in turn reflect individuals' attempts to acknowledge and reconcile the past with their present new cultural environments, social spaces and different linguistic ecologies.

2. Surveying and locating political and linguistic landscapes

Multilingual literacies evoke multiple and complex interpretations and positionings with a complex politics of recognition. Our project is situated within the discursive places and spaces and conflicted socio-historical and political discourses of language legislation, immigration patterns and diverse communities of practices (Wenger, 1998). Canada is a country, which recognizes two official languages, English and French, based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Official Languages Act. In Canada, political discourses center on majority and minority language contexts within an English and French discourse of linguistic and cultural duality. Within

the nested contexts of these political discourses is the rhetoric of multiculturalism and heritage languages embedded in a broad framework of laws and polices that support Canada's approach to diversity and embracement of cultural pluralism. In Quebec, the official language is French, based on Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language. Quebec school boards are linguistically organized as either English or French. Figure 2 summarizes some of the key legislation and public discourses pertaining to the language of instruction in Quebec and Canada (Maguire, 1994; Maguire & Graves, 2001). Although seemingly mapped in language legislation, the linguistic landscape is neither fixed or stable.

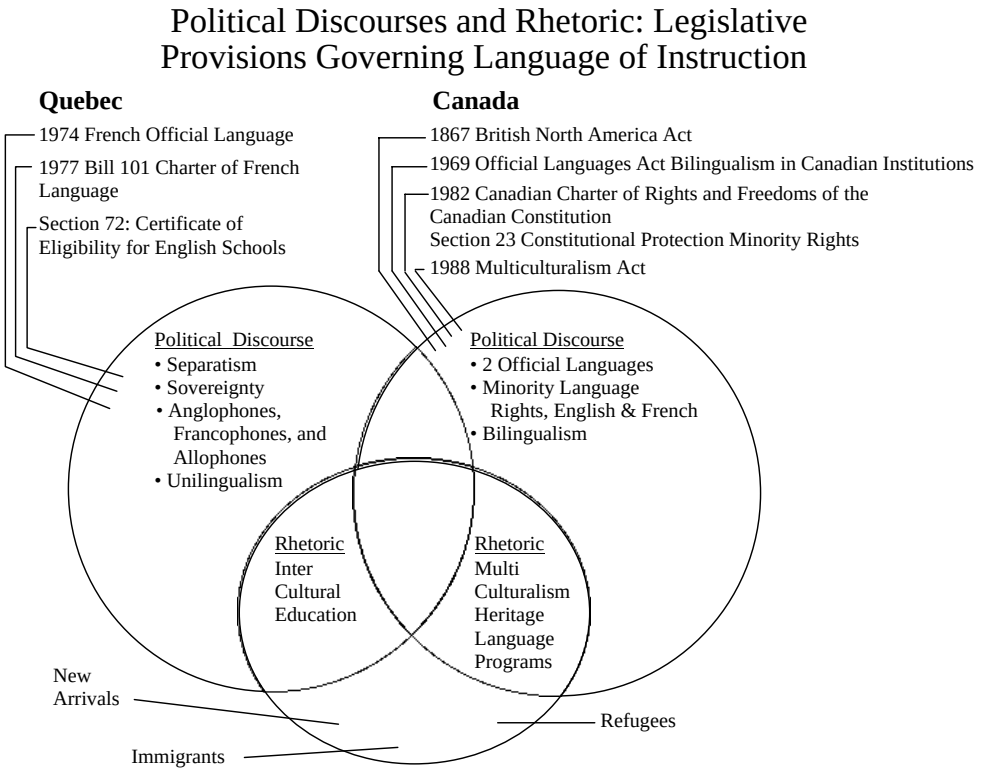


Figure 2 Provisions governing language of instruction in Quebec and Canada.

In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt a Multicultural policy that assumes an inclusive citizenship. This resulted in the 1988 Multiculturalism Act that recognizes and promotes the mutual understanding among diverse groups in Canadian society. Ironically, there was little reference in these policies to heritage languages until the Heritage Language Act in 1991. Even within the recent 2002, Canadian action plan for official languages, the *Next Act: New Momentum for Canadian's Linguistic Duality: The Action Plan for Official Languages*, there is little reference to or explicit plan of action for public visibility of Heritage Languages, other than the following statement: "Minority official language communities have always nurtured our linguistic duality and made a strong contribution to our linguistic and cultural diversity. The Government of Canada has historical and political commitments to those communities" (The Next Act, 2002).

The lack of explicit recognition of heritage languages other than English or French in public policy documents is surprising since many of the parents in our family inquiries in our heritage language project see the learning of multiple languages as social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990) to move across and within more than one language or cultural community or imagined community of practices (Anderson, 1993; Wenger, 1998). Curdt-Christiansen (2001) documented in her study of Chinese parents that as newcomers who may not speak French, the official language of Quebec, they provide diverse French literacy resources in their homes for their children to

access such as books, videotapes and private tutoring. Particularly striking is the lack of research not only on immigrant children's language affiliations and positionings, but also on their parents' evaluative orientations towards language learning, multiple literacy practices and options in language education within the context of a global economy and increasingly diverse, mobile social worlds. Knowledge about how immigrant families locate and situate themselves within the conflicted political discourses about languages and make choices about their children's schooling and family language policies is also scarce. For example, Karine's parents choose the Armenian "all" day school with Armenian, English and French as the languages of instruction. Other parents who do not intend to settle in Quebec or Canada, may or may not choose an English school with a French Immersion program. However access to English schools is limited. Parents must apply for a Certificate of Eligibility for English Schools if they want their children to attend an English school. In the French system classes (welcome) were set up in the eighties to help immigrant "allophone" children integrate into Quebec society.

To add to this complexity of Quebec schools as complex discursive places, some language and religious groups operate trilingual school systems as for example the Armenian Schools, the Jewish Parochial school system and the Greek schools in Montreal of which the first one dates back to 1909. Canada and Quebec have had a long history of maintaining heritage languages either through such formal trilingual school systems or informal Saturday schools. Thus, some children attend a trilingual school system during the week and a Saturday Heritage Language school; some attend a dual track school and a Saturday school; some attend a dual track school with a cultural enrichment program such as the PELO program developed in the seventies for Italian, Portuguese and Greek children and which still exists in some schools now under the jurisdiction of the new Montreal English School Board. Surprisingly very little has actually been documented about these heritage language contexts notwithstanding the literacy practices within these discursive spaces. Just mapping the children's individual school trajectories in our project is much akin to the task of land surveyors mapping uncharted landscapes let alone understanding what the political and linguistic landscapes offer to different generations, communities and this present generation of multilingual children themselves.

Indeed, Quebec, an officially unilingual French province, provides a unique context for exploring multilingual literacies, identity construction and understanding third space and diasporan communities. In a province where French is spoken by a large majority of the population and in a city, where communities with varied histories and immigration patterns, speak in languages from all over the world, interacting, nested contexts (Maguire & Beer 2002) offer a diversity of spaces and places in which to examine multilingual children's' expressions of self and negotiations of identity. The offspring of many mixed marriages has created a generation of trilingual or multilingual children who feel comfortable in multiple socio-cultural spaces and linguistic worlds. Montreal Gazette, reporter Susan Semenak claims that this third generation is "young, educated and savvy; they like being multilingual and multicultural – and reject the idea of assimilation" (Semenak, February 12, 2000:A 1-2). The language resilience of many of these children has led many sociolinguists (Bourhis, 2001), sociologists (Bourdieu, 1990) and philosophers (Taylor, 1994) to believe that heritage languages have more power, visibility and identity in Montreal than in any other North American city. While this may or may not always have been or be the case, children's identity constructions are both enabled and constrained by their access to and appropriation of multiple literacy practices and multilingual literacies in different discursive spaces. They are the daily inhabitors and users of these spaces.

Our Heritage Language project is located within the nested contexts of power relations which Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor describes as a 'politics of recognition' between majority and minority language groups within conflicting political discourses in Canada and Quebec (Maguire and Beer, 2002). It is also located within the diverse historic evolution of the 'heritage' language communities and their visible or invisible presence and place within Canadian and Quebec society. In viewing identity as connecting to a complex politics of recognition, Taylor (1994) poses some provocative questions: Who is seen? What is visible? Who is made visible? Who is made invisible? Who is recognized? Who is not recognized? And how are those who are not recognized then oppressed, excluded, marginalized and silenced. For example, less visible portraits in the early immigration literature and which now emerging date back to less popular historical moments in Canadian society, such as the head tax on Chinese, the internment of the Japanese and the lack of

recognition of or reference to the Armenian 1915 genocide in Quebec and Canadian political and public discourse on immigration, minorities, multiculturalism and intercultural education.

To return to the notion of third space. This notion can be linked to other concepts of community and space such as diasporan communities (Braziel and Mannur 2003) and imagined communities (Anderson, 1983). All three concepts help conceptualize and understand the processes of identity construction and reconstruction and searching for 'homelands' -- as places and spaces for multilingual children to locate themselves - to belong and to be recognized. Both diasporan and imagined communities can serve as spaces, real or imagined, for the complex border crossings occurring in intercultural communication and appropriation of multiple literacy practices in a globalized world. This dynamic appropriation of multilingual literacies can emerge within a diasporan or imagined community perspective and perceived, conceived or lived spaces.

2.1 Creating textual spaces and reading different places

Ivanic (1998:31) argues that "writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities of selfhood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody." She maintains that terms like subjectivity, subjectivities and positionings and her own term "possibilities for selfhood" suggest both that the socially available resources for the construction of identity are multiple and that an individual's identity is a complex of interweaving positionings" (Ivanic, 1998: 10). To get a sense of this dynamic intermingling and appropriation of cultural literacy practices that make up the experiences of the children in our project, I turn to the complex, nuanced textured layers of meanings and positionings reflected in Emma's text 'St. Margaret." In creating this textured literacy memoir, Emma describes a field trip to a residential facility for the elderly which she wrote when she was in grade 3 in an English medium, culturally diverse school.

This young writer is from Indonesia, a country where the practice of housing elderly people in seniors' residences, a form of displacement, is far less common than in North America. Literacy portraits of Emma and her family have been presented elsewhere (Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Graves, 2001). Noteworthy is that Emma's parents like many recent newcomers have taken advantage of the loophole, referred to as "the five year window" in the Quebec language legislation that permits new immigrants access to the English public schools system. This text is another local exemplar of how a multilingual child like Emma, who speaks Javanese and Indonesian, engages in multiple social worlds and how multiple social worlds influence her daily literate actions and worlds.

> St Margaret
>
> Today the whole class were going to St. Margaret's. We went by citybus. When we go there, we went inside and sat down in the middle of the old people. then we sang It's a long way to Tiperary, Katie I'm looking over, Put on your old gray bonnet and School days. After that we did the three little plays. Then we sang Daisy, When I was little and Pack up your troubles. Then we took our little booklet our "One time" stories folder, pencil and card. We each went to a person. I went to a woman. I gave her the card. I said to her if she wanted me to read her a story or ask her some questions. She said she wanted me to read a story. So I did and in the end I said by and she said have a good day. A few minutes later Miss R called every body to sit in the middle again. A man sang a song for us. Then we had a cookie and juice. Then we sang Oh Canada. Then we went back to school. The trip to St. Margaret was great.

Picturing this eight year old from another culture and religion in the context of an English Catholic residence for the elderly, singing songs from not only another culture but also another time, space and place, speaks volumes to her attempt to create a dynamic coherence in her social construction of her lived experience. Her interpretation, evaluation and textual representation of this experience is explicit in her declarative statement, "The *trip to St. Margaret was great."* Emma also explicitly lists her classmates' inter textual encounters with songs from another era for these elderly people. Her use of the collective pronoun "we" signals that she and her classmates are directly involved in

this communal, social practice of singing songs for these seniors: *"When we go there, we went inside and sat down in the middle of the old people. Then we sang It's a long way to Tiperary . . ."* She interactionally positions herself within this lived moment between the communal event and her own interlude and conversational exchange with a nameless senior: *"I said by and she said have a good day*."

The expression of the self and the construction of the identity are both enabled and constrained by the appropriation of the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the second or third language and mediational means accessible and perceived to be valued in different contexts and discursive spaces. Yoyo's comments, Karine's map, and Emma's text illustrate how a socio-cultural view of identity construction needs to include contextualized references to the ways in which an individual constructs an expression of self from the available, usually conflicting resources in a particular socio-linguistic, cultural environment, place, space or literacy moment. I have argued elsewhere that socially meaningful activity from children's viewpoints must be considered as the epistemological and explanatory sources for understanding children's consciousness, interpretation of literacy tasks and practices and identity construction through multiple literacy practices (Maguire, 1994; 1999).

That the Canadian social landscape is woven and framed in a multicultural mosaic is a common theme in Canadian political discourses. Current Canadian urban populations include an increasingly large number of multilingual immigrant students experience multiple school experiences and multiple literacies. As mentioned previously, Montreal provides interesting sites for mapping and understanding the life worlds of these multilingual learners and their weaving of multiples literacies in their ordinary day–to-day living. Because many of these children have a foot in many cultural places and must locate themselves in multiple school spaces and sociolinguistic communities, they do not seem to straddle the stereotypic linguistic divide of the two solitudes anglophones and francophones mythologized by Canadian writer Hugh MacLennan. Many create a 'third space' for themselves that allows for strategic engagement in social interactions with others in real or imagined communities.

Indeed, the Montreal and Quebec contexts provide valuable material, physical places and social spaces to explore this notion of a third space in which multilingual learners can live critically between and among cultural and language differences (Bourhis, 2001; Taylor, 1985). However, the extent or overlap of the multiple communities of literacy practices for children attending heritage language schools is yet to be identified and documented, especially from the perspectives of the children themselves as they negotiate sites for cultural dialogues and encounters. A methodological challenge we face is that the heritage language contexts themselves keep changing as we watch and attempt to map them, thus challenging us to resist essentializing definitions of heritage languages and notions of spaces as fixed and stable. We frequently engage in discussions of and debates about the nuanced meanings of literacy, becoming and being literate, as illustrated in these excerpts from our audio taped dialogues:

> The word literate in Armenian is a very interesting concept. It is only referred to established writers and authors. …. There was a political reasoning behind the creation of the alphabet and it really had to do with the preservation of the cultural heritage (Hourig).
>
> I'll give you a perfect example, when you were my teacher, you came from Armenia and you wrote in a script I couldn't … it was like I could not decipher it. I had to sit down with my grandmother and she read it to me (Diane).
>
> Chinese literacy must be understood within its historical context and ties to Confucianism and the Chinese revolution.. Pinyin is now used in Chinese Heritage language school (Xiao-Lan).
>
> We don't refer to Japanese as a heritage language (Reiko).

In the first excerpt, Hourig is referring to the historical evolution of literacy within the Armenian context while Diane refers to the differences between Eastern and Western Armenian styles of representing the Armenian language. Xiao-Lan, who grew up during the Chinese

Revolution, insists that the meanings of Chinese literacy must be understood within this political context and its historical ties to Confucianism. Reiko comments that within the Japanese Saturday school context, the concept of heritage language does not resonate. Her comments have forced us to re conceptualize the very label and the meanings of 'heritage language'. Noteworthy is that some literacies and identities within these heritage language contexts become more dominant, visible and influential than others at different times (Maguire, 1999).

We are committed to a comparative case study methodology that is characteristic of an anthropological approach that affords cross-cultural inquiries and children's evaluative orientations towards linguistic diversity and cultural differences to be voiced, understood, recognized and respected (Maguire & Graves, 2001; Maguire & Beer, 2002). The dialectic between local and global literacies serves as a reasoning heuristic to confront the ambiguities, contradictions and constraints, to make heritage schools visible in the public and private discourse of schooling and to recognize the ways in which power relations in a school constitutes a site's discursive literacy practices and construction of individual, collective, and /or hybrid identities. A number of questions emerge that can become an agenda for dialogue with educators and policy makers: At what points do children attach symbolic meanings and affiliations to languages and language use in particular contexts, places and spaces? This necessitates looking more widely and appreciating the historical contexts of the heritage language schools within the complex macro contexts of the conflicting political discourses in Canada and Quebec. Mapping multiple and multilingual literacies and children's positioning is a dynamic process that exists in diverse socio-cultural, historical, political arenas. To illustrate, I now focus on three heritage language contexts - Armenian, Chinese and Japanese. These contexts pose issues and possibilities for conceptualizing identity and diaspora and rethinking concepts of homeland, community, place, space, belonging and identity politics. Thus, I use the concept "diaspora" in a broader sense to reflect its complexity, flexibility and variability within these communities, spaces and places.

3. Shifting contexts: heritage schools as historical sites, discursive places and spaces

The Heritage Language schools to which we have access differ in their goals and approaches to the heritage language and thus become observable discursive spaces and sites for understanding research as a relational process and generative possibilities for constructing interpretive spaces. The family and community discursive literacy practices emerging in these heritage language contexts have been largely invisible to the mainstream society and dominant discourses and communities in Montreal, Quebec, and even to ourselves when we were designing a project on "heritage language schools". What is a heritage language school.? Where is a heritage language Who participates in, controls and influences the discursive activities of Heritage Language Schools?

The phrase Heritage Language School normally refers to the Saturday day schools that multilingual children attend to maintain their languages and cultures. In Montreal, the Heritage Language Schools may be distinguished by their actual material building spaces and the community's identification with the Quebec government. Some communities operate trilingual schools systems that are funded and clearly visible as institutional buildings with identifying logos. For example, the Armenian community has a Saturday school and a "regular" five day a week school that teaches Armenian, English, and French. The socio-historical institutional contexts vary from one heritage language context to another. The Armenian day school and Armenian Saturday school are accredited as mediators of Armenian as a heritage language. The other two schools, the Chinese *Shonguo* and Japanese *Hoshuko* are privately funded, rent space for their Saturday schools from mainstream educational institutions, and thus have no visible identifiable logo or physical presence as a particular "heritage language school". The Japanese Saturday school sees itself as a supplemental school rather than a heritage language school. The different ways in which the three schools identify themselves and their different identifications with the Quebec Educational system raise some interesting questions about defining Heritage Language contexts.

In the United States, the phrase heritage language refers to non-English languages spoken in the United States. For example, Valdes 2000/2001 defines a Heritage Language Speaker as "A

speaker of a non-English language who has been raised in a home where the language is spoken, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English. With the context of the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act, Heritage language "means a language, other than one of the two official languages of Canada that contributes to the linguistic heritage of Canada." However, each heritage language context must be located within its historical contexts and patterns of migration and immigration. Three metaphors emerge in understanding these three contexts - diasporan, world differences and transnationalism. They provide the historical contexts for interpreting the local literacy moments and lived experiences embedded in them.

3.1 An Armenian context. A diaspora space/spaces

Historically, Armenians have lived in diverse disaporan communities. Hourig Attarian maintains that Armenian genocide survivor narratives "invariably refer to stories of mothers teaching the alphabet to their children by tracing the letters in the desert sands" (Attarian, 2001). They have adapted and integrated into new countries while maintaining their own languages, eastern and western dialects and cultures. A recurring leitmotif in Armenian's daily discursive practices has been the palpable presence of multiple languages, dialects and cultures co existing – even today - as we saw earlier in this paper with Karine. The Armenian community in Canada can be traced back to the late 1880s when individual Armenians came to work mostly in factories and took their earnings back to their country. In 1930, the charitable organizations such as the Armenian Benevolent Association of Montreal, among other community practices, taught children the Armenian language and religion. In the 1950's, Montreal had a settlement of Armenians consisting of 225 individuals. The Armenian community in Montreal has grown since its settlement days. Armenians immigrated from various countries such as Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece and Iran. The community now has close 30,000; it has many churches, schools and community centers that play a major role in preserving the Armenian heritage, traditions and culture and in helping its members integrate into Quebec and Canadian communities. Such infrastructure organizations and material and social places including the Apostolic Church, cultural centres and youth organizations provide a public face for an Armenian identity to be visible and recognized. They are places that combine as material, mental and lived spaces.

3.1.1. An Armenian day school

The Armenian day school referred to here is one of three Armenian heritage language day schools operating in Montreal. This school functions in a trilingual setting and operates with a double mission: offering its students the necessary skills and knowledge to preserve their heritage language and culture and to integrate within the larger mainstream society. It is a physical place where Armenian is spoken on the playground and heard in classroom interactions. Partially subsidized by the Quebec Ministry of Education, its trilingual program is comprised of French as the language of instruction (through an Immersion approach), Armenian Heritage Studies (including Language Arts, History, and Religion), and English as a Second Language. Introduction to literacy begins in kindergarten and in the heritage language, Armenian. French Immersion also begins in kindergarten and English courses join the curriculum in grade one, where the trilingual program is officially launched. The school is attended only by children from the Armenian community. The great majority of the students like Karine speak Armenian at home and are enrolled in activities at the Armenian community centre. In 1959, the Saturday school of the same school board) was launched. In 1970 a summer camp. In 1973, a nursery/preschool was established with 60 students. Children are introduced to both Armenian and French in preschool. In 1974, The day school was established with Kindergarten and grade one only and 37 students. In 1980, the first elementary sections graduate and by 1989 the first secondary section graduates. The school now averages around 700 students per year (only K-11). The preschool is a separate establishment and averages around 200 students a year.

The three Armenian researchers working in this context have had different schooling and lived experiences in the Armenian Heritage Language context. Arminée attended the Armenian Saturday and day school. Diane attended kindergarten at the Armenian day school and then studied in French at a European school in Montreal. Her contact with the Armenian community was limited. All three have taught in the school. Arminee and Diane are currently teaching in the

school. Karine's map emerged from Diane's French classroom. Hourig grew up in an Armenian home in Lebanon. Her major concern has been that the Armenian language will lose its functionality for this generation of children. Hourig's personal observation about the meanings of the word "literacy" in Armenian is an example of the multi-textured meanings of literacy we are encountering in each heritage language context.

> The word "literacy" in Armenian is not used in the same sense as the English one. It is meant to only signify the elementary deciphering/decoding of the language, nothing more. I thought of all the instances I've heard the word in the context of illiteracy, [rather] than the other way around! Interestingly the word "literate" in Armenian refers specifically to established writers/authors. However, the words "language" and "culture" are always used to talk about the preservation and continuity of the heritage. They are the two ingredients especially important for conserving the Armenian identity, most essentially in the diasporan contexts. Lately, a new word is put more and more into circulation, to indicate the active role of creating and constructing identity, as opposed to the more passive conserving aspect (Team meeting audio tape June 2002).

Hourig explains that the alphabet can be traced back to 404-406 when Mesrop Mashtots, "a court scribe turned priest scholar created the Armenian alphabet with 36 letters" (Attarian, personal communication 2002). Long before Karine drew her map of Armenia, the kingdom was effectively partioned by the eastern and western regional powers of the Byzantine and Persian empires. With the support of the king, Mashtots set out to open schools together with his students to teach and to translate books. Hourig maintains that "from the fifth century on books and writing have been closely connected to the preservation of the Armenian language and identity" (Attarian, 2002). In the 20's, they experimented with a number of orthographies in the republic of Armenia. While Eastern Armenian gained prominence, the issue of orthography is still contested and highly debated within diasporan Armenian communities.

3.1.2 Reading words/reading world

Language in Quebec frequently determines the neighbourhood where people live, their political affiliations and media they watch, read or listen to. While there is no recognizable bounded Armenian neighbourhood, the Armenian community has a visible presence through its constructed material places - its institutions. It has supported a trilingual media and educational school system that includes regular and Saturday schools. All three researchers working in the Armenian context expressed concerns about the traditional, narrow literacy practices that seem to characterize the Armenian day school. This concern led Hourig to volunteer her time and conduct her own Saturday writing sessions for a small group of children. The next two nuanced literacy moments provide additional insight into her rationale for creating more enjoyable Armenian literacy practices in a context outside the official Saturday or day school and can be more appreciated when viewed against the larger landscape/s of the Armenian community as Diasporan.

Daron's Structurings and Images

> Even though (Daron) went about his usual "structurings" in his poem(in Armenian) in both cases he built them around beautifully crated images. He has amazing vocabulary. He felt at ease with the imagery he created and was very sure of what it was he wanted to convey. (In one instance when he had composed an image using the sense of hearing to describe his number, he had written that it resembled the sound of "the flight of a delicate butterfly" – nourp titernigi me trichkin tsayne ouni. I asked him if he rather meant "delicate flight of a butterfly." He gave me a disapproving look and insisted he knew what he was writing. "Delicate was to modify "butterfly" and not "flight". He also seemed to play love to play with the words (Field Notes – Attarian).

Talar Gliding in and out of Four Languages

> At the time of the study Talar was seven years old. She attended an Armenian heritage language school for a year. Her parents however made a decision to pull her out of this setting at an early stage. He now attends a mainstream French public school. She is a bright and artistic little girl. She won first place at the annual McGill conservatory competition, where she played one of her own compositions. Talar speaks the Eastern dialect of Armenia, since both her parents are originally from Armenia. Her father is concerned that ever since she has been out of Armenian school, she has started to forget the Armenian alphabet. Even though her parents speak only Armenian at home, Talar prefers to use French. Since her paternal grandmother is a Russian speaker, Talar effectively glides in and out of four languages. Before Talar's arrival the main language of interaction in our small circle was in Western Armenian. Talar's arrival changed the group dynamics naturally. The children immediately started using all the Eastern Armenian they knew (Field Notes –Attarian).

Both literacy moments evoke more visible appreciation of multilingual children's positionings in those elusive moments when they confront not only the work of identity and identification but also their own creativity and voice in more than one language and/ or dialect. The concept of Diaspora may well become more synonymous with family relationships than a particular place or homeland like the Republic of Armenia (Hayastan). The vitality of the Armenian community can be attributed in part to the heritage language schools, material places, mental and ideological spaces where Armenian youth have the opportunity to develop hybrid identities as 'Armenian-Canadian' - individuals with a dual sense of belonging and active members of both heritage and mainstream societies. Observing national-religious feasts and holidays developed in the 1920; these cultural activities later came to be called *hayapahpanoom*, or 'the preservation of Armenian identity'. Armenianness' was defined initially by means of certain more or less binding markers of identity. These include the maintenance of traditional family values, emphasis upon friendship between different Armenian families, use of the Armenian language at home and in the community at large, the establishment, wherever feasible, of all-day and one-day Armenian schools, and preservation of Armenian personal names, cuisine and other traditions and customs (Sanjian, 2001).

Thus, Diaspora in its traditional sense of 'homeland' still dominates the discourse on Armenian identity among members of the Middle Eastern diaspora. It takes on evolving and more widespread meanings as new technologies such as telephones, jets, fax machines, the internet and media expands the possible spaces for diaspora networking and cultural dialogues about what it means to be Armenian. Children like Daron, Karine and Talar indicate that the varied customs and dialects found in different Armenia villages of the ancient Ottoman Empire are changing as new outlooks, linguistic abilities and cultural positionings emerge. Thus, Attarian's Saturday literacy events provide spaces for children to create poems, stories, anecdotes and discover their own meanings of being 'Armenian'. Each will imagine or construct the diaspora, the vision of homeland and construction of culture in different ways. This is also the case within the Chinese community which has been perceived as bounded, material place, homogenous community and "Asian" looking".

3.2 A Chinese context - reading spaces - worlds of difference

Our dialogues within the Chinese Heritage Language context also focus on reading the worlds of differences within this Asian context and the commodification of hybridity. Xioa-Lan believes that Chinese people have also been dispersed all over the world as "they seek a better life for themselves, families or a safe haven protecting them from social injustices". However, some of the children in this Chinese context have a strong affiliation to China as illustrated in this excerpt from Shuzi's text which appeared in a local Chinese newspaper.

> The studies and lessons at Zhonguo (school) remind me of China. It makes me feel that I am still living there. What I see are people with yellow skin and black hair, what I hear are the familiar sounds of our language. All that happened at Zhonguo (school) reminds me of my classmates and teachers far away in China, my grandparents and the environment I

was so familiar with, I miss them. When one day I have the opportunity, I will go back to visit them. (Chinese text by Zhuzi 11 years translated from an article in a local Chinese newspaper)

In Montreal, the Chinese are Quebec's fourth largest ethnic minority group. City-installed arches to Chinatown in downtown Montreal might lead one to conceptualize this community as fixed, materially bounded and as a discrete culture. However, despite this visible, physical presence in the city, there is much heterogeneity within the Montreal Chinese; there are several groups mainly based on origin of home country such as Taiwan, Hongkong, Singapore, or other countries in South-East Asia with Chinese populations. The increasing number of immigrants from mainland China has changed the demographics of the Chinese ethnic population in Montreal which is now estimated to be about 56,830. Many Chinese heritage language schools were founded and established to maintain Chinese traditions and languages. These schools employ different regional languages and phonetic systems (Pinyin or Zhuyinfuhao) as instructional tools for the teaching of either the simplified or the classical Chinese characters. Xiao-Lan Curdt-Christiansen draws attention to the worlds of dialect difference within the Chinese context in Montreal: The Chinese language consists of seven major dialects or regionlects which are mutually unintelligible: Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu, Xiang, Gan, Kejia and Min. In China, Taiwan and countries with Chinese immigrants, one of the more than 50 Chinese dialect varieties is often used at home as a vernacular and the standard language and the national language of the host country is used in public (Curdt-Christiansen, 2001).

To date, we have located eight Chinese Heritage Language Schools in Montreal that can be tied to very different immigration patterns, language and religious affiliations. The Zhonguo school which is described here and which Yoyo attends is the largest of all the schools.

3.2.1 A Chinese heritage language school

The Zhonguo school (pseudonym) was founded in 1994 as a private Saturday school to respond to this need for language and cultural maintenance. As a discursive space, it is independent and autonomous and receives no government grants. In contrast to the Armenian day school, it has no formal connection to the school boards in Quebec and nor is it financially funded by the Ministry of Education. The mission of this school was to create a place where Chinese (Mandarin) was taught and Pinyin (Chinese phonetic script) would be used to teach simplified Chinese characters, the standard script of China today. The school officials rent the building of a major college in urban Montreal as its location on the weekends. Thus, as a discursive place, unlike the Armenian school, it has no visible edifice or logo that explicitly signals it as "a" Chinese school." During the time we first gained access to this school through Xiao-Lan, the school had a population of about 500 children who are predominately Chinese. Over eighty percent of the students come from Mainland China and ten percent from Hong Kong. The remaining ten percent of the students come from Taiwan or are Caucasian Canadians. The student population has increased to over seven hundred in the last two years.

There are now more than fifty classes and over forty teachers (Zhonguo school report 2000). The students now come from all over the greater Montreal area and the suburbs; some students even come from Vermont. Most of them speak one of the Chinese language dialects at home and attend either French or English school during the week. The school uses a "semi imported" curriculum. Texts are imported from China; those used for teaching the Chinese language are special textbooks designed for teaching Chinese to overseas Chinese children. The teaching methodology is mainly teacher centered and the most frequent pattern of teacher discourse could be described as the typical Mehan like IRE pattern classroom (Curdt-Christiansen, 2000). Courses are offered in Chinese language arts (in Mandarin), mathematics, Chinese chess, drawing/painting, national dance, music, and Chinese martial art. For newcomers, courses in English and French are also available. All teaching is in Mandarin. Most of the teachers have been professional teachers in China

Similar to Attarian's statement about changes in Armenian literacy, the Chinese community faces changes in the uses of Chinese scripts. Post 1949, mainland China used a system of simplified characters called *jiantizi* rather than the traditional system of characters associated with ancient texts and paintings. The latter system, known as *fantizi* was used in Taiwan and Hong

Kong, places that had provided Canada with many Chinese–speaking immigrants. Recently, Montreal's newest Chinese language newspaper, Sinoquebec/Chinese newspaper, featured some articles in simplified characters rather than the more complex characters that are stories in themselves. Local Chinese newspaper Li and his fellow immigrants from mainland, China felt the need rescript their literacy faces and their newspapers. Like Xiao-Lan , Li was educated in post revolution China where the elaborate picturesque script has been changed to a simplified version now called *Pinyin*. In Chinatown, one can see the evolution of written Chinese as an ongoing transformation from the traditional script handed down by parents and grand parents and current reform uses of Chinese script – an evolution influenced by history, politics and culture in addition to geography. The first and most popular Chinese newspaper still opens in the traditional way, reading the back pages first and from left to right.

3.2.2 Reflections on 'Asian looking people' - worlds of differences

An interesting finding from the informal observations of and conversations with the children in formal and informal settings is the varied patterns of code switching among the children which seem mostly determined by their socialization, language affiliations, friendship patterns, family situations and daily lived spaces and personal locations as illustrated in these excerpts from interviews with two children.

> I meet Kevin only once a week and sometimes on a holiday when our parents arrange eating together. .. We don't know how to say things; if I want to tell Kevin what I have done in my school. I tell him in French, because… I.. what we did at school was in French. I don't know hot to tell him Chinese, like the things we do at school.
> My mom and dad do not always have time for me. I do my homework on my own. I don't have other close Chinese friends to play with. And David lives in South shore, it is very far for me to go to him every day.

The positive sense of self which emerges among many of the multilingual children in our project is not the case in every heritage language context or school situation. For example, even though Chinese cultural commodities are similarly available, the Montreal Chinese community has a public material space and face, has been well established since the turn of the century, Bee reflects on her own identity as Asian-looking and in relation to other minority language children in her culturally diverse, English medium school which offers a French Immersion Program. Nine year old Bee also attends Shonguo, one of the eight Saturday Chinese Heritage language schools in Montreal. Her reflections illustrate that the ways in which children's identities take shape and change are relational in character. Her self understandings about differences, racism and discrimination have a strong emotional resonance that impacts on her sense of belonging, socialization and friendship patterns in her "everyday school" in comparison to her" every Saturday school." Many children spontaneously comment on these discursive demarcations of their schools.

> The Only Asian Looking
> I have two schools, one is French and English everyday school Hillrose Academy and the other school is every Saturday Chinese school, Zhonguo school. At my everyday school a boy and I are the only Asian looking people. The rest of them are mainly from Italy or Greece. They look differently from me they look like Canadians. There are Greek, Italian, Hebrew and English heritage language classes in the school, but no Chinese or Japanese classes. I do not like my school very much because people make fun of me and call me chinese girl instead of my name. I try to ignore them. I do not make fun of Italian people because Chloe is my best friend and she is Italian..... I don't have as many friends in Shonguo as in Hillrose, but they are very nice to me. Everybody is Chinese looking with brown eyes and black hair except Xiao-An. She is totally blond with very blue eyes. My parents say that they can't believe she is half Chinese. Anyway, she is my best friend in Shonguo (Trans. Bee).

In this excerpt from her Chinese journal, Bee reflects on her every day school experiences at Hillrose Academy (an English school with a middle French immersion program) and her every Saturday Chinese School, Zhonguo school. These two discursive school spaces impact on her

reflections, social relationships and sense of self. Although Hillrose Academy is culturally diverse, Bee comments on her outsider status "as Asian looking" in this place. We hear the intertwined voices of the children and her interactions with them. Ironically, her best friend, Xiao-An who attends Shonguo school, is Chinese but not "Asian looking". She has blond hair and blue eyes. She was born in Canada; her mother is Chinese and her father is an English speaking Canadian.

Unlike Bee who attends an English school, Xiao-An attends a French public school during the week. Xiao is a comfortable reader, writer and speaker in all three languages. She sees herself as a Chinese, white Canadian and clear sense of belonging to her Chinese roots. She deliberately wrote her title in Chinese characters, demonstrating her knowledge of Chinese and her connection to her Chinese background and declarative statement about her lunch that she brought to school The text serves as another example of local literacy moments that offer windows on the complex, contextual worlds of multilingual children, where subtle sifts and slide of meaning collide, occur and re-occur (Maguire, 1999). We have many instances of children's self portraits or statement as they reflect on their sense of self and others, their insider and outsider status, sense of belonging, race and ethnicity in different contexts.

> One day, while I was in 5th grade, I brought chopsticks to school because I had noodles. I found out that the microwave we had in our class was in another class so I had to go to the other class to warm up my noodles. It made me feel weird to walk into a 4th grade class to warm up noodles. I had to go get their lunch teacher and that meant walking around the class a lot. I hated doing that. When I went back to class and started eating noodles with chopsticks, seven to ten people crowded around my desk looking at me or saying I was weird or asking if I was Chinese. I felt like yelling at them and telling the mind their own bees wax but I didn't say anything. I just kept feeling angry until the teacher came and shooed them away.

A clear pattern has developed in some of the heritage language contexts where some of the students feel comfortable, welcomed and able to celebrate their heritage languages and identity. There are other places where that is not the case because of traditional discursive practices, family situations and geographical locations.

3.3 A Japanese Hoshuko School - globalization and transnational spaces

The Japanese community is the smallest of the three communities examined in this paper. Census data indicates that only two percent of the Canadian population are Japanese. Japanese Canadians began to move to Montreal in larger numbers between 1942 and 1945 as a result of the federal governments evacuation, internment and dispersal plan (The Japanese Canadian Experience in Quebec 1987). According to Tomoko Makabe (1998) in her book *The Canadian Sansei*, there were in the 1991 census data 2,360 Japanese Canadians in Montreal. In the seventies, two schools opened, the Montreal Hoshuko (Supplementary School) and the Montreal Japanese Language Centre. Forty -five years have passed since a large influx of Japanese Canadian relocated to Montreal from internment and work camps, ghost towns and sugarbeet farms in British Columbia and Alberta. Compliant with the federal government's dispersal policy, Japanese Canadians who had once lived in strong, concentrated west coast communities, scattered themselves across the country. Within the urban cities, they relocated to such places as Montreal. Their fear of visibly regroupng as a cultural group and of provoking continued racial discrimination was as strong as, and in conflict with, their need for cultural affirmation and support. In a section of *Repartir a Zero*, a community defined, Bourgault writes:

> Japanese Canadians in Montreal today remain dispersed in terms of the areas they live in, the work they do and the schools they send their children to. They have avoided visible concentration as a collective, hoping to blend in, unnoticed into the larger population. Although Japanese Canadians have lived relatively anonymously in Montreal since they arrived in the early forties, they have always maintained contact with each other through various community organizations and groups. This kind of networking was essential in the

> early days following their wartime persecution and it has developed, through the years, into the very structured community on which they are dependent today. (p. 24)

Japanese literacy and heritage schooling must be located within the different generations, Issei, Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei children. By the Issei generation making themselves less visible as a community as a conscious, deliberate and strategic choice, many second Nisei and third generation Sansei Japanese Canadians have lost their mother tongue or are unaware of their roots. The concept of heritage language is confounded if we distinguish between Japanese returnee children who will return to Japan and Canadian born Japanese children whose parents have immigrated to Canada or intermarried and plan to make their home in Canada or Quebec.

Unlike the public face and space of the Chinese Community, there is no particular, bounded, material physical space, nor identifying markers of 'a Japanese community' in Montreal. The Japanese Saturday school, founded in response to demands by Japanese parents living overseas that their children receive Japanese education while living abroad has aimed to create a Japan-centred atmosphere and curriculum. As the number of Japanese people working for Japan companies in the Quebec region increased, the Montreal *Shokokai* (the Japanese Association of Commerce and Industry), with the support of the Japanese Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education, opened the Japanese Saturday school in 1972. Since its establishment, is has been financially and administratively assisted and managed by the members of the *Shokokai*. Initially, the majority of the student population were children who were born and raised in Japan, but staying in Quebec only temporarily. They would eventually return to Japan once the parent (usually the father) completed the work term (Ishibashi, 1993; Yoshida, 2001).

Yoshida identifies two types of families at the Japanese Saturday school: those whose aspirations are linked to Japan and those whose aims are to integrate into the local environment by trying to learn about the local culture. Although it has never been public ally reported, the two groups consist of children whose parents are members of the *Shokokai* (business people) and children whose parents are in academia. Thus, the Japanese Saturday school has two main groups of families with different attitudes toward local schools as discursive spaces. While the academic families tend to be more interested in learning about local cultures and open to learning at the local school, the *Shokokai* families tend to keep up with Japanese educational materials and focus on their children's studies at the Japanese Saturday school rather than at the local school (Yoshida, 2001).

However, the *Shokokai* families were the driving force behind the Japanese Saturday school which may be attributed to their financial assistance to the school. Because of the economic situation in Japan in the 1970s, the families of the *Shokokai* were much wealthier than other families at the Japanese Saturday school. Due to the fixed rate of the currency exchange (before the introduction of floating exchange rates), the academic families were not as affluent. For instance, people who worked for major Japanese corporations—Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and the Bank of Tokyo—used to occupy important positions in both the *Shokokai* and the Japanese Saturday school steering committee. As the Japanese economy grew in the 1970s and 1980s, more companies sent more workers to their branch offices overseas. In Montreal, the Japanese population grew with the development of city's economy and so did the school populations at the Hoshuko. In 1989, the Japanese Saturday school reached its peak, with 95 students. The Japanese Saturday school teachers embrace the mission of the Japanese Saturday school -- to teach the curriculum students in Japan learn at school. They closely follow the guidelines for the teachers (*kyoiku shido yoryo*) provided by the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Despite the Japan-centered atmosphere of the Japanese Saturday school, since the mid 1980s, Canadian-born children whose parents had immigrated from Japan began to attend the school in greater numbers. This new student population created some tensions at the school. The focus of the Japanese Saturday school had always been the preparation of students for their return to Japan. However, this gradually shifted with more locally born children, who were born and raised in Canada and thus had no plan to return to Japan to live. Some parents who wanted their children to enter "good" Japanese universities in the future feared the deterioration of the educational standards of the Japanese Saturday school if the locally born students attended the Japanese Saturday school. They feared that the Japanese language proficiency of children born and raised in

Canada would not be sufficient, leading their children (from Japan) to level down their learning at the Japanese Saturday school (Yoshida, 2001).

The student population has decreased because of the exodus of Japanese (and many other) corporations out of Quebec. The student population is split almost fifty-fifty between children from Japan and Canadian-born Japanese. The number of students who come from mixed marriages (i.e., one Japanese parent and one non-Japanese parent) has also increased and resulted in more diversity to the Japanese Saturday school. The School's focus has shifted from being exclusive to being more inclusive of children from diverse backgrounds. It no longer strictly views itself as a place for preparing students for the entrance examinations back in Japan but has become more inclusive even admitting student who are not Japanese. Despite persistent preconceived notions about differences between Japanese-born and Canadian-born students, and mixed feelings about the mission of the Japanese Saturday school, Yoshida (2001) realized in the course of her fieldwork that the Japanese Saturday school is now largely understood as a place of relaxation by students, parents, and teachers. Throughout the interviews, teachers, parents, and students informed her that they refer to the Japanese Saturday school as a place where Japanese people gather together, exchange information, and speak in Japanese. Thus, the Montreal Japanese Saturday school has become a socializing space for recreation, and relaxation for diverse student populations.

In her study Yoshida (2001) documents how the experiences of contemporary young Japanese Canadians in Montreal are quite different from those who experienced internment camps decades ago. A first generation Japanese recalls this dark period in Canadian politics: "After the internment (during World War 11) all Japanese wanted to do was to blend in. They didn't want to stick out at all. That's why they moved here to Montreal and to eastern Canada in general. It was easier to re-begin life again (Interview with a Japanese Canadian at the Montreal Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre). The new technologies and commodification of Japanese popular culture and electronic media from Japan that children can access has influenced is changing children's evaluative orientations towards their identity, hybrid identities and identification. The next literacy moment considers identity construction and identification within a transnational context and the internet. Consider the following exchange between Reiko and Masato and chameleon character of his approach to identity and identification:

Masato's Musings: Cyber Space and Transnationalism
Reiko: Masato: People often ask me this question. On the Internet, I am always asked, Where are you from? I first say Canada.
RY: Why?
Masato: Why? I wonder why…But when I "chat" with the same person for a long time, I will eventually tell this person the truth, that my parents are Japanese.
RY: What do you say?
Masato: Usually, I would say, "To tell you the truth, I was born in Canada, but my parents are from Japan." Then, most of the time, the person would respond saying, "Cool!"
RY: Do you think saying "I am from Canada, but my parents are from Japan" is the same thing as saying "I am Japanese"? Do you think you are Japanese?
Masato: Well, I don't care much about these [identity] issues. But in my class, there are people who like Japanese *Anime* (Japanese cartoons). To them, I would say, "Ha, ha, you are from here, and I am from Japan!" Usually, I would say I am from Canada first, but when it is better to say "Japan," I would say that I am Japanese. When I am in Japan and asked to identify myself, I would say I am Japanese. My response would vary depending on where I am…
RY: Then, when do you think you are Japanese?
Masato: I think I am Japanese when I am with my friends. When a friend tells me, "I always wanted to go to Japan," I would say, "Ha ha, I am from Japan." [Translated from Japanese]
In response to Reiko's question, "how do you define Japanese people?" Masato said:

My friends think Japanese people are amazing. They think Japanese people are smart. I also think that Japanese people are smart and do things right. It is a small thing. For example, subways are neatly maintained and kept clean. There is not much spray paint on walls in cities. I think

Japanese people are very disciplined…I also think that Japanese people have a lot of imagination because their *anime* is so developed. [Translated from Japanese]

We can connect Masato's comments to the two metaphors I used as entry points to this paper "third space" and "disapora". Charles Taylor states "the demand for recognition … is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being" (1994:25). Mataso is happy to acknowledge his identity as Japanese because he perceives that his friends recognize Japan as a "cool country". Due to the increasing scale of globalization and transnationalism, the experience of Montreal Japanese Canadians has changed (Yoshida 2001).Through her conversations, the students reveal that their self-identification as Japanese and with Japan is derived from the "recognition" that they perceive they receive from their classmates at their local regular school. Yoshida attributes this positive self-image to the expansion of cultural marketing, Japanese popular culture and cultural commodities which easily available in Montreal and the internet which opens up new ways of belonging and being recognized.

4. Reflecting on third space

As the shifting contexts of the three heritage language schools illustrate, each context has a complex, unique history and development that relates to historical, economic and political issues in the country or culture of origin and identification with the host country. In this paper, I focused on local literacy moments when children engage the work of identity and identity politics and used a larger political landscape to locate the heritage language schools as discursive places and spaces with different historical trajectories, kind of disaporan communities of practices and spaces, real or imagined. Through observations, analysis of texts, interviews, and a close attention to multiple aspects of school and home contexts conducted in the relevant heritage language itself, in our on-going heritage language project, we have been able to develop an historical consciousness and move beyond the common problem of researchers working in the dominant (or a dominant) language and not having a deep insight into culture-specific norms of the other culture. Each researcher is herself a member of that language and culture group and became the expert informant and mediator for the rest of us. The multilingual and multicultural character of our heritage language group contributes to our working assumptions about language and the reflective understandings we have constructed to date:

- Multiliteracy development is deeply rooted in socio-cultural historical, economic and political forces that are sometimes visible and invisible.
- Becoming and being biliterate or multiliterate is a complex, dynamic relational process.
- The act of finding one's voice can only occur in contexts of equity, justice and mutual respect and trust.
- What children experience as literacy practices in communities, classrooms, families and schools are not neutral, cultural, social, political phenomena.

A dialogic approach with a focus on lived experiences has provided us with opportunities to engage in self-reflectivity about our own inquiry processes. We tape and keep minutes of all meetings. The data collection methods provide an audit trail of our evidence and the different entry points for new ideas and spaces. We have become used to the notion of a third space in which to live critically between and among cultural and language differences and multiple discourses.

The third space emerges as an overarching theme for understanding the coming together of the many "I"s the self embodies in this interpretive inquiry (Maguire & Beer, 2002). One constant concern has been to recognize the uniqueness and complexity of identity construction and literacy practices not only for each setting but also for each individual student in a particular place and space. Methodologically speaking, the comparative-contrastive embedded case portraits that we are attempting to draw of the schools, communities and family settings become a reasoning heuristic in understanding and drawing our methodological purposes. They serve as reasoning tools for understanding the nested contexts, political discourse and the multiple literacies embedded in our project. They also serve multiple functions to help us confront ambiguities, contradictions and constraints and to make heritage language schools visible in the public/private discourses of

schooling. They have been essential to us in recognizing the ways in which power relations in schools and communities constitute a site's discursive literacy practices and construction of individual and /or hybrid identities and spaces, real, perceived, lived, or imagined.

Multilingualism opens spaces for multiple literacies and multiple literacies offer places for multilingualism to be recognized and appreciated as a resource. Multilingualism frees students from the prison of monolingualism; dialogic perspectives and the notion of a third space free us from the idea that groups or individuals can only hold one perspective at a time (Holland, p. 15). Theories of social reflectivity (Bourdieu, 1990, Corson, 1991, Eisenhart, 1995) assume that socio-cultural forms and structures are not objective facts independent of individual activity, learning trajectories, space and places. To return to the contexts of Montreal and Quebec as ideal places to explore the complex, nunaced meanings of heritage languages, multiliteracies, identity construction and cultural positionings we face a number of challenging questions: What is a Heritage Language? Who is responsible for preserving a Heritage language? Several things must be taken into account when researching in multilingual contexts. There are shifting contexts within each heritage language school. Some linguistic minority populations are more heterogeneous than others must be considered when planning ethnographic inquiries in multilingual contexts. This requires taking a broader approach that includes historical perspectives as well as local literacy practices in particular spaces, perceived, conceived and lived.

Our dialogues have led us to re-examine the meanings and definitions of heritage language and heritage language literacies. Understanding the physical spaces, locations and historical roots of each school, language and community equally challenged our own assumptions about multiple literacies and meanings of literacy in these contexts. Just handling the different dialects and scripts in the different languages has challenged our linguistic assumptions, let alone competencies. As our portraits of the three Heritage Language schools are emerging, we see how each context has a complex and unique history and development that can be traced to historical, economic and political issues in the country or culture of origin. Thus, some literacy practices are preserved in the new country and others may be lost, resisted, or even erased by choice. These differences may or may not be connected to local communities with links to historical diaspora or immigration patterns.

Third space can be linked to other useful concepts. Benedict's (1983) "imagined communities" has implications for children's common participation in activities that become figured worlds of identification with others who are elsewhere, and engaged in similar activities such as e-mail and the internet. While the children see the power and potential of their multiliterate abilities, their teachers do not seem to tap or recognize this knowledge. For policymakers and educators, it is evident that a very wide definition of literacies has become essential to our inquiry: talk, e-mail, computer games, web-sites, cartoons, drawing, photos, and music have all emerged as important aspects of expression for case study participants as well as reading and writing in more than one language and script (Maguire & Beer, 2002). The children themselves frequently reflect on their own sense of self, their insider and outsider status, their sense of belonging, race and ethnicity as they weave their multiple literacies into their day-to-day activities and construct their identities. The children in this study would be better served if policy makers, community leaders and teachers could more fully appreciate and draw on their literacy potential and multiple language resilience. Equally, the cultural and language backgrounds of researchers must be visible and recognized in dynamic interaction with the contexts they are researching. Understanding the relationships between individuals, social practices and political discourses is critical for those in periods of rapid transition. It is especially important for children when different languages and cultures intersect in their classrooms and playground worlds and when these differences go unrecognized and cause disjunctures or even ruptures in their life worlds. Concepts such as identity, agency, space - real or imagined, and diaspora afford new ways of understanding the complex border crossings in intercultual communication and appropriation of multiple literacy practices globally and locally.

Note

1. The prime objective of our Heritage Language Research Group is to understand how children from non-mainstream backgrounds who have diverse school experiences negotiate their multilingual literacies in heritage language contexts. This research has been funded by NCTE

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