

# Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy, and Learning

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## Ideological Becoming

### *Bakhtinian Concepts to Guide the Study of Language, Literacy, and Learning*

Sarah Warshauer Freedman  
Arnetha F. Ball

In his recent exhibit, “Migrations,” photographer Sebastiao Salgado (2000) looks through his camera’s eye to tell what he calls “a story of our times,” a story of massive and global movements of people. Most often these people are migrating because they seek refuge from rural poverty, or because they are refugees or displaced persons whose movements are caused by war or other political, ethnic, or religious conflict. Salgado presents haunting images of outstretched hands reaching for a new life that is just out of grasp, hungry children in parched landscapes that yield no food, masses on the move with nowhere to go. These images come from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. These are not the typical media images of globalization, which associate modernity with progress and prosperity, new technologies, and high-speed travel. We acknowledge the typical modern images, but we also think it critical not to forget Salgado’s more disturbing images, which are also images of our times.

Salgado could just as easily have fixed his lens on disturbing scenes in the United States: the hungry and homeless who migrate from shelter to street in search of spare change or a bite to eat, undernourished school children moving from home to school on unsafe streets, gangs of teenagers crossing neighborhood boundaries to mark territory and engage in seemingly senseless battles. In everyday life, these scenes occur in the context of great wealth and plenty that often exists right around the corner.

It is across these twenty-first-century divides – between the haves and the have nots, between those with place and those who are displaced, between those with access to high-speed travel and technology and those who have little access, and for those at all points along these continua – that we must find ways to communicate that establish bonds rather than create barriers.

Much prior research on language, literacy, and learning has examined the nature of the divides that separate us and the clashes that occur when disparate people come together, often in our schools but in other social

institutions as well (e.g., Ball, 1992, 1998; Ball & Lardner, 1997; Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972; Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Freedman & Katz, 1987; Michaels, 1981). We use this chapter to argue for a new direction for research, one that focuses more directly on how people can and do communicate across these divides and the role such communication plays in teaching and learning. The earlier research on clashing cultures provides an important foundation for this new research agenda, for we need to know what goes wrong in order to understand what does and can go right. We argue for this new focus because more different kinds of people *are* coming together – in classrooms, in workplaces, over the Internet, in cities all around the globe. New communication technologies, easier access to faster modes of travel, as well as the global migrations Salgado depicts, argue for a global picture of increasingly diverse populations existing side by side and interacting together. Diverse people will struggle to understand one another. We therefore will need to understand the nature of that struggle. We will have before us opportunities to watch what goes wrong just as we have done, but we also will have opportunities to watch and learn from effective communication as it occurs.

#### DEFINING IDEOLOGICAL BECOMING

We are specifically interested in understanding how effective communication leads to the development of language, literacy, and learning in these new contexts. In seeking this understanding, we have found the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and his whole school, including Medvedev and Voloshinov, extraordinarily helpful, especially their concept of “ideological becoming.”

Before discussing why we find this concept so helpful, we define ideology in order to clarify what Bakhtin and his followers mean by the term. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary* (2000), ideology means:

1. The body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture
2. A set of doctrines or beliefs that forms the basis of a political, economic, or other system

The second, more political meaning is often ascribed to Bakhtin. However, the Russian word *ideologiya* does not carry strong political connotations. Morris (1994), who writes about British English, sees Bakhtin’s meaning as most consistent with the first definition:

The Russian ‘*ideologiya*’ is less politically coloured than the English word ‘ideology’. In other words, it is not necessarily a consciously held political belief system; rather it can refer in a more general sense to the way in which members of a given social group view the world. It is in this broader sense that Bakhtin uses the term. For

Bakhtin, any utterance is shot through with ‘*ideologiya*’, any speaker is automatically an ‘*ideolog*’. (p. 249)

Emerson (1981) makes a similar but somewhat expanded point, writing from a U.S. vantage:

Its English cognate “ideology” is in some respects unfortunate, for our word suggests something inflexible and propagandistic, something politically unfree. For Bakhtin and his colleagues, it means simply an “idea system” determined socially, something that *means*. (p. 23)

In Bakhtinian writings, *ideological becoming* refers to how we develop our way of viewing the world, our system of ideas, what Bakhtin calls an ideological self. Although the Bakhtinian school’s concept of ideological becoming does not necessarily have a political edge, it does not exclude the development of a political idea system as part of ideological development. In the case of language and literacy learning, especially as we consider diverse populations talking and learning together, we believe that politics are an inevitable consideration. Language use and literate abilities provide ways for people to establish a social place and ways for others to judge them (see Trudgill, 1995). The choices learners make about what types of language to acquire and use are political just as the decisions teachers make about what types of language to promote and accept in the classroom are political. Students make conscious and unconscious decisions about how much to identify with and acquire school language and school ways; they come to school with ways of talking that mark them as members of a particular socioeconomic class, and they decide whether to move away from those ways; they decide what to read and write and whether they care most about pleasing the teacher or their peers or both or neither. Broadly speaking, these are all political decisions. Likewise, teachers decide how to respond to diverse language patterns in their classrooms; how much controversy to introduce into the classroom; how to group or not group students for learning; how to respond to individuals and the group; whether to teach critically, in ways that push students to examine the established social order. Again, these are all political decisions, some more explicitly and consciously so than others.

It is also important to note that the concept of ideological becoming does not refer to the development of isolated concepts or ideas. Bakhtin and his followers are interested in the development of the whole person and his or her complex of ideas and concepts, including political ideas, but not to the exclusion of other parts of the idea system. Bakhtin is concerned with more than individual growth because he places the individual firmly within a social context and shows that the individual influences the social world, just as the social world influences the individual.

HOW IDEOLOGICAL BECOMING RELATES TO LANGUAGE,  
LITERACY, AND LEARNING

To understand the importance of ideological becoming for language, literacy, and learning in contexts where diverse people come together, we first note that according to Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978), ideological becoming happens within what he calls “the ideological environment” (p. 14).<sup>1</sup> According to Bakhtin/Medvedev, “Human consciousness does not come into contact with existence directly, but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world” (p. 14). In effect, the ideological environment – be it the classroom, the workplace, the family, or some other community gathering place – mediates a person’s ideological becoming and offers opportunities that allow the development of this essential part of our being. In ideological environments characterized by a diversity of voices, we would expect not only new communication challenges, but also exciting opportunities and possibilities for expanding our understanding of the world.

Bakhtin (1981) notes that the coming together of the voices of the different individuals within these environments is essential to a person’s growth: “Another’s discourse performs here [in ideological becoming] no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth – but strives to determine the very basis of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior” (p. 342). All learning is at its core social. According to Bakhtin, the social interactions that are most effective in promoting learning are those that are filled with tension and conflict. Individuals struggle with these tensions as they develop their own ideologies. Bakhtin argues that the struggles are needed for people to come to new understandings: “The importance of struggling with another’s discourse, its influence in the history of an individual’s coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous” (p. 348). Although miscommunication of the type that has been so carefully studied inevitably occurs along the way, Bakhtin’s theory implies that it is essential to look beyond the moment of miscommunication to the longer-term, ongoing dialogic process if we want to understand the struggles that lead to learning. According to Bakhtin “our ideological development is . . . an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values” (p. 346). We go through a “process of selectively assimilating the words of others” (p. 341). The role of the other is critical to our development; in essence, the more choice we have of words to assimilate, the more opportunity we have to learn. In a Bakhtinian sense, with whom, in what ways, and in what contexts we interact will determine what we stand to learn.

<sup>1</sup> The question of authorship is disputed, although according to Morson (personal communication, 2002), it is now widely believed that this text was written by Medvedev. When we refer to it in the text, however, we use Bakhtin/Medvedev because this is the authorship ascribed on the text from which we are quoting.



Bakhtin (1981) argues that when diverse voices interact, we struggle to assimilate two distinct categories of discourse: (1) authoritative discourse, and (2) internally persuasive discourse. Because of their different properties, we struggle with them in different ways. Bakhtin defines authoritative discourse:

The authoritative word is . . . so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it among other possible discourses that are its equal. It is given [it sounds] in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact . . . for example, the authority of religious dogma, or of acknowledged scientific truth or of a currently fashionable book. (pp. 342–3)

The nature of our struggles with an authoritative discourse depends on our relationship with it. Bakhtin (1981) explains that literary characters often struggle against “various kinds and degrees of authority,” against the “official line” (p. 345); such is also the case in everyday life, which art imitates. These struggles occur in what Bakhtin calls a “contact zone,” that “zone of contact” where we “struggle against various kinds and degrees of authority” (p. 345).<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that all people struggle against all authority or all authoritative discourses, but rather that there are times in our lives when what we think as an individual is not the same as some aspect of the official doctrine of our larger world. It is at those moments of struggle that we develop our own ideologies. Bakhtin explains that the struggle occurs because

[t]he authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. (p. 342)

<sup>2</sup> Mary Louise Pratt (1991/1999, 1992) has been widely quoted for her use of the term “contact zone”; she does not derive her use from Bakhtin, but rather from linguists who talk about what occurs when different languages come into contact with one another. Contact languages refer to “improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in the context of trade. Such languages begin as pidgins, and are called creoles when they come to have native speakers of their own. Like the societies of the contact zone, such languages are commonly regarded as chaotic, barbarous, lacking in structure” (Pratt, 1992, p. 6). She uses the term more specifically than Bakhtin does “to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographical and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (p. 7). Like Bakhtin, she is interested in “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other,” but she is concerned with “contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt, 1991/1999, p. 584). She goes on to apply the term to modern contexts where contested cultures come together and uses it to provide a contrast to the common term “community” derived from “speech community,” which is often conceptualized as a homogeneous and coherent group of speakers.

Morson (this volume) explains that the authoritative word is not the same as the authoritarian word. The authoritative word may or may not be authoritarian. Although some people take authoritarian words as authoritative, Wertsch (2002) shows that some may resist. He gives the example of people living under an oppressive government who in their private discourses oppose the authoritarian words of the government, even though in public they act as though they accept these words as authoritative. The point is that it is important to determine whether what one voices as authoritative really functions authoritatively for an individual.

As we develop our idea systems or ideologies, besides struggling with the official authoritative discourses in our world, we also come into contact with and struggle with the everyday discourse of the common people we encounter. This everyday discourse is what Bakhtin calls internally persuasive discourse. Internally persuasive discourse has an almost opposite set of properties to those of authoritative discourse. According to Bakhtin (1981), internally persuasive discourse is “denied all privilege, backed by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society” (p. 342). It is what each person thinks for him- or herself, what ultimately is persuasive to the individual. As we form our own ideas, we come into contact with the discourses of others and those discourses enter our consciousness much as authoritative discourse does. The discourse of others also influences the ways we think and contributes to forming what ultimately is internally persuasive for us. However, unlike its authoritative cousin, internally persuasive discourse is subject to change and is constantly interacting with our ever-evolving ideologies. Indeed, “a variety of alien discourses enter into the struggle for influence within an individual’s consciousness (just as they struggle with one another in the surrounding social reality)” (p. 348).<sup>3</sup>

If we take the case of U.S. schools today, we can see the importance of considering learning and development in terms of ideological becoming. U.S. schools are changing demographically. Classrooms are more varied than ever before, with students coming together across what used to be considered uncrossable linguistic and cultural divides. These diverse populations bring a range of internally persuasive discourses, which will impact the process of ideological development and ideological becoming of all students inside our classrooms. They ensure plentiful tensions among a range of authoritative discourses to which different students will orient and among a wide range of internally persuasive discourses as well. They also ensure tensions between the authoritative discourses and the internally persuasive discourses. This rich and complex “contact zone” inside the classroom yields plentiful opportunity for students to decide what will be internally persuasive

<sup>3</sup> Landay (this volume) offers extended examples of the interplay of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse in the classroom. Morson (this volume) discusses the differences between the authoritative and the authoritarian, as well as offers further examples of the interplay of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

for them, and consequently, for them to develop their ideologies. This diversity, which includes the diversity within the world that surrounds the classroom, presents both challenges and opportunities as teachers seek to guide their students on this developmental journey.

#### SETTING A RESEARCH AGENDA

As we forge a research agenda for language, literacy, and learning for the twenty-first century, we need to consider the multiplicity of voices in our classrooms. Furthermore, we must think globally, and we must think about language, literacy, and learning in schools and in nonschool settings. In these contexts, we need to consider how the multiplicity of voices shapes the ideologies that the next generation will develop and that will guide us all in the coming century. These voices demand that we set a research agenda that includes the complexities of our world's societies, its schools, and its other settings where ideological becoming is nurtured.

We propose that if we take seriously the Bakhtinian notion of ideological becoming, there are at least three important implications for the future of research and practice:

1. Researchers and practitioners must take diversity seriously and see how it can be a resource.
2. Researchers and practitioners must seek to understand the mechanisms of growth and change, which is always occurring.
3. Researchers and practitioners must seek to understand peoples' struggles to creatively manage those tensions and conflicts that are critical to learning.

Next, we will explain what we think it means to take these Bakhtinian concepts seriously, using our own cross-national work in the areas of language and literacy learning and teacher education.

#### OUR RESEARCH IN CROSS-NATIONAL CONTEXTS

Ball presents her research in South Africa, and Freedman presents her research in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda (Freedman, Corkalo et al., in press; Freedman, Kambanda et al., in press). These cross-national studies have proven especially useful in helping us broaden our assumptions about diversity, growth and change, and the nature of the Bakhtinian struggles and tensions that are characteristic of our new times.

Ball's study (2000a, 2000b) focuses attention on the first implication for research, what it means to take diversity seriously and see how it can become a resource. Ball's study is based on a teacher education course implemented over a 3-year period in the United States and South Africa in an effort to help teachers become better prepared to teach culturally and linguistically

diverse students. Using data collected from more than 100 U.S. and South African preservice and in-service teachers, this research investigates the evolving perspectives of teachers as they prepare to face challenging situations in diverse schools. The data include the classroom discussions, narrative essays, journals, and autobiographies of the teachers' literacy experiences. This study shares the developing voices of these U.S. and South African teachers over time as they engage with issues of literacy and diversity in the course.

Freedman and her colleagues are studying the role of the schools in social reconstruction in two parts of the world that experienced war and genocide in the early 1990s: Rwanda and the former Yugoslav country of Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>4</sup> The study includes interviews and focus groups with educational officials as well as with local stakeholders (teachers, parents, and secondary students). The goal is to introduce local voices into the national and international debates about the roles schools are playing and might play in shaping the countries' futures. Freedman describes the official debates about the schools and then provides excerpts from interviews with local stakeholders. Freedman's work focuses attention on the second and third research implications, what is involved in understanding the mechanisms of growth and change, and what is involved in understanding struggles to creatively manage the tensions and conflicts that underlie learning.

### Ball's Project: Taking Diversity Seriously While Seeking to Understand the Mechanisms of Change

Current reform movements in the United States and abroad are challenging teacher education programs to prepare teachers who are able and interested in teaching in the schools of the twenty-first century. U.S. demographers predict that by 2020, 46 percent of the U.S. school population will be students of color, whereas in South Africa students of color comprise well over 50 percent of the school population. Reports on educational achievement in both countries confirm that a large number of these students attend schools in poor, underresourced areas and that many of them are failing to achieve at their full potential. Many of these students move from home to school on unsafe streets. They represent society's have nots, who are often displaced, and who lack access to high-speed travel and technology. Twenty-first-century classrooms in the United States and South Africa are becoming more varied

<sup>4</sup> Data were collected in three towns in different areas of Rwanda where the wars and genocide were experienced differently – Kibuye and Rubengera in Kibuye province, Save in Butare province, and Byumba in Byumba province. See related studies with complementary data collected in these same cities and in other parts of Rwanda in Stover and Weinstein, in press.

In the Balkans, data were collected in one town in BiH, Mostar. Additional data were collected in Vukovar in Croatia, but because they were collected later, they are not included in this chapter. Related studies with complementary data collected in these same cities, as well as in other parts of BiH and Croatia, can be found in Stover and Weinstein, in press.

than ever before. With students and teachers coming together across linguistic and cultural divides, it is more imperative than ever that teacher education programs prepare teachers to work effectively with diverse student populations. Clearly, an important goal of teacher preparation programs globally must be to prepare teachers to work effectively with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Ball's interest in investigating the changing perspectives of U.S. and South African teachers emerged because these two countries share striking similarities in their need to prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations and in their histories concerning the education of marginalized people of color. These two countries have historically shared many of the same language policies toward linguistically diverse students and the mechanisms they use to implement those inequitable policies. South Africa and the United States in past years promoted apartheid and segregation, which resulted in separate and unequal systems of education that deliberately miseducated Blacks in an attempt to lower their aspirations and prepare them for a subordinate role in society. Both countries share a history of racial disparities in the quality of schools, in educational access, and in the preparation of teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The cross-national study that is reported on here is based on a teacher education course that was implemented over a 3-year period with teachers from these two countries as they prepared to face challenging situations in diverse schools. This course drew on the works of Vygotsky (1978), Leont'ev (1981), and Luria (1981) to build a sociocultural theoretical frame that would help to explain how teachers develop commitment to issues of diversity, as well as how their commitments are revealed in their oral and written discourses, as they consider possibilities of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. It was hypothesized that, as teachers were exposed to strategically designed readings and activities within a teacher education program, their perspectives on literacy and commitments to teaching diverse student populations would be affected in positive ways. Using data collected from more than 100 U.S. and South African preservice and in-service teachers, this research investigated how teachers' developing perspectives and commitments can be facilitated by exposure to the internally persuasive discourses of diverse writers about literacy and through engagement with particular classroom activities. The research reveals how the teachers' developing perspectives and commitments are revealed in their changing patterns of discourse (Ball, 2000a, 2000b). The research involved discourse and text analyses of narrative essays, literacy autobiographies, journals, interviews, small-group discussions, and videotapes of teaching collected from the teachers enrolled in the course. These data illustrate the teachers' changing ideologies concerning theoretical principles and teaching practices. In a Bakhtinian sense, this research investigates the notion of ideological becoming. Ball conceptualized the teacher

education program as a learning environment and social setting – a contact zone – where ideological becoming would be nurtured. She realized that the teachers came to the course with a body of assumptions and beliefs that had been shaped by the authoritative discourses that they had encountered prior to this course. Knowing that each teacher began the course with a body of assumptions and beliefs, which constitute their internal ideologies, she exposed the teachers to a range of theoretical readings representing the internally persuasive discourses of others, which she hoped would be added to the multiplicity of voices that would shape and guide the developing ideologies of our next generation of teachers. She also exposed the teachers to readings about pedagogy and best practices that would enlighten them about working with diverse student populations and cause them to give serious consideration to ways that diversity could be viewed as a resource in their classrooms.

The teachers in this study brought a range of internally persuasive discourses to the course, which had been influenced by the authoritative discourse that shapes traditional approaches to teaching mainstream students. The internally persuasive discourses that each teacher brought to the course impacted their ideological becoming as they engaged with new ideas within our teacher education classroom. As most teachers enter teacher education programs, they bring with them very limited perspectives on what literacy is, what it means for a person to be literate, and ways that they can strategically use the diverse language and literacy practices that students bring to the classroom as a resource. Linked to these limited views is the fact that many of these teachers have also given little thought to teaching students who are different from themselves or who have had different literacy histories from their own. The teachers in this study were exposed to diverse readings that were carefully selected to broaden and challenge their previously held ideologies concerning the use of literacies in classroom practice. In essence, exposure to these theoretical readings and practical strategies, coupled with reflective writing, student case studies, and authentic teaching experiences, were designed to serve as a catalyst to motivate tensions between authoritative discourses and a wide range of internally persuasive discourses that were present in our class. This rich and complex “contact zone” inside the teacher education classroom yielded plenty of opportunities for students to decide what would become internally persuasive for them; in other words, it yielded plenty of opportunities for teachers to further develop their ideologies.

As we have noted earlier, it is what each person thinks for him- or herself, what ultimately is persuasive to the individual, that determines the development of their ideologies. As teachers form our own ideas, they come into contact with the internally persuasive discourses of others, and those discourses enter their consciousness much as authoritative discourse does. It was hoped that the discourses of the carefully selected theories of others

would influence the ways these teachers came to think about diversity, and contribute to forming what ultimately was internally persuasive for them. According to Bakhtin, the internally persuasive discourse of these teachers would be open and subject to change and would constantly interact with other ideas in ever-evolving ways. In the account that follows, excerpts collected from one of the teachers are presented in order to trace her changing discourses over time and to show evidence of her developing ideologies and plans for future practice. These brief excerpts are taken from the students' personal narratives, reflections on the course readings, and the teacher's discussions of how her participation in the course as a strategically designed activity system influenced her ideological becoming (see Ball, 2000a, 2000b, for a more detailed description of the complex mechanisms of change that influenced this student and her fellow classmates).

One South African teacher, Dorene, was a female in her late twenties who came from a lower-class, Black South African background. Dorene attended a teacher education program that was offered at a major university located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Although the university offered a traditional teacher education program, Dorene and her classmates were enrolled in a course for practicing teachers who were seeking certification in a Further Diploma in Education program. This teacher education program was designed to prepare teachers to teach in the newly emerging multilingual and multicultural schools. When she enrolled in the course, Dorene had been teaching for 3 years and living in an area of the city designated for "Blacks" during apartheid. Like all participants in the course, Dorene wrote an autobiography of her early literacy experiences in order to bring to a metacognitive level of awareness those experiences that helped to influence the development of her ideologies concerning literacy and what it means to be a teacher. In her autobiography, Dorene revealed that she grew up in a township and recalled starting school at a rather late age:

I was then nine years old. Neither of my parents attended school, they are illiterate. But, what I vaguely remember is that my mother used to show me pictures and tell me what was going on, i.e., a woman is carrying a basket, she is coming from town, etc. What I liked best was when she told me stories, some I still remember even today. When I was about seven years old I was hospitalized and I remember the nurses used to read us stories from books in Afrikaans and English. I was in the hospital for six months and I loved to listen to what was read and also joined the other children in a class where on certain days a lady used to come and teach us to read, write and count. We also attended Sunday school and reading was done all the time there. I learned to read and write on a slate. When I could master reading in standard 3, I used to read for my mother from the schoolbook and she would sit down and listen to me. If she didn't, I used to cry.

My reflections on my experiences are both positive and negative. Positive in the way that I developed a love for reading and school work and a love for teaching pupils the happiness and fulfillment a person gets from reading. But there were also

negatives. I often thought of dropping out of school because my father did not see the importance of me going to school, not allowing me to read my books at home. The only time I could look into my books was late at night . . . I passed my school years having to study only at school . . . or else I had to wait until he was asleep. Sometimes I was beaten at school and sometimes I was beaten at home for separate reasons. I was the only one who survived . . . my brother and sister dropped out of school at an early age and I blame my father for that. Having someone to encourage you in what you do helps and motivates you to go further. I thank my mother and my teachers for encouraging me. I always think of my teacher who used to say "one who strives never loses," and that is how I endured my school years. . . .

This autobiographical activity served as a readiness exercise that prepared Dorene and her fellow classmates to consider new and different perspectives, attitudes, and visions for language and literacy learning, inclusion, and teaching practices in the classroom.

Following their experiences of sharing and reflecting on their personal literacy histories, the teachers in the course were exposed to assigned readings that were carefully selected to broaden their previously held ideologies on literacy and classroom practice. They were exposed to the internally persuasive discourses of others through writings by McElroy-Johnson (1993) on giving voice to the voiceless, Giroux (1988) on teachers as transformative intellectuals, Freire (1994) on the pedagogy of the oppressed, Gee (1989) on discourse as identity, and Delpit (1992, 2000) on the acquisition of literate discourse and on teaching other peoples' children. In essence, exposure to these theoretical readings and to practical strategies, coupled with reflective writing and authentic teaching experiences, served as a catalyst that motivated the teachers to consider new possibilities for their teaching practices. As the teachers' metacognitive levels increased concerning their own literacy experiences, many began to look outward and to question and challenge some of their long-held perspectives that they may not have been consciously aware of earlier.

After reading Giroux's (1988) thoughts on teachers as transformative intellectuals and teachers as critical thinkers, Dorene wrote in her reflective journal her critique of the educational system as she now saw it:

There are problems in our system in that firstly our teacher training was not of equal quality and level as that of our white compatriots and because of that our teaching ways are poor because there is rote learning in our schools that does not give the time or opportunity for critical and logical thinking. I see a need for in-service training for teachers, so that teaching can be more conducive to student success and more creative so we can develop the pupils' skills in literacy in an adequate manner.

After reading excerpts from Vygotsky (1981) on the process of internalization and from Au (1993) on expanding definitions of literacy, Dorene wrote the following in her reflective journal:



The theory that relates to my action research project is the one by Vygotsky that says we should internalize the activities that happen with our learners and assist them in learning more than I was as a teacher. We should not be doing the thinking for the student, but rather, we should be acknowledging the child's knowledge and make him/her more accessible to learning and not stay egocentric. I as a teacher should think, "am I transferring knowledge or am I helping to develop the child holistically in all aspects of life. I should reflect on these things myself, as I want prosperity in my students. . . . In addition, the five strategies from Au (1993) are very important in that a child is not encouraged to be a convergent thinker, but he/she is encouraged to use resources and embark on projects that have different topics.

As the course readings became internally persuasive for Dorene, she indicates their persuasive force as she voices what she wants for the students in her classroom:

Culturally, the learner has to identify with themselves, knowing their own language and then acquiring the ability to communicate in the other languages that are around them, thereby understanding the society they live in. . . . The linguistic growth of students is increased when parents also see themselves as co-educators. There must develop this relationship. Schools should help to establish these collaborative relationships. Parents should be encouraged to participate in promoting their children's progress in the education of their pupils. This can be done if parents listen to their children reading books sent from home. . . . I can truly say that I am what I am today because of my mother and I thank the Lord for having her and myself for obeying authority even under excruciating circumstances. I now realize that these experiences helped to make me the grown up that I am: one who loves children and wants to help them in their learning. . . . I am interested in helping small children to acquire knowledge and through it they can learn to be better persons who can work for themselves and their community, to build the children's confidence so they will not be afraid to talk even if they don't know the other languages.

After many classroom hours spent in discussions, reading about various theoretical perspectives, working with diverse students, and implementing practical strategies within their classrooms, bridges were formed between the texts they read, the teachers' internally persuasive discourses, and the internally persuasive discourses of others – the diverse perspectives and the new voices that were being represented in the course. Dorene's final reflection on her expanding definition of literacy reveals her emerging thoughts about literacy and teaching in diverse classrooms. Dorene's definition of literacy evolved from one that included the ability to "read, write, and speak on social context and academic context," to one that "also takes into consideration the cultural background of the students." For Dorene, the concept of literacy was greatly influenced by her reading of Au (1993). She shared this thought in her journal:

As I have read Kathryn Au's views on the definition of literacy, I fully agreed that literacy is not just the ability to read and write but also having insight to extract meaning from a text, read with comprehension and be able to recall information.

To communicate in a logical and critical way, we must be finding out about commonalities among different cultures and understanding one another, developing skills in implementing the acquired knowledge both academically and socially.

From her reading of McElroy-Johnson (1993), she also included “the ability to voice out your thoughts orally” and, as she noted earlier, “having the confidence so they will not be afraid to talk even if they don’t know the other languages.” These statements illustrate that, for Dorene, the course activities greatly helped her to gain the strength needed to voice her feelings and to be an active agent of change for students of color in a system that desperately needs restructuring.

Dorene clearly represents a student engaged in ideological becoming as she indicates her teaching plans that have emerged as a result of the course along with the multiplicity of voices that she will need as she goes out into the system to impact change. She says, “I want as a teacher to help my pupils to achieve their goals, i.e., reading writing and speaking. I want them to be proficient in reading all the languages we teach at school.” Further evidence of Dorene’s ideological becoming was heard in her emerging internally persuasive voice as she says,

Now I can allow a buzz to take place in my classroom that makes the pupils feel free. I converse with them so that they may see I have an interest in their lives. As from when I started learning about the action research project, I let my pupils do activities like interviewing prominent figures in their community like policemen and nurses. This way, my pupils develop confidence in speaking with professional people besides at school. I have come to the realization that in order for the teacher to be effective in the class, she needs dedication and love for what he/she does. The teacher should be supportive to the children and not have a teacher-centered class. Guiding children and being a role model helps very much when allowing the children to make their own choices. But we must make a rule that each person is responsible for his/her choice of action. Effectiveness goes with planning. Without planning properly, what are you going to do with results that end in failure? That is why it is important to assess yourself and know your goals. And finally, the tone of your voice also plays a very important part. If you speak soft or if you scream, your pupils will imitate you.

The implementation of these changes and emerging plans were confirmed by Ball’s observation of the changes in Dorene’s teaching practices over time – during her 1997 visit to South Africa and again during her 2000 visit (see Ball, in press). As we came to the close of the course, Dorene penned the following letter:

Dear Dr. Ball:

Time flew by so quickly that I was taken aback with I heard that your time in South Africa is over. I will miss you. To tell the truth you came when I was fumbling – having hard times when I said I was quitting from the course. But you came with your fire – with Vygotsky and Au flying – and you boosted my spirits. I am thankful for the help you have been, for the insights you have given. Now I know I have to be aware of

every detail I venture into. In my schoolwork, I must have a far researching mind – to develop myself and ensure the progress of my pupils. I know now that for my pupils to be bilingual, I have to encourage them positively, not teaching them for the purpose of academic achievement only. But to let them adapt to all situations. Your handouts have been a great help and will keep on helping me. Whenever I am uncertain of something and need guidance, I will take a look at my handouts. The handout on classroom-based assessment by Fred Genesee has been a great help, together with the one on how to teach a second language to first language speakers. They have been very important and will continue to be. Instructing pupils is always a challenge, but the end results of our acquired skills will be for the betterment of our students. I wish you, doctor, a safe and peaceful journey home. Please come back again soon and keep us on our toes.

Thank you again very much.

Dorene

When many of the teachers first entered Ball's course, like Dorene, they freely admitted that they had not given a great deal of conscious consideration to the notion of working as advocates for social change concerning the learning environments available for critically thinking students from poor and marginalized backgrounds. During the course, teachers were confronted with the challenge of considering these issues through interpersonal and socially mediated forums, including readings representing the discourses of others, individual and shared reflections on a range of related issues, written engagement with carefully designed prompts on these topics, and challenging classroom discussions that cause them to consider issues of diversity in different ways. Exposure to theoretical readings and practical activities took place during the course as a catalyst for engaging teachers in oral and written conversations that Ball hoped would have a positive impact on their thoughts and developing ideologies on issues of equity and educational reform.

At the time of this research, South Africa was emerging from the systematic implementation of apartheid and a history of social, economic, and educational inequalities in the education of marginalized populations. When I conducted my research in 1997 and 2000, South Africa was seeking ways to more effectively educate large numbers of poor, marginalized, and underachieving students. Many of these students were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and they were educationally different from the students for whom the majority of instructional materials and school expectations had been tailored. At the time of my visits, it was clear that South Africa perceived the state of its educational program for underserved populations to be in crisis. With an end to official forms of social and economic segregation and degradation, as well as an apparent need for massive reconstruction of their educational system, South Africa welcomed innovations and collaborations that would support them in achieving their goals toward educational reform.

Dorene and many other students who participated in this course experienced challenges to their existing internally persuasive discourses that motivated them to struggle with the official authoritative discourses that they had previously encountered. They also came into contact with, and struggled with, the everyday discourses of their classmates and the common people they encountered. The changes that took place as a result of these encounters are what Bakhtin and his followers call ideological becoming.

### Freedman and Her Colleagues' Project: Understanding Struggles To Resolve Tensions and Conflicts

Freedman turns to the second and third implications for future research, those aspects of ideological becoming that focus on the mechanisms of growth, and how learners struggle with the tensions and conflicts that lead to learning. Whereas the Bakhtinian school discusses the positive role these struggles play in learning, tension and conflict take on a special intensity in the countries where Freedman and her colleagues' research is situated: Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). These countries are in the throes of recovering from the mass atrocity of recent war and genocides. Many of their citizens have suffered serious trauma, and many are undergoing major shifts in identity. They are struggling to survive their psychic and physical wounds, and they are struggling with how to understand their nationality and nationhood. They further are struggling with what democracy means for them personally and for their countries. The citizens of BiH also live under the supervision of the international community because the UN Office of the High Representative (OHR) enforces the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords. Many feel that the OHR sits unrelentingly in judgment of their actions. In both Rwanda and BiH, the schools carry the responsibility of inculcating ideologies in the next generation that will do nothing less than support reconciliation and a lasting peace. The stakes for the ideological becoming of the young are high and the teaching tasks complex.

In Rwanda during 4 months in the spring of 1994, the Hutu government organized and oversaw the slaughter, by conservative accounts, of at least a half million people (Des Forges, 1999) and, by some estimates, of as many as 800,000 people (Sibomana, 1999). The current Tutsi-dominated government espouses a philosophy of national unity and reconciliation, although it was involved in massacres of up to 300,000 people in Rwanda and Congo (Prunier, 1995; Sibomana, 1999). As Sibomana (1999) assesses the situation, "Official declarations are one thing; reality is another" (p. 139). The current Rwandan government has strongly discouraged all official identification by ethnicity, and many believe it is illegal to identify as belonging to a particular ethnic group. The government also discourages even unofficial displays of ethnic identity. There is little space for disagreement or debate,