

Dr Yvonne Foley
The University of Edinburgh
Email: yvonne.foley@ed.ac.uk

Diverse Critical Literacies: Pedagogies of Recognition

There are increasing numbers of pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) in schools in the United Kingdom. In excess of a million pupils across UK schools currently speak one or more languages in addition to English, many of whom are refugees fleeing war and violence. There are very few papers that report on research that explores the diverse accounts of pupils learning EAL and their experiences in schooling contexts. Their voices remain silent. This study sought to begin to address those gaps by exploring how teachers draw on critical literacy practices to engage in identity work with their pupils.

This paper will present initial findings from a case study that set out to foreground a linguistically diverse group of EAL learners' own voices about their identities and their school experiences as they develop literacies within an English-medium environment. A secondary focus of attention investigated how teaching staff within that context perceived the current situation and the needs of EAL learners, along with what they viewed as appropriate responses to these needs as learners constructed their sense of self.

A sociocultural lens was used to examine these perceptions and the interpretation of findings has drawn on recent theorizing on identity, belonging and migration. Interviews and classroom observations were used to address two main questions: how do EAL pupils talk about their sense of self during critical literacy practices? And what identities do teachers make space for during the teaching and learning of literacy in their school and classroom settings?

Initial findings and recommendations about ways in which both learner and teacher perceptions could be used to understand how multilingual identities are formed through the use of critical literacy practices will be discussed.