

Connection, culture and communication: Teacher trajectories, identities and motivations for teaching in a Vietnamese community language school



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Linguistic ethnographic study

Dissertations in Language Education 10



Developing multilingual literacies in Sweden and Australia

Opportunities and challenges in mother tongue instruction and multilingual study guidance in Sweden and community language education in Australia

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Vietnamese CL school

- Saturday mornings (9.00-12.00)

Material collected over 12 months

Audio recordings of

- Lesson observation, events, administrative meetings
- Semi-structured interviews (teachers, school and administrative leaders, other staff)
- Focus group interviews (students and parents)
- Photographs, field notes, classroom artefacts, school and administrative document.

(Reath Warren, 2017)

Two teachers of Vietnamese

Born in Vietnam, migrated to Australia as young adults

Nguyet*

- Has taught gr 2 at VCLS for 14 years
- Works as high school mathematics teacher

Tai*

- Has taught gr 9 at VCLS for 18 years
- Involved in teaching Vietnamese to children since soon after arrival in Australia
- Works as computer engineer

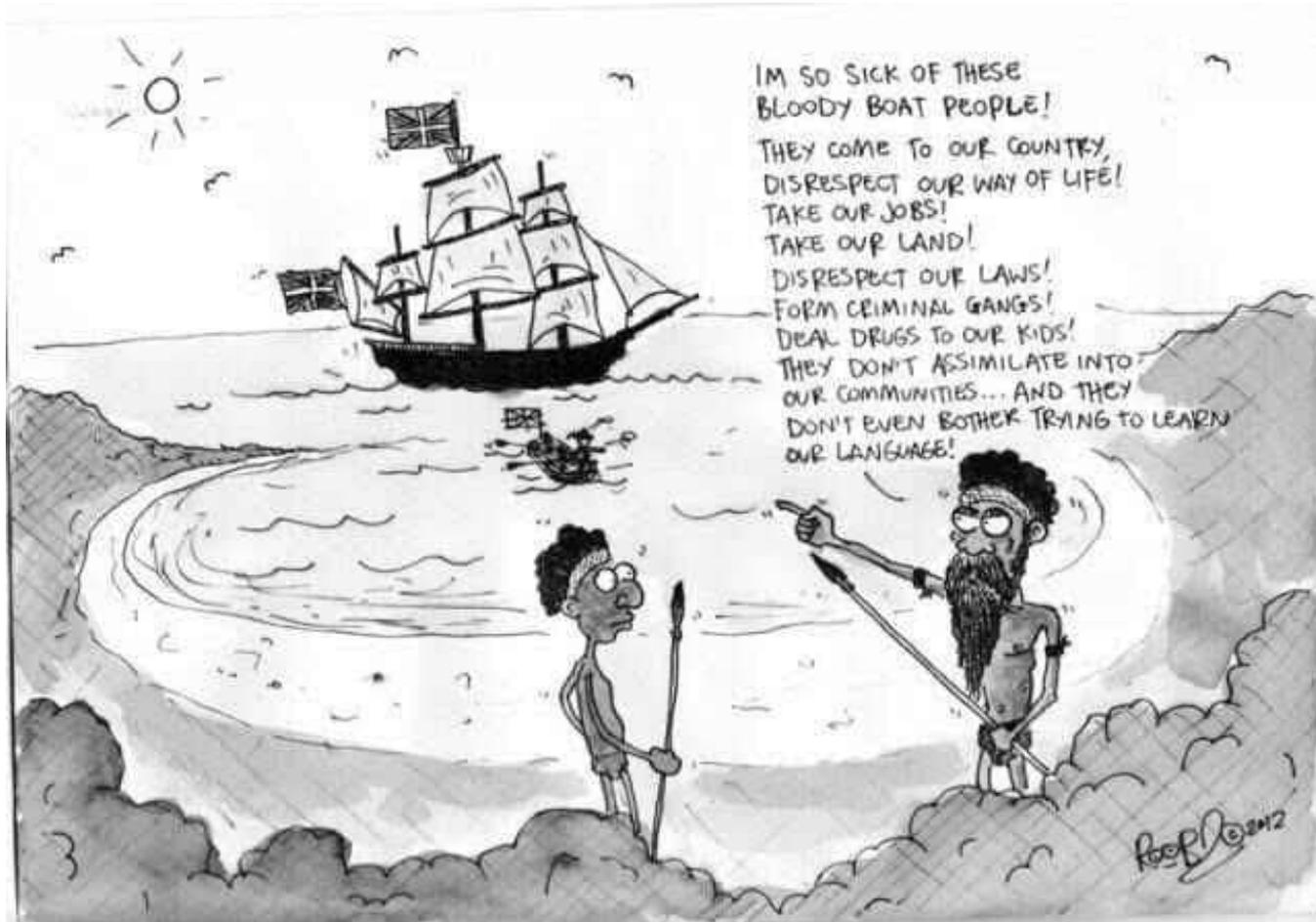
CL schools operate outside the mainstream school context (although often situated in mainstream premises)

Contextual factors



(Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2013)

Contextual factors



(Brand, 2012)

Theoretical perspectives

- Monolingual mindset in Australia (Clyne, 2004, 2008)
 - English as the "unmarked case" (Ellis, 2006)
 - Identities
 - Emerging through interactive and discursive processes
 - Reflections of an interplay between individual and structural factors
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Research question and methods

- How do Nguyet and Tai describe their journeys into and purposes for teaching at the school?
- Positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997):
 - 1) How are characters in the stories told by Nguyet and Tai positioned in relation to each other?
 - 2) How do Nguyet and Tai position themselves in relation to the listener?
 - 3) How do Nguyet and Tai position themselves in relation to discourses on languages, learning and culture in the broader Australian context?
- Poetic transcriptions (Ahlgren, 2021)

In focus today:

- Isolation versus connection as motivating factors for teaching Vietnamese
 - Social and ideological factors shaping CL teacher identity
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Poetic transcription

Transcription should be based on epistemological, methodological and theoretical assumptions (Ochs, 1979; Bucholtz, 2000)

An integral and dialogical process that include *selection, analysis of data, interpretation and representation*

- A process of *writing nearby* (Ahlgren, 2021, Journal of Sociolinguistics)
 - narrative texts with an allusive and connotative force
 - texts that bring out the resourcefulness of language use
 - text that position the researcher and emphasize reflexivity
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Poetic transcription

Poetic language (structured in lines, verses, stanzas)
has the potential to...

- recapture the original performance
 - highlight patterns of repetition, hesitations, false starts, revoicing self and others
 - elucidate pauses and silences
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I am been treat not very good
so I had to move to countryside to study
no chance to study at the city

I lived in the city
but they asked me to move
to move to countryside

And mum say: “you have no future here
you have to find somewhere else to go
to find your future, here is no future”

So mum helped to send me, and my sister
on a small boat
to to go
because she separate the family by two
or three part

I go first
so if I die
still half the family
yeah

Extract 1. Reasons for leaving Vietnam (Tai)

At that time
no money or anything involved
just someone finish high school in Vietnam
come here to help

The young kid who born here
want to learn Vietnamese yeah
and and then
we formed the young single group
volunteer teacher

And someone try to write a book
because there are no textbooks or anything yeah
at that time we start everything from scratch

Extract 2. Volunteering as a teacher in Australia (Tai)

First of all
when I started here in 1998
first I want relationship with people around
because otherwise I just by myself

So I just like to know more people
and then, when I get to this school
all the children was good
so I just like it
and I keep on working

I've got a friend and she was a dentist
she taught here before
and I don't know how she knew it
but she taught here before and she said:
"The Saturday School needs more teachers.
Would you like to get involved?"
and I said: "Yeah! Why not?!"

Extract 3. Investing in people and teaching (Nguyet)

When they are this age
when they learn a language
it's like their brain will process in a more complex way

Because if you learn English you just learn:
“This is the way the English put in sentences”
but you learn Vietnamese
oh they have to know another rule

So they learn more
and their brain develops in a different way
and then they appreciate the difference
so they are tolerant of different cultures
when they have to communicate with different people
so it's like
they is more open

Conclusions

Nguyet and Tai's expressed experiences of *isolation* and *disconnection* in a broader context, contrast with their descriptions of *involvement* and *connection* with the local community and the Vietnamese CL school.

Social factors (migration experience, educational structures) and *ideological factors* (the monolingual mindset), revealed in their narratives shape the *identities* that Tai and Nguyet perform.

- **A complex identity work:** vulnerability and agency
 - **Motivations for teaching:** communication, knowledge of culture and multilingual identity

 - **Poetic transcriptions:**
 - validate and valorize the seldom-heard perspectives of CL teachers
 - give space to voices that deviate from a normative way of talking
 - reflect emotional experience: struggle, pride and hope for the future
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