
Multiple literacies: An alternative OR beyond Freire1 (DRAFT)
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Introduction

Literacy like an ever-changing chameleon camouflaged within different worldviews is an ever-becoming controversial term. What counts as literacy, who counts, who does the counting and what it means to be literate has created much debate. The term literacy has been used as a political as well as an economic yardstick of the wealth of a nation. From a Eurocentric perspective, literacy and its westernized forms have become tied to measures of a “developing nation”. Enormous amounts of resources have been poured into literacy projects. In the end, literacy and the uses to which literacy have been put become highly contested.

In some contexts, literacy has a fixed determinate definition and has universal truth-value. This conceptualization of literacy has been questioned. In other contexts, literacy is used in different ways not only across disciplines but also within disciplines. There is a proliferation of meanings assigned to literacy taken up by many disciplines: applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, anthropology, sociology and critical pedagogy, just to name a few. As a result, there is considerable debate and chaos (chaos is a healthy term in a postmodern world) with regard to multiple meanings assigned to the term literacy.

The use of the term, multiple, brings up the issue of paradigms. For many years if not decades, the study of/on literacy has often been placed in a binary mode juxtaposed with the term ILLiteracy. The latter in and of itself is a controversial term. One very important paradigmatic approach to the study of literacy was and to some extent still is fed by a postpositivist worldview. This worldview, which is often referred to as the received view, has gained tremendous legitimacy. Postpositivism derives its traditions
from the natural sciences with its desires for replication, laboratory-like controls, generalizable results and universal appeal.

Applying the term, multiple, signals a movement away from the binary worldview and a greater openness to more social and value-laden notions of literacy (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Luke, 1991; Masny & Ghahremani-Ghajar, 1999). The proliferation of meanings assigned to literacy calls for an examination of conceptual frameworks that situate literacy. Conceptual frameworks cannot be created without understanding the paradigmatic contexts within which frameworks are designed. I understand paradigm as a worldview, a relationship between the knower (the individual), forms of knowledge and how these intersect in space and time. Because of the proliferation of paradigms, it becomes important to critically explore paradigms from which conceptual frameworks are derived and also understand how literacy is positioned conceptually within these frameworks. Such understandings can only enrich our knowledge of literacies.

The paradigm and conceptual framework of multiple literacies retained in this article is presented later on. At this time, a brief introduction to the paradigm espoused as well as to the concept of literacies is warranted. The conceptual framework is situated in postmodernism. The work of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari has been influential in the conceptualization of multiple literacies. Derrida’s work on *aporia* (1967) that opening where doubt and questioning take place is also a space where chaos, movement and transformation of multiple literacies occur. Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the rhizome (1980/1987) is important to the notion of becoming. An example of a rhizome is a tuberous plant. It has no beginning, no end, a middle from which growth occurs and stretching out in multiple lines. The image transposes to the movement of multiple literacies as constant transformation and the flow of movement of multiple literacies creates a sense of becoming.

This paradigmatic frame creates the context for the conceptualization of multiple literacies. Accordingly, in this article, the concept of literacies refers to literacies as a social construct. As such, literacies are context-specific. They are operationalized or actualized *in situ*. They take on meaning according to the way a sociocultural group appropriates them. Literacies of a social group are taken up as visual, oral and written. They constitute texts, in a broad sense, that interweave with religion, gender, race,
ideology and power. In this way, all literacies are value-laden. No matter what the conceptualization retained, none are value neutral.

In a postmodern world, an individual engages literacies as s/he reads the world, reads the word and reads her/him self. Accordingly, when an individual talks, reads, writes, and values, construction of meaning takes place within a particular context. This act of meaning construction that qualifies as literate is not only culturally driven but also is shaped by sociopolitical and sociohistorical productions of a society and its institutions.

Thus, in this article, I want to foreground the context I have been working in as I began documenting my work on literacy. Most of my research is situated in minority language education in Canada, in particular French language education. I have worked in the French minority communities in the provinces of Alberta and Ontario. According to the Canadian Census survey of 2001, Alberta claims 60,000 people declare French as a mother tongue while Ontario claims 494,000. Mother tongue refers to those individuals whose first language is French and it is still understood. Apart from eastern Ontario, which also includes the capital of Canada, Ottawa, most French minority communities of Alberta and Ontario are geographically at great distances from each other. Moreover, each community has significant demographic differences. While one may be rural, another may be urban. Then there are mining-town communities while others have developed around the forestry industry. In all these communities, both French and English coexist. The extent of the French language and culture in the community depends on the social, political, historical and educational forces operating in that particular community at that particular time.

All provinces have minority-language school boards or school districts. Each district often covers a considerable geographical area. It is not uncommon to drive two to three hours to get from one school to another. Schools play a major role because they are an important source of support and development of a community. French is the language of instruction. It is an entry point that allows me to gain a greater understanding of literacy, to broaden possibilities for forms of literacy and to revisit a relationship between literacy and reading and between literacy and text. When I refer to moving away from and engaging different and differing views of literacy, reading and text, I compare these
complex relationships between and among literacies to the many and multi-faceted ways
a crystalline catches light depending upon the way it is viewed.

The first part of this article is devoted to a multiple literacies model that has been
adapted to respond to the challenges facing minority language communities. The model is
based on a conceptual framework of multiple literacies presented in this article. The
second part takes a closer look at the concept of literacy as I assign meanings to literacy,
reading and text within this conceptual framework. Situated within a postmodern world,
the framework and the concepts retained are a constant becoming and not fixed. I
conclude with an understanding that literacy can take on multiple perspectives, one of
which is linked to power. In the case of minority language communities, I argue for
resonance and dissonance that connect power, literacy and minority language education.

This article serves as an entry point to provoke thought and reflection on the
process of becoming by engaging texts and reading the world, the word and oneself.
While many of the terms are familiar, they take on meaning once situated in a particular
conceptual framework. Perhaps, in a derridean way (Derrida, 1976), thought and
reflection may bring on moments of doubt or questioning and thus create that space, that
opening that for what is yet to become.

**Minority language education**

Canada, through the enactment of the Official Languages Act in 1969, becomes a
bilingual nation recognizing French and English as the two official languages of the
country. The Act guarantees the official-language rights of Canadians in their dealings
with federal institutions. Moreover, both French and English are recognized as having
equal status, rights and privileges. Then in 1982, the Canadian Constitution is patriated
from Great Britain. It contains the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It
entrenches French and English as the official languages of Canada. It also entrenches the
right of parents to educate their children in one of the official languages anywhere in the
country where numbers warrant. Quebec is a majority French province while the other
provinces are majority English. Accordingly, minority language education rights are set
out in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It signals that parents
can educate their children in French in all provinces where the majority language is
English. It also ensures that parents can educate their children in English in Quebec where the majority language is French.

For over a decade, I have been involved with French minority communities in Canada. I have studied young children’s language use in a school context. During that time, it was inevitable to move towards studying oral language, reading and writing as contested knowledges involved in power relationships (Masny, 1995). In linguistic communities that cohabit, power relationships are inherent. It soon became very apparent that language, literacy, identity and power were intertwined. What were also revealing were the tensions that arose between linguistics communities. Just as one might consider exclusionary practices across communities, one also found such practices within communities. Within French minority communities, there are tensions and struggles. Marginalisation occurs from within as well as from without (Masny, 1996).

The Canadian charter of Human Rights in 1982 provided in law access for minority language communities to their own educational system. Shortly after, governance of French language education was created by, for and with French communities. District school boards were established. French was the sole language of instruction. Children were admitted to French school based on Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Human Rights\(^2\). To this day, governance persists as a judicial issue since there are still cases pending before the Supreme Court of Canada regarding the interpretations of the right of French language communities to French language education.

These judicial contestations as well as victories have brought many communities together in matters of education (Masny, 1998). One of their goals is the development of an educational project that would affirm the “linguistic, cultural and social actualization” of French. I came to participate in one of these projects at the invitation of the Alberta government, the French language education department. The meaning assigned to the term actualization in government policy documents refers to the development of an educational project aimed at promoting French language-culture in school and in the community, and improving academic achievement. A major goal of this project is to support French minority schools for they are perhaps the most significant sites to promote French language-culture in partnership with home and community.
Based on earlier work (Masny 1995), I thought about literacies interacting in a transactional mode, interweaving and constantly in the process of meaning construction. In Masny (1997), I elaborated a conceptual framework of multiple literacies that was adapted as a literacies model for the actualization of French so that through its educational system, Alberta’s French language community could thrive. The rationale for adopting a curriculum that took up multiple literacies was that, at the time, the curriculum promoted mostly school-based literacy and provided little opportunities for legitimating other literacies.

The educational project for minority language communities required that aspects of home and community be validated in school. The school is considered the most significant site for the promotion of French language-culture. French media (newspapers, magazines and entertainment) in the community are at a premium. Moreover, only in a minority of homes will you find both parents speaking French with their children. Most times, both languages (French and English) are spoken. Sometimes, no French is spoken at all. As rights holders of Section 23, these parents have the right to send their children to French language schools. Increasingly, children come to school knowing little or no French. While the school has a mission to educate the children to succeed academically, the school is also an integral part of a community. As such, the school aims to foster in children a sense of community membership. In order to do so, children come to school at an early age, hence the importance of preschool. In most district school boards, preschool education, that is full-time junior and senior kindergarten, has become an educational priority. The kindergarten period combined with day care service in the school has taken on cultural and linguistic capital as children engage forms of literacies.

Figure 1 is an adaptation of the multiple literacies model that is now part of Alberta French language education at the preschool level (Ministry of education of Alberta, 1999). At the center of the Figure is the child in the context of the school, the home, and the community. There is a flow (dotted lines) between the personal, school-based and community literacies. The language and culture as well as the literacies are in movement and contribute to identity formation. Critical literacy consciously shapes and transforms the readings of the word, the world and self. As the individual engages in global education, the latter comes to shape and transform those readings of the word,
world and self. Additive bilingualism is crucial in a minority language community. When two languages coexist in the community, it is important to be proficient in both languages. This model has applications that reach beyond the scope of the present context because it promotes personal, school-based, community and home literacies and foregrounds critical literacies. In addition, this framework has incorporated aspects of global education and additive bilingualism. I will explain each one in the next section.

Multiple Literacies

In this conceptual framework, the individual is reading the world, the word and self in the context of the home, school and community (local, national and international). This entails on the part of the individual a personal as well as a critical reading.

Personal literacy

This framework for multiple literacies corresponds to a worldview in which the individual is immersed in different societal settings (school, home and community) shaped by social, political and historical contexts within that society. Personal literacy focuses on reading oneself as one reads the world and the word. It is within that perspective that personal literacy contributes to the shaping of one’s worldview. It is a way of ‘being’, based on construction of meaning that is always in movement, always in transition. When personal literacy contributes to a way of becoming, it involves fluidness
and ruptures within and across differing literacies. S/he who reads the world and the word is in a process of becoming, that is, the person creates and gives meaning to that process of becoming in relation to texts. Text is assigned a broad meaning to include visual oral, written and possibly tactile forms (Masny, 2001b).

**Critical literacy**

No reading of the world, the word or oneself could take place in any significant manner without a critical reading or reading that calls on reflections (of texts). For many researchers, the work of Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987) comes to mind when referring to reading the world and the word. His work has inspired many researchers. As well, there have been conceptual frameworks that are linked to critical literacy such as critical theory and critical feminist theory.

The concept of critical literacy espoused by Freire is paradigm specific. The conceptual framework is situated within modernity. His theory of critical literacy is a theory of practice that serves to liberate and transform individuals, a sense of betterment of the human condition of the individual. Central to Freire’s notion of critical literacy is that socio-economic structures are poised to mainstream or marginalize individuals. In creating links with Critical theory, Friere’s concept of critical literacy creates a context for conscious examination of power relationship based on historical, political and social conditions at a particular time and space (within a particular community).

Moving beyond Freire in this article signals that while the term critical literacy is used, the concept is related to another paradigm, that of postmodernism. Social, political and historical conditions inform and shape a reading of the word, world and self. When doubt and questioning arise in/through reading the word, world and self, so does consciousness. Contrary to Freire, where there is a sense of finality, that critical reading that fosters transformation and emancipation, the present framework that incorporates critical literacy acknowledges that transformation is taking place. What remains to be seen is how the transformations happen, how they get taken up. That is the subject of the next paragraph. An example is provided in the section that focuses on a conceptualization of literacy.
The meaning of critical literacy retained in this article is likened to a personal journey. One entry point on this journey is that literacies are value-laden and linked to power. When reading the world and the word in a critical way, there is consciousness that social, cultural, economic, historical and political values are attached to literacies. At issue is the question of which literacies link to which values and in what context. A second entry point is reading oneself. This occurs in school, home, and community. Let’s consider the school. The school can be a space for social justice. It can also be a space for social control, and normalization. There is the expectation that children in school will display school-based literacies often considered literacies of normalization. The power of normalization can seriously challenge an individual’s reading of self in reading the world and the word in school. When tensions arise or as Dufresne (2002) states, when worldviews collide in the individual, transformations take place. The individual will seek stability in the midst of chaos. The questions remain: whose norm is s/he seeking? A personal norm? A school norm? A community norm? The individual has moved. That is about all that can be ascertained. What reading of self goes on cannot be predicted.

**Community literacy**

According to Masny (1997), community-based literacies refers to an individual’s reading of literate practices of a community. In the French-minority context presented earlier, the school is a significant site and quite often the hub of the community. Community–based literacies because they appear not to have the same legitimacy as school-based literacies are often marginalized and called upon in contexts outside the classroom. There are other ways of reading community literacy. One example that comes to mind is the ways of ‘being’ that a farmer refers to when explaining his farming practices and the instruments he uses for his farming practices. How he talks about this is a form of community literacy. These practices are linked to what Fasheh (1990) uncovered when he acquired a postgraduate degree and was returning to his native country to teach mathematics at the university. One day, he observed his mother doing calculations while cutting up a pattern to sew a dress. Her ways of calculation were considered not scientific, at least not according to Fasheh’s ways of calculation that earned him his academic degree. Such experiences created an opening, a space for
questioning, and challenged his world views that moved him to take up his mother’s community-based literacy. His desire then became to legitimate such forms of literacy within the community school.

While the school might be a site for control and normalization as well as a site for transformation of society, these cannot occur without a partnership between home, school and community. In this manner an individual’s reading of the world, the word and self in the context of home, school and community create possibilities to construct and reconstruct his or her way of ‘being’. If incorporating literate ways from the home and community does not take place in school, it will be impossible for individuals to develop community membership.

**School-based literacy**

According to Masny (2001b), school-based literacy refers to the process of interpretation and communication in reading the world, the word and self in the context of school. It also includes social adaptation to the school milieu, its rites and rituals. School-based literacy emphasizes conceptual readings that are critical to school success. Such literacies are mathematics, science, social sciences, technologies and multimedia. While these literacies are important for school membership, they cannot be devoid of links or partnerships with home and community.

**Additive bilingualism**

This concept is often linked to social psychology. Additive bilingualism, historically came to signal that when learning a second language, in particular in an immersion context, and that the aim of learning the second language was not instrumental, then the acquisition of a second language would be seen as an addition to the first language. The opposite, also known as subtractive bilingualism, would occur when learning a second language would erode proficiency in the first language. The framework retained in this article moves away from the binary positioning of additive or subtractive to the view that bilingualism is additive OR subtractive signaling that there are multiple bilingualisms.
In addition, additive bilingualism ties into the historical, social and political nature of bilingualism and the power relationships involved when two language communities cohabit. In the Canadian context, English has greater visibility and presence. As a result, it becomes very challenging for minority communities to promote French language-culture when cohabiting with English. Therefore, some would state that by promoting two languages, there is the risk of contributing to what is known as subtractive bilingualism. However, it must be recognized that children and increasingly adults from French minority communities consider themselves to be bilingual and would name themselves as bilinguals. This has created tensions within minority communities. For instance, the educational system of many minority communities imposes norms of French mother tongue programs as if the communities were in a French majority context such as in the province of Quebec. In the latter context, an individual’s reading of the world, the word and oneself is considerably different. Additive bilingualism has been introduced here to acknowledge the bilinguality of individuals and to ensure that measures are in place so that individuals achieve high levels of competence in French and in English. Individuals often have high levels of competence in English. To provide alternatives, partnerships between home, school, and community become the most important catalyst in helping members of a minority community to achieve greater levels of competence in French. In order to maintain a high level of competence in French, the framework incorporates additive bilingualism. Otherwise, the silencing surrounding the nature of bilingualism would bring on/out its subtractive nature.

Global education

The impact of global economic, political, social and cultural movements has left its imprint on education. Global education refers to diversity that includes pluralism, feminism, community, citizenship, identity and popular culture (Burbules & Torres, 2000). Globalization can be considered a worldview that reconfigures education (curriculum, pedagogy, teaching, learning) in specific contexts (Dufresne, 2001). A postmodern globalized world is one in which we situate ourselves in non-linear time and space, one that favors high levels of technology and one in which English has become the privileged language. In all of this, minority communities must situate themselves and
consider the tensions between local, traditional and contemporary values as well as social and cultural capital that globalization engenders. It obliges us to examine closely the boundaries between minority, majority and local, national and international. It also entails a decentering and reconfiguration of worldviews. What is at stake and the differing perspectives within a minority community are significant.

Global education in this framework offers multiple perspectives. There is almost the inevitable force of globalization on all communities. It would seem important in French minority communities to establish community membership with similar communities across the globe. At this time, students rarely socially read themselves as Francophones outside their community. It is very localized because their experiences of reading the world and the word occur in French mainly in school. The values that their literacies might have do not extend beyond the community unless students engage global education. Globalization and new technologies can be interpreted as an extension of social and cultural capital in French minority communities. It also becomes a way of critically reading citizenship, democracy, the environment and international understandings (Lessard et al., 1997). This signals that a minority community should seek ongoing creation moving away from imposed norms from outside.

Global education is also a way to counter the power of global English. For a long time, print, TV and radio were the main media sources in French and were not easily available in most remote communities. The power of English is insidious. With the new technologies, individuals in minority communities can engage different readings of the world, the word and themselves, extending their power as one of becoming

Globalization does not go on unproblematically, however. A highly technological society places significant value on knowledge. This focus on forms of knowledge has transformed knowledge forms into economic leverage and that in turn has resulted in the commodification of knowledge (Masny, 2001a). Combined with the surge of the internet and information technology, westernized societies have become information-based, information that is fragmented and decentered. Accordingly, it becomes all the more important to read the world, the word and self through a critical reading, especially as a member in a minority-language community.
**Literacies: A conceptualization**

In presenting the various aspects that shape a multiple literacies framework, the word, literacies, requires conceptualization. Earlier in this article, I had assigned meaning to the word literacy without necessarily going in depth into the conceptual framework. A concept is operationalized only when it is situated in a conceptual framework and in relation to other concepts as well. Concepts, moreover, are paradigm specific. Accordingly, this section elaborates on the conceptual framework as well as the paradigm from which the conceptual framework is derived.

As stated earlier, the paradigm espoused is postmodern. Postmodernism is often seen as a response to modernity. Postmodernism defies definition. Just as there are several strands of postmodernism, there are postmodern thinkers. Three were mentioned earlier in relation to the multiple literacies framework: Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. Derrida’s contribution relates to the concept of *aporia*. When an individual reads the word, world and self, meaning construction is in flux while simultaneously creating a moment of sense-making. Within this process of meaning construction and sense-making, doubt and questioning take place. These moments of doubt, questioning become openings, an *aporia*, during which change and transformations of reading the word, world and self are created.

Another contribution to the paradigm that has shaped the conceptual framework of multiple literacies is the work of Deleuze and Guattari. In the introduction to this article, the image of the rhizome was briefly presented. The rhizome is central to the process of how readings of the word, world and self create a movement of becoming. Just as a rhizome has multiple lines growing in multiple directions and thereby creating links and connections, the multiple literacies framework brings together different literacies at different times and in different contexts. There is a constant flow that creates a movement in reading the word, world and self.

Because postmodernism espouses a move away from universality and fixed forms of knowledge towards indeterminacy and fragmentation, the concept of literacy retained moves away from a definition of literacy and foregrounds the notion that literacy can only be actualized in the context. Accordingly, in this article,
literacy as a social construct consists of words, gestures, attitudes, ways of speaking, writing, valuing, a way of ‘being’ in the world. Literacies are value-laden, interwoven with gender, race, religion, ideology and power. When a person talks, reads, s/he constructs meaning in a particular context. More precisely, this act of meaning construction that qualifies as “literacy” is subject to cultural, sociopolitical and sociocultural interpretations within that society and of its institutions. The meaning of literacy is actualized according to a particular context in time and in space in which it operates (Masny, 2002).

According to this framework, literacies can be considered as a reading of texts embedded in personal and social language practices in diverse situations. Text is assigned a very broad meaning. In addition, there are social, cultural, historical and political implications embedded in reading.

A person is a text in continuous becoming. Reading the world and the word through text influences the text that a person continually becomes (Dufresne and Masny, 2001). To illustrate this, I take an example from Dufresne (2002). This study took place in an immersion class as learners were confronted with their own errors and error correction in the second language, French. A grade 4 student, Bruno (a pseudonym), could not accept that in French he could not say twelve o’clock (douze heures). The teacher told him that his response was incorrect. The correct form was midnight (minuit). Despite the fact that Bruno acknowledged, noticed, and was made aware that the correct form was minuit, he was not willing to let go of douze heures. Both knowledge forms were in his view correct. In his first interview, when he stated his position about mistakes, he said that he was willing to accept that he would make mistakes. He was learning a new language. This first interview is different from the second. In the second interview, Bruno did not want to acknowledge a mistake. He maintained that there was no difference between midnight/minuit and twelve o’clock/ douze heures. Are challenges to his knowledge formation also challenging his ‘being’?

In the previous example, there are several literacies operating. In reading the word and the world in a school context, Bruno is also linking with a powerful text, that of the teacher, that of the norm. How does he attempt a reading of self, of these differing
literacies? His response to the teacher’s correction of the form twelve o’clock is an indication. Moreover, in reading the world and the word through text, (for example the two interviews reported above), Bruno’s reading of self is that of engaging a text and meaning construction of who he is, what he knows and the relationship between the two. Is his response to both forms part of the continuous becoming, the between-ness, the opening as part of the process of ‘being’?

Dufresne (2002) in citing Masny (2001) refers to reading oneself, one of the literacies in “relation to text as an attempt to tame the uncontrollable and fashion a way of ‘being’ and to reject the tenets of structuralism “(Dufresne, 2002,127). Affirming literacies as multiple is also acknowledging the plurality of and intersecting worldviews, the different and contradictory ways of meaning and experiences that flow in the process of ‘being’, that is becoming.

This process also points to important connections between literacies and identity. Different readings in different situations become the conditions of identity. In other words, the experiences of difference construct identity. According to Parker (1997), “unless we can articulate and understand our distinctiveness, we cannot conceptualize, identify or defend identity because simply, we have none” (p.157). We seek to construct identity out of experiences of difference.

Experiences of difference can be about experiences in reading critically. Reading critically in reading the world, the word and self in postmodern times signals reading critically differing (multiple and contradictory) literacies. At the same time, reading critically creates opportunities for questioning. Questioning points to a sense of between-ness, an indication that a space is opening. With that opening, questioning is seeking difference.

Questioning while reading critically can also extend to reflective experiences. That space or between-ness produces possibilities for engaging reflections. Reflections intend to provoke thought within a process of becoming. Questioning and reflections tie into multiple literacies and the conceptual framework retained, the desire to become in fragmented and contradictory constructions of meaning. Multiple literacies create readings that expose the complexity of becoming. This has significant implications for education and construction of knowledge in postmodern societies.
Reflections

The impact of globalization is one where social, cultural and geographical constraints give way to the economic market of globalization. Reading the world, the word and self, the literacies that are a way of ‘being’ can raise consciousness of the effects of globalization.

In a postmodern era of globalization, Dufresne (2001) states just as in chess-playing, “processes and strategies used by governments, nations, states and communities differ based on their ways of ‘being’, their literacies, their ability to read market goals for the present and the future” (p.5). In linking conceptually with Derrida, societies evolve between what is and what is yet to come and are heavily influenced by (or in partnership with) industry and an uncertain future.

With the information highway and hypertext, knowledge forms are constantly changing, transforming and in the process, becoming. Knowledge forms are viewed as merchandise in our economic market. Those who control the information highway constantly transform power, value and capital attached to knowledge forms according to supply and demand.

Faced with uncertainty and non-linearity in the world, there seems to be a desire to establish stability, norms. In a similar manner, an individual’s way of ‘being’ will be uncertain as displacement of one’s way of ‘being’ is continuous when faced with information that is fragmented and decentered. Dufresne (2001) acknowledges that western society is information-based and it is constantly changing and constantly becoming. The onus, then, is on the individual not to establish the veracity of the information but to engage in a power relationship with the information. Adopting a critical reading as part of the process of meaning construction in reading the world, the word and self, multiple literacies as a way of ‘being’ can be taken up as a way of becoming in a postmodern society.

What links could there be between a minority community and multiple literacies in a postmodern era of globalization? In large part, it might have to do with the particular context of a minority community and the assigning of value-laden meaning to literacies within that community (Masny & Dufresne, in press). Minority communities are often
constructed in relation to majority communities. Minority communities could read critically the extent of imposition of the community’s way of becoming according to a majority. A minority is about ‘being’ different. If a postmodern globalized world is about chaos, non-linearity, fragmentation, then minority communities could create and transform. With globalization, multiplicities and difference are visible. Accordingly, affirming literacies as multiple creates an opening that connects with questioning, difference, reflections possibly about who we are but more importantly about what we have yet to become.

This article is intended to provoke thought about multiple literacies which conceptually involve reading the world, the word and self in postmodern times. According to Lather (2000), to provoke thought is to trouble the boundaries, ways of ‘being’ conceptualized as multiple literacies and linked to non-linear, indeterminate knowledge forms. In a minority language community, troubling the boundaries can be challenging, uncoupling concepts and taken-for granted-assumptions. From a normalized position, a community gains legitimacy based on power of language, numbers, history, culture, economy, geography or any combination thereof. Globalization and the techno-information highway are invasive and challenge the singularity of a minority community and its values. Difference and plurality trouble the boundaries of community and of self. Reading critically the world, the word, and self entails continuously seeking differing and different literacies as a way of ‘being’ in the world and part of a process of becoming.

References


To provide definitions in this article would be incommensurate with the postmodern paradigm. To do so would mean adopting an authorial (authority) stance and is viewed as fixed determinate forms of knowledge. What is possible is situating a term, that is, providing a context.

According to Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Human Rights, Canadian citizens have the right to have their children educated in French if any of the following three situations apply:
- if their first language is French,
- they received their own primary education in Canada in French, or
- they have a child who has received or is receiving his or her education in French in Canada.

In Québec, where most people speak French, Canadian citizens have the right to have their children educated in English:
- if they received their own primary instruction in Canada in English, or
- if they have a child who has received or is receiving his or her education in English in Canada.

According to section 59 of the Constitution Act, 1982, the right of persons whose first language is English, who wish to have their children receive English-language instruction, does not apply in Québec until permitted by the legislative assembly or government of Québec. In all cases, the right to receive an education in a minority language applies only when there is a sufficient number of eligible children to justify providing schooling in that language. Where those numbers do exist, governments must provide the necessary facilities.
The multiple literacies framework, because it is in movement and transformation had as an entry point opted for literacy as a state of being, creating a sense of finality and determinacy. As the framework and the concepts related to multiple literacies changed, transformation of the framework espoused the notion of literacies as a way of ‘being’ with the intent that being incorporated becoming, in other words, becoming-being.