

## **Identity, Ideology, and Language A Literature Review of Theoretical Anchors and Empirical Studies**

**Majd Sarah**

College of Education, TLC Doctoral Program,  
The University of Texas at El Paso, TX, USA

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of selected theoretical frameworks and some empirical studies that take up theories on identity, ideology, and language. The researcher attempts to highlight the most important theoretical frameworks on identity, ideologies, and language, and discusses key theoretical frameworks that have had an influence among recent scholars' empirical work especially in the fields of second language acquisition (SLA), sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. This article has two objectives. First, with a focus on the relationship between language, identity, and investment, the researcher attempts to present a review of Norton's foundational work dated between 1995 (Peirce, 1995) to a more recent scholarly work (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Next, she discusses identity and interaction from a sociocultural linguistic approach by drawing on Bucholtz and Hall's framework (2004a, 2004b, 2005). Findings from this article highlight a paradigm shift in the ways the scholarly focus has changed from looking at language solely as an oral and written skill to looking at language from the sociocultural lens and studying how it is embedded in identity production through linguistics interaction. This article concludes with a recommendation for future research on identity and language to respond to the diversity of language practices and aim at connecting language ideologies and identity to enhance our understanding of today's complex learning communities and globalized world.

*Keywords:* agency, investment, language learning, linguistic capital, social identity

**Cite as:** Sarah, M. (2018). Identity, Ideology, and Language :A Literature Review of Theoretical Anchors and Empirical Studies. *Arab World English Journal*, 9 (2).

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no2.4>

## Introduction

What is language? Is it a set of rules that are universal across all languages (Chomsky, 1988), or is it a set of “socially charged” words (Bakhtin, 1981)? Scholarly opinions on what language study is differ depending on areas of research, interests, and purposes. Early in the 1990s, a change was initiated in the questions scholars asked in the fields of second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. The popular view of language was as a set of formal rules, or distinctive knowledges: *langue* and *parole* in the Saussurean approach (De Saussure, 2011[1916]) and *competence* and *performance* in Chomskian approach. But in the 1990s, researchers (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton Pierce, 1995) doubted the popular view of language as “an empty vehicle that conveys pre-existing meanings about the world” (Ahearn, 2011, p. 8) and they wondered about SLA theorists’ perspectives of the language learner’s relationship to the social world. The shift we’ve witnessed hence then have asserted that “language is not a neutral medium for communication but rather a set of socially embedded practices” (Ahearn, 2011, p. 3).

Research interests in the relationship between identity and language learning underwent a shift in the epistemological paradigms utilized by many second language acquisition scholars and linguistic anthropologists. Questions on identity and language learning have taken up new research trajectories theoretically and empirically. For example, in her study of immigrant women learning English in Canada, Norton (1995) examines the reasons behind which learners of a language seem to sometimes be able to successfully communicate in some situations, while other learners struggle, resist, or remain silent. Other scholars argue the role of power in conversations involving immigrants and observed “self-recreation” in how some learners established their changing identities within certain social context (McKay & Wong, 1996). Furthermore, linguistic anthropologists hold in common views that language is a form of social action. Urciuoli’s (2013) ethnography, *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class*, argues that the “political economy” of language is evident in the ways Puerto Ricans in New York City’s Lower East Side experience, accept, or resist the judgments that they and others make about what constitutes “good” or “bad” language whether Spanish, English, or a mix both. Urciuoli’s findings on Puerto Ricans’ language choice when interacting with white coworkers as opposed to their language choice when talking to their African American neighbors brings attention to the “strictly enforced” boundaries between Spanish and English in certain social contexts. She notes the importance of language in unequal social and economic relations and the way these power relations both reflect and reinforce the differences in status (Urciuoli, 2013).

Amid the most recent developments in sociocultural and sociolinguistic studies of identities, ideologies, and language, the author attempts to examine how theories of social identity and language learning have developed and discusses the ways in which these frameworks have been used by SLA theorists (Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Darvin & Norton, 2015) and linguistic anthropologists (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). This paper is by no means an exhaustive review of literature, but rather a discussion of selected theoretical and empirical studies of the relationship between identity and language learning. First, the researcher discusses how second language acquisition theorists reconceptualize the relationship between language learners and the social world; then she reviews a framework for the analysis of identity as constituted in linguistic interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and draws on some empirical studies that used these frameworks.

### **Social Theory and SLA Theory in Language Learning**

Between the 1980s and the 1990s, research discourse has shifted from language itself as an abstract component made of a set of elements to learning processes and styles (Cohen & Aphek, 1981; Oxford, 1990). Oxford's taxonomies (direct and indirect strategies of language learning) lead to another shift in the research emphasis and the next developments in the field of linguistics become the exploration of the social context of language learning. This new emphasis is the starting of a reconceptualization to SLA theory and the way SLA theorists make a distinction between the language learner and the social world. Up until the 1990s, second language acquisition theorist have described the individual's personality unidimensionally "as [either] introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, field dependent or field independent" (Pierce, 1995, p. 10). In other words, "the individual" is described as a "host of affective variable". An example of this can be found in Krashen's (1981, 1982) hypothesis that comprehensible input in the presence of a low affective filter (the learner's motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety state) is the major causal variable in SLA. All of these variables are related to the individual and not to the social context; some other theories in SLA focus on the social aspects, but these aspects mostly refer to variations in groups of language learners and groups of target languages (Schumann, 1976).

Because of the inadequacy of the SLA theories -mentioned above- in addressing why the women in Norton's study sometimes have equivocal feelings about speaking English, a reconceptualization to develop a comprehensive theory of social identity is needed. Norton's (1995) paper attempts to integrate the language learner and the language learning context, and question how the "relations of power in the social world affect social interaction between second language learners and target language speakers" (Pierce, 1995, p. 12). To contribute to the debate on second language learning, Norton uses the data collected in Canada in 1991 (diaries, questionnaires, individual and group interviews, and home visits) and draws on her reading of social theory and "the poststructuralist conception of social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change to explain the findings from her study" (Pierce, 1995, p. 9).

### **Social Identity as Multiple, a Site of Struggle, and Changing Over Time**

Among postmodern theorists, Weedon's (1987) work is highly distinguished for its conception of subjectivity and the way she links individual experiences and social power in a theory of subjectivity. Subjectivity is "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, 1987, p. 32). Moreover, Weedon highlights the role of language in the relationship between the individual and the social by stating that language is "the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (p. 21). This acknowledgement of how language forms a central role in defining social and political organizations is essential to the way in which poststructuralism depicts individual diversity.

Drawing on Weedon's work, Norton identifies three main characteristics of subjectivity which play a particularly important role in her 1993 study analysis: "the multiple nature of the subject, subjectivity as a site of struggle, and subjectivity as changing over time" (Pierce, 1995, p. 15). First, previous definitions of the individual in SLA research presuppose that a person has a fixed, essential, and unique core, while in poststructuralism the individual is diverse, dynamic,

and multiple. Second, the subject is not perceived as passive but rather has human agency within communities, or societies through which they navigate the unequal relations of power. It is argued that “subjectivity is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power” (Pierce, 1995, p. 15). Third, Weedon (1987) argues that subjectivity is multiple and open to change. A person’s social identity is of a changing quality. This notion of “self-recreation” is later discussed in the work of McKay & Wong (1996).

### **Motivation or Investment?**

The concepts of instrumental motivation (learning a language for specific reason) and integrative motivation (learning a language to become part of a certain community) have been very influential in the field of second language acquisition (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985). In their work, Gardner and Lambert do not capture the complexity between relations of power, identity, and language learning because instrumental and integrative motivation assumes language learners to have a static identity and a singular desire to learn a second language. Pierce (1995) argues for the conception of investment rather than motivation to capture the complex relationship between language learners and the social world. By drawing on Bourdieu’s (1977) use of economic metaphors and in particular the notion of cultural capital, Pierce analyzes “the socially and historically constructed relationship of the women [in Canada] to the target language and their sometimes-ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (Norton, 1995, p. 9).

To deepen our understanding of the argument of motivation versus investment, the author provides here a brief example from Pierce’s (1995) study on the struggle in conceptualizing the relationship between the individual language learner and the larger social processes. Pierce’s presentation of the short dialogue between Eva, an immigrant language learner and one of her anglophone Canadian coworkers, Gail, is critical to our understanding of the previously mentioned concepts (1995, p. 10). When Gail asked Eva how come she didn’t know “Bart Simpson”, Eva remained silent. With reference to the previously discussed theories (Krashen, 1981, 1982; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985), Eva may be portrayed as an unmotivated person with a high affective filter, a poor language learner with minimal to no sociolinguistic competence, or an introverted person who is unable to interact properly. All of these possibilities, Pierce argues, do not adequately address why Eva decided to remain silent in that particular place and at that specific time.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) use the term ‘cultural capital’ to refer to symbolic resources (language, education, friendship), as well as material resources (goods, real state, money). They argue that some forms of cultural capital have a higher exchange value than others in particular social contexts. Pierce (1995) builds off this notion to look beyond conceptions of motivation and explore how learners invest in a second language. She argues that “if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (p. 17). Pierce’s notion of investment is to be distinguished from instrumental motivation since motivation is “a property of the language learner- a fixed personality trait” while the notion of investment captures the complexity of the language learner social identity and multiple desires. Pierce’s study of the immigrant women in Canada sheds light on the complex dynamic relationship between the

language learner and the social world and describes language learning in terms of social, economic, and political relations and diverse practices that reinforce gendered activity.

### **Other Discourses**

Other researchers also argue that SLA theorists have struggled to understand the relationship between language learner and the social world. McKay & Wong (1996) draw on Pierce's conception of investment in order to explain and analyze the English language development of four Chinese-speaking high school students in an ESL program in California. Their two-year ethnography suggests that there are multiple discourses and counter discourses that constitute "the very fabric of students' lives and [determines] their investment in learning the target language" (p. 603). These multiple discourses and larger conversations affect these students' identities especially conversations involving immigrants that depicts Asians as model minorities. McKay & Wong extend Pierce's analysis by emphasizing the role of power in all conversations personal to national and how these include competing and contradictory colonist/racialized discourse of immigrants. This study contributes to our understanding of this complex, changing self of language learners who undergo "self-recreation" and "constantly conduct delicate social negotiations to fashion variable identities" (McKay & Wong, 1996, p. 603).

Skilton-Sylvester (2002) also builds on Pierce's work by exploring the experiences lived by four Cambodian women participating in ESL classes in the United States. These case studies present an analysis that problematize the conceptions of motivation. Skilton-Sylvester argues that women's "interest in and ability to come to class shifted across time and space as they look on different roles and identities in and out of the classroom" (p. 11). This suggests that the conception of language investment must take into account home experiences and professional identities in order to explain language learners' investment in a second language.

### **Communities of Practice**

Identities are complex, social production of relations of power and social interactions (Bakhtin, 1981; Foucault, 1970). Furthermore, Wenger (1998) argues that people can make sense of the world around them through "communities of practice". Thus, identities are constructed through social interactions and "tension between our investment in the various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts" (p. 188). Drawing on Wegner's notion of "communities of practice" and Norton's (2001) research with two adult immigrant language learners, Kanno & Norton (2003) argue that language learners' practices go beyond the four walls of the classroom to realms of imagined and desired communities. These imagined communities are "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (p. 241).

What constitutes communities of practice in second language classrooms? In many of these classrooms, communities are either a reconstruction of the past historically constituted communities and relations, or imagined and desired communities which offer a range of possible identities in the future. Imagined communities build off Wenger's (1998) notion of "communities of practice" and suggest extending that conception to better understand learners' investment in second language learning while taking their future, imagined communities of practice into account. Kanno & Norton's example of a Japanese fashion design student who's learning English in Japan

while envisioning himself working in New York, provides an insight on how learning a second language (in this example English) can be an “important means of gaining this future affiliation” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 242). Thus, “an imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and a learner’s investment in the target language must be understood with this context” (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

### **Communicative Competence under Reconstruction**

In this article, the author has earlier discussed that in the field of formal linguistics, the dominant approach to language revolve around decontextualization of language to be reduced to a set of formal rules (Chomsky, 1988). Linguists have used the Chomskian approach to draw distinction between competence (the abstract and usually unconscious knowledge that one has about the rules of a language), and performance (putting those rules into practice- sometimes imperfectly). While these conceptions are used to dominant, Hymes’ (1971) views on communicative competence have been taken up by many SLA theorists. Hymes addresses Chomsky’s abstract notion of competence by undertaking ethnographic exploration of communicative competence. This exploration establishes the importance of a language learner to not only learn the rules of a language, but also explore whose interests these rules serve. With his ethnography, Hymes pioneers the approach known today as ethnography of communication.

Thus, what does a language learner need to know in order to learn and know a language? According to Cipollone et al. (1998), a language learner must master five basic components of a language to know it: Phonology (the study of sound), Morphology (the study of word structure), Syntax (the study of sentence structure), Semantics (the study of language meaning), and Pragmatics (the study of language use). In today’s research, we notice a shift of linguists’ primary interest in the first three areas (phonology, morphology, or syntax), to an interest to study the last two components (semantics and pragmatics) and the integration of these two components with the first three (Ahearn, 2011). Thus, building on these arguments and Bourdieu’s (1977) conception of competence as “the power to impose reception” (p. 75), Pierce (1995) argues that “the definition of competence should include an awareness of the right to speak” (p. 18).

### **The Model of Investment within a Social Turn: Reshaped Ideologies**

Norton defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 45). Norton’s recent work expands her foundational work on identity and investment and proposes a comprehensive model of investment. This model “occurs at the intersection of identity, ideology, and capital” (Darvin & Norton, 2015); and it takes into account the spaces where language acquisition and socialization occur and how they “have become increasingly deterritorialized and unbound, and [how] the systematic patterns of control [become] more invisible” (p. 36). This new model that Darvin & Norton propose addresses the ways learners navigate through online and offline contexts and “perform identities that have become more fluid and complex” (p. 36).

As discussed earlier, constructs of motivation view the individual as having a “unitary and coherent” identity with specific desire or traits; while the construct of investment depicts the learner as a complex social being that changes over space and time within social discourses. In an

attempt to sharpen the lens, Darvin & Norton propose a more comprehensive model which “challenges educational agents to reflect on the material conditions that allow learning to take place, and how learners, inscribed by race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexual orientation are accorded or refused the right to speak” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 37).

Today and after Pierce’s 1990s study of the five immigrant Canadian women, theorists have noticed that the world has gone through many changes in global economy and the relations of power on both micro and macro levels. These changes lead to the call of “reshaping language ideologies, linguistic capital, and interactions within multilingual and multicultural environments” (Blommaert, 2013 as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 41). The technological revolution reshaped the way people communicate and enabled new forms of productivity and labor. As a result, power relations and mechanism have become more invisible and work landscape has become more private and isolated. Additionally, the rise of new industrialized countries such as China led to changes in language ideologies and reshaped the value of a second language. Amid these changes, Darvin & Norton (2015) propose a model of investment that is able to achieve a change in the foundational poststructuralist theories. Their main goal is to establish a dual perspective which aims to “go beyond the microstructures of power in specific communicative events and to investigate the systematic patterns of control that communicative events are indexical of” (p. 42). In the rest of this article, the author discusses the theoretical framework proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2004a, 2004b, 2005), and simultaneously draws on some empirical studies use of this theoretical framework to analyze identity in interaction.

### **Identity and Interaction**

The main goal of the earlier sections of this article is to shed the light on the paradigm shift that took place in the way scholars questioned and analyzed the relationship between language, identity, and the social world, and to provide a short overview of the framework proposed by Pierce (1995) and trace its arguments and trajectories. In the remaining sections of this article, the author provides a brief summary of Bucholtz and Hall’s (2004a, 2004b, 2005) framework for analyzing identity as produced in linguistic interaction. While providing the reader an accurate account for all the five principles proposed as the pillars of Bucholtz and Hall’s framework, the author attempts to draw readers’ attention to the connections between this framework and earlier theoretical approaches and scholarly research.

Linguistic research on identity has drastically increased and has become central across a wide scope of fields such as sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. However, while research on identity has increased, the development of theoretical approaches remains a second concern. As mentioned in the introduction of this article, we’ve witnessed a change in the study of language and a shift in scholarly concerns from language as a universal medium (Chomsky, 1988) and a set of distinctive knowledges (De Saussure, 2011[1916]), and language learning as an abstract component of strategies and styles (Cohen & Apeh, 1981; Oxford, 1990) to language as “a set of socially embedded practices” (Ahearn, 2011, p. 3) and language learning as a complex relationship between the language learner and the social world (Pierce, 1995). Simultaneously, a change in the analytical approach to identity is also traceable: from identify as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psych or in fixed social categories to identity as “multiple, a site of struggle, and

subject to change” (Pierce, 1995, p. 20) and a “relational and social cultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 585).

Thus, with the scholarly turn in identity focus and the need for a general sociocultural linguistic perspective, Bucholtz & Hall’s theoretical framework aims at drawing together insights from multiple fields and theorists to allow “for a discussion of identity that permits researchers to articulate theoretical assumptions about identity often left implicit in scholarship” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). By drawing on speech accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991), social identity theory in social psychology (Meyerhoff, 1996), theories of language ideology (Gal & Irvine, 2000; Silverstein, 1979), indexicality in linguistic anthropology (Silverstein, 1976), and theories of style (Mendoza-Denton, 2002) among many others, Bucholtz & Hall offer a framework that “focuses on both the details of language and the workings of culture and society” (2005, p. 586).

Within this framework, identity is depicted in a broader and a more open-ended definition: *Identity is the social positioning of self and other*. Bucholtz & Hall (2005) argue that identity doesn’t emerge at a single analytical structure, such as code choice or ideological structure, but rather operates at many levels simultaneously. Their approach encompasses the intersubjective construction of identity and privileges interaction as the means in which resources -like vowel quality or turn shape- gain social meaning. In the following section, the writer summarizes Bucholtz & Hall’s five fundamental principles to the study of identity and includes brief discussions of some empirical studies that embark on Bucholtz & Hall’s theoretical framework as toolkit to analyze identity.

### **Identity: A Discursive Construct That Emerges in Interaction**

The first principle proposed by Bucholtz & Hall is the emergence principle which addresses the traditional view of identity as a construct primarily within an individual’s mind that is merely reflected in language use. Emergence is first addressed by Hymes (1975) who views language as dialogic rather than monologic and calls for a better understanding of linguistic structures as “emergent in action” (Hymes, 1975, p. 71). Later, other linguistic anthropologists have moved further with the conception of emergence in the field and in particular, Bauman and Briggs whose work demonstrates that performance emerges as specific encounters unfold (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Briggs, 1988). Additionally, other theorists view culture as an emergent product through dialogical processes; that is, it is produced when speakers draw on multiple voices and texts in every utterance (Bakhtin, 1981).

Extending these arguments against structuralist and generativist formulations of performance, culture, and grammar, Bucholtz & Hall maintain that “identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices” (p. 588) and therefore, identity is mainly “a social and cultural phenomenon” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 588). Almost all recent linguistic research on identity and language take this general view as the starting point. However, the principle of emergence is particularly helpful when speakers use language in a way that does not conform to the social category they are normally assigned to, for example, cases of transgender identity and cross-gender performance.

An example of this case is Hall's (1997) study on the discourse practices of hijras, a transgender group in India whose members are predominantly born males. Hijras violate gender norms in India by dressing and speaking like women. Gender marking in Hindi is often obligatory, thus hijras use linguistic gender system as a resource to distance themselves from masculinity. Hall's example of Sulekha, a hijra member who was forced out of the house in her early teens, illustrates how feminine gender marking does not reflect a straightforwardly assigned feminine identity. It also demonstrates how linguistic structures (gender marking in this case) can be a powerful tool used by Sulekha to construct her feminine identity as opposed to her family's perception of her gender (Hall, 1997).

### **Identity Is Not a Collection of Social Categories**

In the second principle, positionality, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) challenge the popular view of identity that is mainly found in quantitative social sciences which correlate macro identity categories (gender, race, social class, age, etc) to individual's social behavior (Labov, 1966). These approaches have traced valuable trends, but have been less effective in capturing the flexibility in identity relations in varied contexts. Linguistic ethnographers aim at filling this analytical gap by demonstrating that "language users often orient to local identity categories rather than to the analyst's sociological categories" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 591). These ethnographers look at micro details of identity shaped in interaction, orientations and temporary roles assumed by participants, and other interactional positions that seem different from their participants' conventional identity. Individuals' formation of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in discourse accumulate ideological associations "with both large-scale and local categories of identity" and may shape who does what and how in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 591).

Therefore, Bucholtz & Hall's perspective broadens the widely circulated views on identity by arguing that identity encompasses "macro-level demographic categories, local ethnographically specific cultural positions, [as well as] temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (p. 592). Bucholtz's (2001) study on California high school students is an example of the effectiveness of this principle. In ethnographic interviews of two 17-year-old middle-class European American girls, Bucholtz notices that even though the two girls have lots in common and share similar linguistic resources, yet they position themselves as different kinds of teenagers using a variety of linguistic markers (in this case innovative quotative markers in youth discourse). Both girls, Christine and Josie, use different choices of innovative quotative markers to index their identities and their youth. In the analysis of these interview, Bucholtz & Hall argue that "demographic lines of gender, age, race, and class provide part of the picture" (p. 593), but more can be learned when considering the ways these girls position themselves and others subjectively and intersubjectively.

### **Indexicality**

"Identifying the precise ways in which language and social relations intersect is one of the most pressing issues in linguistic anthropology" (Ahearn, 2011, p. 28). One of the key concepts that help scholars in identifying these intersections is *indexicality*. Indexicality is the fundamental mechanism by which identity is constituted (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In order to obtain a fuller understanding of this term, the author starts by tracing back its links to the study of semiotics (the study of signs) and how the concept of indexicality involve the creation of semiotic relationship

between *signifier* and *signified* (De Saussure, 2011[1916]); in other words, between the *sign* and the *object* (Peirce, 1955), or more precisely between the linguistic form and social meaning (Silverstein, 1976).

De Saussure's famous example of the 'tree' as a sign, since it links the mental concept of a tree with the sound that this word compromises, lacks an important element of semiosis which is found later in Pierce's model of meaning-making through signs. Pierce's (1955) model involves three components: signs, objects, and interpretants. The latter is extremely important because this component (interpretants) represents the outcomes or effects of semiotic relationship between the sign and the object. Drawing on these conceptions of indexicality, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) argue that "identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes" (p. 594). For example, in the previously mentioned study (Hall, 1997) of Indian Hijra members, Sulekha quotes her family as they condemned her in childhood as 'hijra'. Sulekha's family uses this extreme derogatory term deliberately to enforce the term's ideological association with impotence which indexes an ultimate insult in common Indian family structures. Other micro-level linguistic structures that can be addressed as indexical signs include style features (Mendoza-Denton, 2002), and stance markers (Du Bois, 2002) among many other aspects of language use such as regional or ethnic accents or dialects (Gal & Irvine, 1995). The tactics of indexicality mentioned here provide a sense of the wealth of linguistic resources that contribute to the formation of identity position and call our attention to the micro and macro indexical processes that construct identities at multiple levels in interaction.

### **Identity as a Relational Phenomenon**

Building on the first three principles discussed: emergence, positionality, and indexicality aspects of identity and its construction, Bucholtz & Hall propose a fourth principle that emphasizes identity as a relational phenomenon. Through this principle, they call into question the over simplified views of identity relations as "revolving around a single axis: sameness and difference" (2005, p. 598), and the popular view of identity as autonomous and independent. Thus, Bucholtz and Hall argue that identities are "intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarities/ differences, genuineness/ artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (2005, p. 598). The list of identity relations Bucholtz & Hall outline is not exhaustive, but rather suggestive of the multiple dimensions of relationality through which identities are constructed. The author briefly summarizes this discussion here.

The first complementary identity relations, similarities and differences, are referred to by Bucholtz & Hall as adequation and distinction. The relation of adequation emphasizes that "in order for groups or individuals to be positioned as alike, they need not ... be identical, but must be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 599). Adequation can be seen earlier in the example of Sulekha (Hall, 1997) and her use of feminine gender marking that neither reflect her view of herself as a woman nor an attempt to be viewed as such; but her use of the gender marking is rather an enough semiotic potion of femininity to help her produce herself as hijra. On the other hand, distinction is a familiar identity relation that depends on "the suppression of similarities that might undermine the construction of difference" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 600). In this case, the researcher returns to the example of high school California girls (Bucholtz, 2001) to illustrate how processes of social differentiation

can be found in the way these two girls distinct themselves from each other through interaction. By means of some linguistic resources in their youth discourse, and particularly their use of innovative quotative markers, Christine and Josie, position themselves as distinct subjectively and intersubjectively.

The second pair of relations is authentication and denaturalization processes. “What sorts of language and language users count as genuine for a given purpose” is a question that has prevailed the sociocultural linguistic literature (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 601). According to Bucholtz and Hall, authenticity “focuses on the ways in which identities are discursively verified [while denaturalization focuses] on how assumptions regarding seamlessness of identity can be disrupted” (2005, p. 601). The first phenomenon can be traced in Bauman’s (1992) study of Icelandic legends, and particularly the case of the poet who is thought to have magical powers. Bauman’s analysis of the narrator’s narrative points how the narrator authenticates his history and himself as a teller in a process Bauman’s call *traditionalization*, “the act of authentication akin to the art or unique dealer’s authentication of an object by tracing its provenience” (Bauman, 1992, p. 137). On the other hand, denaturalization is noted in Bailey’s (2000) investigation of Dominican Americans’ identities. Bailey points out that Dominican Americans’ phenotype ideologically displaces them as African American or black while their language-based identities are Hispanic. In this case, denaturalization is apparent in the fact that black skin does not necessarily entail black identity.

The last pair of relations is authorization and illegitimation aspects of identity construction. While authorization involves “the affirmation or imposition of an identity through structures of institutionalized power and ideology, whether local or translocal [its counterpart, illegitimation,] addresses the ways in which identities are dismissed, censored, or simply ignored by these same structures” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 603). The latter is illustrated in Park’s (2004) investigation of ideologies of English in Korea. Park’s example of Korean nationals attending graduate school in the United States, who mock one of their Korean friend in his absence for his Americanized pronunciation of the word ‘Denver’, illustrates that based on these participants’ ideologies, speaking English fluently is culturally inappropriate or un-Korean. This example shows how interactional dynamics support ideological structures even in the absence of powerful authority; a process that is earlier called *hegemony* by Gramsci (1971).

### **Partialness and Agency in Language Learning**

Researchers’ interest in the dispositions or tendencies that organize how people perceive and respond to the world around them have spread across a variety of fields. According to Bourdieu these dispositions are a system, a habitus, which is “experienced in the form of personal attraction or revulsion” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 5). Drawing on Bourdieu’s conception of habitus as the guide for learners acts and desires and as the environment in which learners exercise their agency, linguistic anthropologists question the extent to which identity rely on agency. According to Duranti (2004), the use of language itself is an act of agency. “Under this definition, identity is one kind of social action that agency can accomplish” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 606). This view of agency and structure as overlapping components of micro and macro articulations of identity benefit the on-going argument of agency in social theory (cf. Ahearn, 2001).

Over the past two decades, postmodern critiques in cultural anthropology and feminist theory have challenged the totalized representation of social life and culture as internally coherent and called for recognition of partialness and for capturing identity as fractured and discontinuous (Behar & Gordon, 1995; Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Bucholtz & Hall's final principal states that the construction of identity constitutes partialness in deliberation, intention, habitualness, consciousness, negotiation, contestation, representation, and structure. Therefore, identity construction is "constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse" (2005, p. 606). In other words, identity is rational and partial and "produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 605).

### Conclusion

Work on identity, ideology, and language has intrigued issues regarding the relationship between language and identity. As more theorists in the fields of second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology questioned the popular norms in analyzing identity, new theoretical frameworks are developed to satisfy the need for a comprehensive theory which integrates the language learner and the social world. Starting with Norton's notion of investment rather than motivation in language learning to Bucholtz & Hall's investigation of identity within interaction, broader conceptualizations are continuously constructed to cope with our globalized present and rapidly changing future. Thus, in every region of the world, future research on identity and language should respond to the diversity of language practices and aim at connecting language ideologies and identity to enhance our understanding of our ever-changing globalized communities.

### About the Author:

**Majd Sarah** is an ESL faculty at the Language Institute at El Paso Community College, and she's a doctoral student at the University of Texas at El Paso. Majd is in the Literacy/ Biliteracy strand and her scholarly interests include language, identity, and ideology.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4155-9244>

### References

- Ahearn, L. M. (2011). The socially charged life of language. *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*, 1-30.
- Bailey, B. (2000). Language and negotiation of ethnic/racial identity among Dominican Americans. *Language in Society*, 29(4), 555-582.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). The dialogic imagination, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. *Austin: University of Texas Press*, 263, 14.
- Bauman, R. (1992). Contextualization, tradition, and the dialogue of genres: Icelandic legends of the Kraftaskald. *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, 125-145.
- Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. L. (1990). Poetics and performances as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19(1), 59-88.
- Behar, R., & Gordon, D. A. (1995). *Women writing culture* University of California Press.
- Blommaert, J. (2013). *Ethnography, superdiversity and linguistic landscapes: Chronicles of complexity* Multilingual Matters.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of linguistic exchanges. *Information (International Social Science Council)*, 16(6), 645-668.

- Bourdieu, P. (1987). What makes a social class? on the theoretical and practical existence of groups. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32, 1-17.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (1977). Reproduction in society, education and culture. *Trans. R. Nice. London: Sage*.
- Briggs, C. L. (1988). *Competence in performance: The creativity of tradition in Mexicano verbal art* University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bucholtz, M. (2001). The whiteness of nerds: Superstandard English and Racial Markedness. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 11(1), 84-100.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. A companion to linguistic anthropology, ed. by Alessandro Duranti, 369-394.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Theorizing identity in language and sexuality research. *Language in Society*, 33(4), 469-515.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4-5), 585-614.
- Chomsky, N. (1988). Generative grammar. *Studies in English Linguistics and Literature*,
- Cipollone, N., Keiser, S. H., & Vasissth, S. (1998). *Language files: Materials for an introduction to language & linguistics* Ohio State University Press.
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* University of California Press.
- Cohen, A. D., & Apeh, E. (1981). Easifying second language learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 3(2), 221-236.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36-56.
- De Saussure, F., & Baskin, W. (2011). Course in general linguistics [1916]. *London: Duckworth*.
- Du Bois, J. W. (2002). Stance and consequence. Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans*.
- Duranti, A. (2004). Agency in language. *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, 451-473.
- Foucault, M. (1970). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences* New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Gal, S., & Irvine, J. T. (1995). The boundaries of languages and disciplines: How ideologies construct difference. *Social Research*, 967-1001.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation* Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning.
- Giles, H., Coupland, J., & Coupland, N. (1991). *Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics* Cambridge University Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci: Ed. and transl. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell smith*. International Publishers.
- Hall, K. (1997). Go suck your husband's sugarcane! hijras and the use of sexual insult. *Queerly Phrased: Language, Gender and Sexuality*.
- Hornberger, N. H., & McKay, S. (2010). *Sociolinguistics and language education* Multilingual Matters.
- Hymes, D. (1971). On communicative competence in CJ Brumfit and K. Johnson (eds.) the communicative approach to language teaching, 5-26.

- Hymes, D. (1975). Breakthrough into performance. *Folklore: Communication and Performance*. D. Ben-Amos and K. Goldstein (eds.), 11-74.
- Kanno, Y., & Norton, B. (2003). Imagined communities and educational possibilities: Introduction. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4), 241-249.
- Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning* Oxford University Press.
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). Principles and practice in second language learning. NY: Pergamon,
- Labov, W. (1966). The social stratification of English in New York City. *Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular*, Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- McKay, S. L., & Wong, S. C. (1996). Multiple discourses, multiple identities: Investment and agency in second-language learning among Chinese adolescent immigrant students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(3), 577-609.
- Mendoza-Denton, N. (2002). 19 language and identity. *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, 475.
- Meyerhoff, M. (1996). Dealing with gender identity as a sociolinguistic variable. *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, 202-227.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Social processes and educational practice* Longman.
- Norton, B. (2001). Non-participation, imagined communities and the language classroom. *Learner Contributions to Language Learning: New Directions in Research*, 159-171.
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* Multilingual matters.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies* New York: Newbury House.
- Park, J. S. (2004). Globalization, language, and social order: Ideologies of English in south Korea.
- Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 9-31.
- Peirce, C. S. (1955). Pragmatism in retrospect: A last formulation. *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, 275.
- Schumann, J. H. (1976). Social distance as a factor in second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 26(1), 135-143.
- Silverstein, M. (1976). Shifters, linguistic categories, and cultural description. *Meaning in Anthropology*, 11-55.
- Silverstein, M. (1979). Language structure and linguistic ideology. *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, 193-247.
- Skilton-Sylvester, E. (2002). Should I stay or should I go? investigating Cambodian women's participation and investment in adult ESL programs. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(1), 9-26.
- Urciuoli, B. (2013). *Exposing prejudice: Puerto Rican experiences of language, race, and class* Waveland Press.
- Weedon, C. (1987). Principles of poststructuralism. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity* Cambridge University Press.