

**Becoming bilingual:
Exploring language and literacy learning
through the lens of narrative**

Sumiko Taniguchi

Doctor of Philosophy

2009

**University of Technology, Sydney
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank a number of people who helped make this thesis possible. First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Jenny Hammond, for her constant support, insightful advices, and above all, her patience. I am also grateful to my co-supervisors, Lyn Yates and Alison Lee, for their valuable comments and encouragement.

I would like to thank research participants who shared their stories with me. Special thanks go to Satoko and her family, whose willing cooperation enabled me to explore the potential of narrative inquiry. I also thank two anonymous participants for their generous co-operation in interview sessions.

I would like to extend special thanks to my writing advisors: Sheilagh Kelly, Cynthia Nelson, Constance Ellwood, and Robert Covelley. I would also like to thank Penny Kinnear for her help with English translation.

I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues, Akira Haruna and Kathy Riley, in particular, who showed their interests in my work, and gave me encouragement. My thanks go to my fellow research students past and present for their support: Emi Otsuji, Constance Ellwood, Anita Devos, Usa Noytim, Bernice Melville, Julie Choi, Kate Bower, Takako Yoshida, Maria Harissi, Bong Jeong Lee, Maria Chisari, and Chhang Rath. Special thanks to Terry Fitzgerald, who sustained my wellbeing through Alexander technique lessons. My gratitude is also extended to the Faculty staff and IT

support persons for their efficient work.

My gratitude for their moral and intellectual support goes to three families in Camden, Leemens, Wrigleys, and Newtons, who made my stay in Sydney always comfortable.

Finally, I wish to say thank you to my husband and my daughter for their understanding and patience throughout the development of my thesis.

Sumiko Taniguchi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: EXPLORING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING THROUGH THE LENS OF NARRATIVE	1
1.1 Why becoming bilingual?	1
1.2 Origin of this study	3
1.3 Research questions.....	7
1.4 Theoretical framework of the thesis	9
1.4.1 Why the need for a complementary approach to studying second language and literacy learning?	9
1.4.2 Why sociocultural theory?	14
1.4.3 Why Narrative?.....	18
1.4.4 Why identity?	20
1.4.5 Why written narratives (as opposed to spoken narratives)?	23
1.4.6 In conclusion: The role of sociocultural and narrative theory in my research.....	27
1.5 Research design of the thesis	28
1.6 Contributions of the thesis	32

1.7 Structure of the thesis.....	33
CHAPTER 2 THEORISING NARRATIVE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES	34
Introduction	34
2.1 Conceptualising narrative	35
2.1.1 Locating conceptions of narrative historically	35
2.1.2 Etymology of narrative: Narrative as both telling and knowing	36
2.1.3 Formalist approaches to narrative: Narrative as literary text.....	37
2.1.4 Transition from narrative as literary text to narrative as an organizing structure of personal experience: Labovian sociolinguistic analysis.....	38
2.1.5 Significance of Narrative turn: Epistemological shift.....	40
2.1.6 Narrative as a mode of knowing	44
2.1.7 Interpretive approaches to narrative.....	47
2.1.8 Emphasis on a sociocultural perspective: Narrative as a social and relational activity	52
2.2 Using narrative in language and literacy learning research	54
2.2.1 Overview of the uses of narrative in the field of language/literacy learning	55
2.2.2 Review of representative narrative studies in the field of language and literacy learning.....	59
2.2.3 Autobiographical studies of language learning	60
2.2.4 Biographical studies of language learning	64
2.2.5 Conceptions of narrative and narrative inquiry within my study	73
Summary of Chapter 2: Major theoretical points about narrative	79

Introduction	122
4.1 My story.....	124
Overview of my transitional stages	124
4.1.1 The first stage: Japanese monolingual	125
4.1.2 The second stage: Contact with English as a foreign language at school.....	127
4.1.3 The third stage: First sojourn: Intensive exposure to English in the United States..	130
4.1.4 The fourth stage: Japanese dominant but with constant use of English in study and research	136
4.1.5 The fifth stage: Becoming a second language learner/user in Australia	142
4.1.6 The sixth stage: Conscious effort to become a bilingual research writer	154
4.2 Satoko’s story	155
Overview of Satoko’s transitional stages	155
4.2.1 The first stage: Chinese monolingual.....	156
4.2.2 The second stage: Migration and social and linguistic adaptation to Japan.....	157
4.2.3 The third stage: Neither L1 nor L2	159
4.2.4 The fourth stage: Striving for ‘both L1 and L2’	161
4.2.5 The fifth stage: Reconstruction of bilingual identities through writing autobiographical narrative	168
4.3 The experiences of collaborative autobiographical narrative writing: Intersection of two stories	169
4.3.1 The circumstances of writing sessions	170
4.3.2 Post-migration narrative	173
4.3.3 Pre-migration narrative	181
4.3.4 Satoko’s story beyond.....	190

4.3.5 My transition: A conscious effort to become a bilingual research writer	192
Summary of Chapter 4: Life-long transitions of two language learners/users.....	195
CHAPTER 5 INSIGHTS INTO LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING	198
Introduction	198
5.1 What is involved in becoming bilingual? Key issues emerging from learners' stories ...	200
5.1.1 Border crossings	201
5.1.2 Social interaction	203
5.1.3 Self-regulation of affect.....	212
5.1.4 Transformation of identities.....	219
5.1.5 Linguistic development	236
5.1.5.1 Linguistic development across languages.....	237
5.1.5.2 The multimodal nature of language development.....	243
5.1.5.3 Control of multiple genres.....	247
5.2 The role of written narrative as mediating tool	249
5.2.1 The relationship between the mediation of narrative and the mediation of writing.	250
5.2.2 Role of written narrative as mediating artifact.....	252
Summary of Chapter 5.....	256
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS: RE-CONCEPTUALISING	
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING THROUGH THE LENS OF NARRATIVE	258
Introduction	258
6.1 Insights into language and literacy learning.....	260
6.1.1 Summary of major findings: Nature of learners' change.....	261

6.1.1.1	Becoming bilingual involves life-long change	261
6.1.1.2	Becoming bilingual involves multifaceted nature of change	262
6.1.1.3	Becoming bilingual involves bidirectional change across languages, modalities, and genres	264
6.1.1.4	Becoming bilingual entails continuous translation	266
6.1.2	Significance of research findings and theoretical implications	268
6.1.2.1	Interplay among learners' social, affective and cognitive domains	269
6.2	The role of written autobiographical narrative in processes of language learning	270
6.2.1	Summary of major findings: The role of written narrative.....	271
6.2.1.1	Making experiences comprehensible and tellable.....	272
6.2.1.2	Identity transformation	273
6.2.1.3	Facilitating social interaction.....	274
6.2.1.4	Taking control of emotion	274
6.2.1.5	Supporting language learning through appropriation and developing meta-cognitive awareness	276
6.2.2	Significance of research findings and theoretical contributions	277
6.2.2.1	The notion of artifact mediation	278
6.2.2.2	The contribution of written narrative as opposed to spoken narrative	278
6.3	Contributions of narrative inquiry to language and literacy learning research	281
6.3.1	Contributions of narrative inquiry: Summary of major features	282
6.3.1.1	Providing a wholistic picture of complex language learning process from an emic perspective.....	282
6.3.1.2	Providing a longitudinal portrait of individual learners	283
6.3.1.3	Elucidating the close connection between language learning experience and	

other aspects of individuals' lives.....	284
6.3.1.4 Highlighting the role of sociocultural and socio-historical context.....	284
6.3.1.5 Giving voice to marginalised or silenced people	285
6.3.2 Significance of the research design.....	285
6.3.2.1 Narrative inquiry as a powerful and insightful complementary approach to language and literacy research.....	286
6.3.1.2 Layers of narrative analysis	287
6.4 Limitations of the research and directions for future research.....	289
APPENDICES	293
Appendix A: A sample of Sumiko's primary data in Japanese	293
Appendix B: Satoko's written autobiographical narrative texts in Japanese	296
Appendix C: Sample transcripts of dialogues during writing sessions.....	305
Appendix D: Sample transcripts of follow-up interviews	312
REFERENCES.....	315

LIST OF FIGURES

Diagram 1 Layers of narrative construction and analysis in the thesis...p.89, p. 287

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I investigate the nature of change that two adult language learners/users have experienced in learning to become bilingual through the mediation of autobiographical narrative writing.

The major purposes of the thesis are to identify the nature of change that adult language learners/users have experienced in learning and using plural languages through the mediation of autobiographical writing in L2, and to examine the usefulness of narrative inquiry as a complementary research approach to understand the complexity of language and literacy learning from the learner's perspectives.

To this end the following research questions have been posed.

1. What can learners' stories tell about the long-term processes of language and literacy learning?
2. What role can written autobiographical narrative play in processes of language learning?
3. What is the potential contribution of narrative inquiry to research in the field of language and literacy learning?

In addressing these questions, I have drawn on socio-cultural and narrative theory to undertake a longitudinal study of two language learners/users – Satoko, a young Chinese-Japanese woman, and myself. Thus, the study comprises Satoko's biographical

study and my own autobiographical study, in which I am simultaneously the subject and the object of inquiry.

I have analysed how processes of becoming bilingual for both of us were represented in autobiographical narratives, and, in turn, how the act of writing autobiographical narratives mediated ways in which we learned to become bilingual. By utilising narrative inquiry, I have attempted to broaden the locus of research into language and literacy learning from language development to learner development.

A feature of the research design implemented in the thesis is its layered approach to narrative construction and analysis. This approach has enabled me to provide detailed insights into the complex interrelationships between linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions of language learning. In particular it has enabled me to highlight the multifaceted nature of learners' change and the significance of affect, social relations, and transformation of identities as learners work between two languages. It has also enabled me to address ways in which learners' engagement with written narrative impacted both their linguistic and non-linguistic development.

Outcomes from the research suggest that complex processes of language and literacy learning can be profitably examined through the notion of becoming bilingual, which entails continuous translation across languages – hence the use of the term *becoming bilingual* in the title of this thesis.