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Chapter 8

Professional Ethics in Multicultural Classrooms: English, Hospitality and the Other

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In order to constitute the space of a habitable house and a home, you also need an opening, a door and windows, you have to give up a passage to the outside world [l’étranger]. (Derrida, 2000: 61)

Introduction

Today, education in Australia is under enormous pressure to re-invent itself. The new Labor Government has embarked on an ‘education revolution’ as a way of ensuring national productivity growth through a large-scale investment in human capital. Education has been identified as a key priority in ‘creating an innovative, productive workforce that can adapt to a rapidly changing world’ (Rudd, 2007: 4). This agenda has triggered nation-wide reforms and debates about teaching standards and the quality of education in all types of schools (Kelly, 2008). The current government has rejected the socio-economic and cultural differences of students as an explanation of differences in educational achievement and has focused instead on teacher quality (Gillard, 2008a). As a result, improving teaching standards in the area of languages is currently identified as a key issue and, hence, has been tied to the development of a national curriculum for languages by the new National Curriculum Board. The government’s emphasis on language education, particularly on Asian languages, has been considered as something that will empower the knowledge base of young people, as well as increasing their employment and career prospects. Investment in languages is also seen as a means of safeguarding national economic and geopolitical interests in the region (Gillard, 2008b). All these developments signal the government’s commitment to educational reforms. However, they also signal its commitment to restructure the work of teachers by making
them responsible for learning outcomes, no matter in what schools or socio-economic contexts they operate.

There is nothing particularly new or 'revolutionary' in these initiatives, given that the re-orientation of Australian politics towards the Asia-Pacific region and national curriculum debates have been on the agenda of various governments for almost two decades. What is new, however, is the increasing accountability and performativity pressures on teachers who have been identified 'as the single biggest variable effecting outcomes at school' (Gillard, 2008a). By positioning teachers in this way, the need for consensus on national professional standards has been emphasized to ensure that teachers' performance is comprehensively assessed and managed. This means getting serious about the neo-liberalization of teachers' work, thereby delineating what counts as a good teaching practice on a national scale. Consequently, excellence in teaching is to be judged, compared and rewarded on the basis of how close teachers approximate a set of performance indicators. That is to say, one becoming a high performing teacher is tantamount to one becoming a better 'managed' professional. One might ask then how teachers are going to respond and teach to difference in their multilingual and multicultural classrooms and schools, if the very idea of responsibility in teaching is reduced to some abstract performance indicators and their work is decontextualized. The problem is that the impoverished representations of 'good practice' and professional standards may contribute further to social injustice, particularly in times when the neo-liberals focus more on teachers' performance and the marketization of education rather than on reducing some profound effects of socio-economic, cultural and linguistic disadvantages on learning outcomes though democratic and culturally responsive education.

This chapter situates English language and literacy education within the context of neo-liberal reforms, particularly with regard to the development of national curriculum and its ability to respond to cultural and linguistic difference both within and beyond the nation. It identifies the blind spots and contradictions inherent in the discourse of professional standards, emphasizing the often neglected issue of professional ethics that is arguably central to teachers' work. In current conditions when cultural-semiotic boundaries between 'us' and 'them' have been constantly crossed and when the proximity of cultural-linguistic difference has challenged the normative and normalizing frameworks of teaching English to the Other, this chapter re-evaluates the contribution of Derrida, Levinas and Bakhtin to language and literacy education in multicultural conditions. It draws on their ideas of hospitality, responsibility and
dialogism to transcend the monological and decontextualized views of professional ethics as caring at a distance. As an alternative, an emphasis is placed on dialogical ethics in linguistic and cultural encounters — in pedagogical zones of contact and ‘face-to-face’ relations with alterity — to think about the possibilities of opening up English language education to the Other and making it more hospitable to difference.

**Teaching English to the Other: The Question of the ‘Stranger’**

English language teachers in Australia operate in what Ulrich Beck (1992) once defined as a ‘risk society’ — a society that is characterized by increasing uncertainties and, related to these, social and cultural anxieties. While Beck (1992) connects risks to the process of late modernization and its side effects, I would like to connect ‘risks’ in English language education to the processes of migration and cultural-semiotic flows that can be perceived as a ‘side effect’ of the globalized world and its transnational economies. Due to migration, most of the schools in metropolitan cities of Australia, to a varying degree, have become multicultural (see Gearon, this volume). In addition to students from migrant families, schools are encouraged to enroll international students. As such, teaching practices can no longer be oriented exclusively towards mainstream students and their cultural literacy. If, some three decades ago, the systems of schooling were positioned in a relatively predictable and controllable space of assimilatory education, now they find themselves located at a cultural crossroads. On the one hand, there is a need to respond productively to the increasing diversity of students, to their languages and cultural identities, as well as to the demands of the global knowledge market. Rudd’s government clearly has these demands in mind while talking about the ‘education revolution’. On the other hand, education remains an ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Althusser, 1971), whose aim is to manage ‘risks’ associated with cultural, religious and social differences and to ensure national cohesion and citizenship through the assimilation of differences.

This contradiction in the politics of education becomes a central concern in the current debates about national professional standards and curriculum, and embodies ‘a tension between a neoliberal emphasis on “market values” on the one hand and a neoconservative attachment to “traditional values” on the other’ (Apple, 2006: 21). Neo-liberal policies in Australian education have precipitated numerous efforts to delegitimize public education by highlighting, or rather constructing, deficiencies of both
public schools and teachers. It is, therefore, interesting to observe how neo-liberal politics in education justifies the necessity of market competition by blaming schooling, teachers and teacher educators for the essential injustices and contradictions of hyper-capitalism. The previous education minister, Julie Bishop, explicitly stated that public schools lack values and should be protected from ‘postmodern and left ideologues’, who have hijacked the curriculum, ‘experimenting with the education of our young people from a comfortable position of unaccountability’ (Davidson, 2006: 15). The current education minister, Julia Gillard, continues this political line of reasoning, arguing that the curriculum should be nationalized to ensure both the quality of teacher training and the quality of curriculum in schools. This strategy of managing ‘risks’ has been widely utilized in Australia to represent teaching as a low trust profession, thereby justifying the introduction of accountability regimes to monitor both educators’ performance and the curriculum.

Equally, ‘moral panics’ (Cohen, 1972) about cultural values and literacy have been used to create effective alliances between neo-conservative politicians, ‘claim makers’ and the press in establishing the ‘context of influence’ on education. Donnelly (2006: 8), for instance, refers to ‘a long and proud history of democratic freedom based on the Westminster parliamentary system and English common law’, a cultural canon and language that are Anglo-Celtic in origin and ‘an industrial and economic system that guarantees a fair go for all’ as a cultural-linguistic basis for a national curriculum. This heritage, as Donnelly (2006) argues, has been denied by the ‘cultural Left’ that infiltrated the curriculum, and students are now taught that ‘Australian culture and society are characterized by inequality, social injustice, diversity and difference’. Hence, neo-conservatives suggest a return to the pre-multicultural curriculum of the 1960s and see cultural literary canon as a protective shield both from the imagined odds of the political Left and pop culture and from the ‘risks’ of letting strangers and their languages and multiliteracies into the cultural space of the nation-state.

Here lies the paradox. In times when classrooms become increasingly culturally diverse, teachers are urged to play down difference, see it as polluting traditional values and beliefs and, hence, as something that should be positively repressed through ‘proper’ education. This neo-conservative vision of teachers’ work entails a typically modern design of dealing with difference through the national(ist) order-making. As Bauman (1997: 63) once put it, ‘the [modern] nation state is designed primarily to deal with the problem of strangers’. It does this by using two strategies: anthropophagic (assimilation) and anthropoemic (exclusion).
Both strategies are central to the process of nation-building, described by Anderson (1991) as ‘imagining’ sameness by homogenizing differences and expelling strangers beyond the borders of managed and manageable territory. Needless to say, education, particularly English language and literacy education, is seen by the political Right as an ideological tool in managing differences, for if strangers are products of certain cultural or social upbringing, they are amenable to reshaping through some sort of explicitly normative national curriculum. It is for this reason that the current initiatives in educational policy making and their ethical foundations should be rigorously interrogated. If children are to benefit from ‘good’ teaching (Gillard, 2008a), educators need to be mindful about the limits of the national professional standards as a framework that can inform responsible teaching.

**Questioning professional ethics**

The current guidelines of state teacher accreditation authorities in Australia provide a very abstract and decontextualized description of standards for graduating teachers in relation to professional ethics. The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), for example, requires teachers to ‘be aware of the social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the students they teach’, to ‘treat their students equitably’, to ‘develop an understanding and respect for their students as individuals’ and to be ‘sensitive to their social needs’ (see VIT, Professional Standards, www.vit.vic.edu.au). These indicators of standards have been linked to the code of conduct that aims to promote ‘adherence to the values teachers see as underpinning their profession’, ‘provide a set of principles which will guide teachers in their everyday conduct and assist them to solve ethical dilemmas’, ‘affirm the public accountability of the teaching profession’ and ‘promote public confidence in the teaching profession’ (VIT, Professional Conduct, www.vit.vic.edu.au). Together, these standards and codes delineate the parameters of good professional practice and, in turn, can be used to monitor and assess teachers’ work. They appeal to the moral authenticity of the profession, a sense of professional values through which individual teachers can align themselves with the community and consciously control their actions. All this was purportedly lacking in the previous understandings of teacher professionalism. Injecting the codes of practice into professional standards can be seen, in my view, as an attempt to fill the gap in values and attitudes that has been created by managerial discourses of performativity and accountability. Clearly, teachers cannot be motivated by accountability pressures and
rewards alone. That is why we increasingly hear calls to restore the moral imperative of the profession, referred to recently by Minister Gillard (2008a) as the highest 'vocational calling'.

Yet, what teacher accreditation authorities have come up with is a deontological view of ethics – a duty-based and objectified perspective on the righteousness of one's actions – that in their view will make up for the detrimental effects of neo-liberal politics on the profession. Due to its abstract and universal nature, deontology is not able to capture the complexity of relations in the everyday life of teachers. It is problematic to apply this type of ethics to situated professional practice because deontology tends to reduce the ethical to popular morality or even to anachronistic moralism (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, 2008). The righteousness of actions cannot be seen as independent of the context in which those actions occur or as a mere intention of a teacher carrying out these actions. Teaching is always already situated in relation to others insofar as teachers are obliged to respond to the call of their students and, in turn, act ethically. How one acts ethically in a particular event of everyday life and how one understands his/her responsibility 'here and now' is played out fully only relationally (Critchley, 1999; Derrida, 1999; Bakhtin, 1993; Levinas, 1986). That is why, for instance, the question of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is the question of one's relations with the Other. This question is coming from the stranger or the foreigner, or as Pennycook (1998) would have it, from the 'SOL' of TESOL. It is perhaps necessary then, before I pose a question about the challenges of English teaching today, to clarify the question of the Other of English.

The Other as the stranger

The question of the stranger – the one who has been implicated as the Other of English curriculum and pedagogy – has played a central role in how and what kind of language should be taught to the 'English subjects' (Green & Beavis, 1996). Pennycook (1998: 22) has identified in this regard a number of connections between the (post)colonial framing of TESOL curriculum and pedagogy to 'the cultural constructions of colonialism' and the production of the non-native Other. By connecting the history of colonial discourses and the subject English within his genealogical analysis, Pennycook has explicated 'the history of the present' in English education that both contains and reproduces the binary logic in relationships between the native self and the alien Other. In this regard, one might say that the current practices of TESOL have sedimented the
historical consciousness – a memory of 'the pastness of past events' (Ricoeur, 1999: 5) – that is rooted in colonialism and nationalism. These practices carry the scars and wounds of the past cultural-political projects. Few would deny that TESOL as a field has come a long way in disassociating itself from the grant-historical projects of explicit cultural-linguistic assimilation. New discourses of transnationalism, cultural-semiotic flows and human mobility have been mobilized to represent English as the language of the borderless world. New communicative and student-centered approaches to language education have incorporated the liberal views of justice and human rights as their foundation. In such a context, English has been conceived as a language of empowerment that enables various 'non-natives' and 'strangers' to participate in globalized economies and cultures.

Yet, even though much has been done to transform the field in a more liberal and liberating way, English language education continues to be built around a cultural core that is exclusionary and divisive. It is this core that has enabled the cultural majority to claim the monopoly in defining what counts as a normative use of language in both curricula design and assessment. Normativity is then central to dealing with the non-normative or abnormal and, in doing so, it exacerbates cultural-linguistic stratification by excluding rather than incorporating alterity. What counts as normal is not, however, something that emerges naturally in the process of social agreement. Rather, this involves an immense amount of ideological work in the area of language and cultural politics to represent a particular as the universal and, in turn, as the national and culturally stable. The desire for a stable cultural space fuelled the engine of linguistic normalization and had a political cachet in most nation-building societies in the 19th and 20th centuries (Anderson, 1991). This ideological work also continues in current multicultural conditions as part of an ongoing nation-building project. Bauman (1997) has defined it as cultural 'order-making'. Depending on the degree of proximity to and distance from the normative center, people can either be classified as fully fledged community members or strangers. More specifically, this has to do with the idea of cultural-linguistic purity in establishing community founded on the principles of mutual understanding and unity. This project is inherently exclusive, as the idea of cultural purity (and the normative language) establishes the limits to incorporation and triggers a search for ever new strangers who do not fit within an image of community sought.

It is for this reason that modern nation-states, as Bauman (1997) argues, are in a constant process of purification. And this explains
why the process of nation-building in Australia remains inherently incomplete. If, previously, the specter of Asian ‘invasion’ attracted much social anxiety and (b)order-protecting efforts in Australia, in current post 9/11 conditions, Muslims are the strangers in focus and at the forefront of the national security agenda. In the context of an unfinished nation-building project and globalization, educating the nation, therefore, becomes more elusive than ever before. Framing the curriculum around dominant cultural literacy and establishing communal homogeneity, while de-legitimating the Other and announcing ever new strangers, is not feasible in these circumstances. This is because the category of the stranger will continue to stand in opposition to a national curriculum framework and professional standards that ultimately presuppose a unified ‘we-horizon’ (Husserl, 1970). What is needed in such circumstances is a shift towards a framework that is more response-able to ‘strangers’ in our classrooms. But this cannot be done only through making changes in curriculum design, teaching methods and professional standards; this is also, and importantly, an ethical issue that language educators need to face. As Butler (1993) once noted, the task of re-figuring ‘outside’ (e.g. the category of the stranger that constitutes the very identity of the cultural-linguistic ‘inside’) is a matter of re-configuring the normative and boundary-producing regime itself and, in turn, re-imagining the ‘we-horizon’ as a space that provides a more responsible response to the Other, without attempting to annul or assimilate it altogether.

Professional Ethics as Hospitality

The question of ethics has always been foregrounded in teaching practices, but often reduced to the codes of conduct in relation to students, parents and colleagues. In this way, professional ethics has been understood as a set of moral imperatives – a set of rules and principles – that regulate teachers’ actions, from dress codes, to the ways of building students’ trust, to the ways of enacting the core values of professional practice, such as integrity, respect and responsibility in one’s practice. Even though education authorities claim that these moral imperatives can provide a recipe for actions in all situations, there are a number of issues with such an understanding of ethics, particularly if ethics is presented as something abstract and, hence, external to teachers’ everyday life in schools.

Imagine yourself in a multicultural classroom – some of your students may have a similar cultural and social background to your own, but
others have backgrounds that are radically different; some can operate effectively with(in) discourses of schooling and are considered to be literate, while others come from a number of war-torn countries, have disrupted schooling experiences and are identified as 'underachieving' or 'at risk' students. Ideally, an ethical teacher should respect, and respond to, all the students and their needs. He/she should welcome their cultures and religions, knowledges and texts, multiple identities and languages into the classroom. This, however, is rather difficult, if not impossible. Some knowledges, texts and languages might be welcome, but not others. Some spaces for difference might be created, but not always and not for all. There are multiple constraints on the ability of teachers to respond to differences in the classroom. And these constraints, be they curriculum, assessment, pedagogical, personal, ideological or cultural-linguistic ones, inevitably result in some sort of exclusion, domination, misrecognition or other forms of cultural, linguistic and epistemological 'violence'. Thus, given the contextual particularity of teachers' work, representing the code of conduct as an abstract set of principles and a recipe for situated action is highly problematic because this code does not resolve pedagogical dilemmas and injustices in education.

How then can we think about the ethics of situated teacher practice and responsible decision-making differently? To answer this question, we need first to address a number of more specific questions: Can English language and literacy education be ethical if it is not open to all differences? What kind of professional ethics do we have in mind, if education does not welcome the Other unconditionally? What is the relationship between ethics and hospitality in language education? And, what kind of ethics can capture the complexity of professional practice in everyday classroom events? These are all 'big' and provocative questions for the profession, which would require a book-length exploration. Here, however, I would like to limit my engagement with them to the work of Kant and Derrida on the issue of ethics as hospitality, in order to shed some light on the enigma of professional ethics, particularly with regard to the possibilities of opening up education to difference. Many educational researchers have productively appropriated these two philosophers in order to explore the relationships between ethics, education and justice. Thinking about justice as the relation to others, both philosophers have discussed hospitality as a cultural-political practice that counteracts violence and exclusion. Yet, their views of offering hospitality to the Other and, in turn, of opening up spaces for difference are radically different.
Immanuel Kant, in his essay on *Perpetual Peace* (1795/2005), outlined the notion of 'universal hospitality' and delineated conditions on the visitation by the Other; a visitation that would not violate peace. Kant argued that the Other (the stranger) should be given the right to visit and not the right to stay, and that during his visitation the Other should not violate peace. In this view, hospitality is limited by the conditions that restrict the freedom of the Other both before and upon his arrival to a particular state. Even though the stranger has the right to come, his visitation is regulated by law and, in this regard, hospitality, too, is circumscribed by law. Kant insisted on conditional hospitality because he believed that without these conditions hospitality could turn into violence (cf. Derrida, 1999). Yet, conditions in themselves are already a form of violence. If we apply the Kantian perspective on hospitality to a multicultural state such as Australia, we can say that the host has a monopoly in defining who can come and what one should become if one's entry is permitted. It is the host that is the final arbiter of all cultural-linguistic rights and moral values and who is the main point of reference in perceiving differences as 'nothing more than minority cultures whom it would “grant” such rights as it unilaterally determines' (Parekh, 1999: 74). A host is a host, as Caputo (1997: 111) argues, 'if he owns the place, and only if he holds on to his ownership'.

Multiculturalism, of course, has been a decisive shift away from the repressive, restrictive and xenophobic (in)hospitality of 'White Australia Policy', to a society governed by laws and principles of cultural coexistence. As such, multiculturalism is the realization of Kant's 'perpetual peace', but it is not the renouncement of one's mastery and, in turn, is not the realization of pure hospitality and justice. One can mention in this regard such events as the 'Tampa crisis', or the Australian system of detention camps for asylum seekers, or current Islamophobia and, related to this, reinforcement of the security state that in itself can be seen as a retreat from the egalitarian model of multicultural society. Justice in multicultural conditions, if there is such a thing (Derrida, 1999), is yet to come and, in many ways, this depends on how we perceive and practice hospitality.

Derrida's (2000) deconstruction of Kant, in thinking about the possibilities of 'unconditional' or 'pure' hospitality, is largely informed by Levinas' approach to ethics. Levinas attempted to expel violence in relation to strangers through his formulation of a radical openness and response-ability to the Other. He argued the primacy of ethics as the first philosophy (*prima philosophia*) that comes before ontology and politics, for both politics (e.g. law-making) and ontology (i.e. the meaning of
being) impose rational categories on the Other that can justify violence. Levinas focused instead on dialogical relations between self and the Other and ethical demand that the Other places on the self. It is in the relations of proximity, in their eventness, that the I finds itself standing before the face of the Other, which is both our accusation (for we may have oppressed or misrecognized the Other) and a source of our ethical responsibility. As Levinas (1987: 83) puts it:

The Other as Other is not only an alter ego; the Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other’s character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other’s very alterity . . . The Other is, for example, the weak, the poor, “the widow and the orphan”, whereas I am the rich or the powerful.

Levinas concentrates on the ‘primordial’ investigation of human relations, in which being shows itself for what it is in encounters with other beings. In these encounters, the self is not a locus of rational interpretation. The self does not discover other things or beings, but instead the self reveals its misinterpretation of its own being. The proximity of the Other – ‘the weak, the poor, “the widow and the orphan”’ – imposes upon me more pressing responsibilities and duties than those I have towards myself. What it means to the ethics of hospitality is that the Other can be seen as a gift that simultaneously enriches my understanding of how to act ethically and puts me under the obligation to say ‘welcome’ and open my doors regardless of who the Other may be.

Derrida (2000: 77) argues that the monad of home has to be hospitable in order to be considered as home – ‘let us say yes to who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification’ (emphasis in original). This would be an absolute hospitality rather than the one ‘out of duty’ that Kant alluded to. Some cultures more than others may approximate this ethic of pure hospitality. For instance, the Berbers always prepare some extra food in case they are visited by unexpected guests. They are prepared for the unexpected arrival of others. There is no culture without a principle of hospitality and some cultures can be more hospitable than others. However, cultural groups, families or individuals can also suspend this principle to protect their home and family members. In this lies the aporia of hospitality, which Derrida (1999: 70) describes as follows:

If... there is pure hospitality, or pure gift, it should consist in [the] opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation, an opening
to the newcomer whoever that may be. It may be terrible because the newcomer may be a good person, or may be the devil; but if you exclude the possibility that the newcomer is coming to destroy your house – if you want to control this and exclude in advance this possibility – there is no hospitality....For unconditional hospitality to take place you have to accept the risk...

Derrida is concerned about the possibility of pure hospitality, arguing that when we experience the aporia (paralysis) of welcoming the stranger without conditions and, at the same time, are aware of risks associated with this, then this is the very moment of crossing the limits, of going beyond the limits of hospitality (cf. Caputo, 1997). For Derrida, responsibility starts in these aporetic moments, when we do not know what to do because, if we know what to do, we would apply a rule, or a principle, or a law. But would it be ethical? Would it be hospitable to the Other? Probably, it would not or not always, as I have argued above in my reference to teaching in the multicultural classroom. Pure hospitality in this sense acquires a messianic character, similar to justice and democracy; it has not been realized yet and is still to come. Therefore, we cannot just say that we are hospitable to any other – we are selective in our invitations, we may expect an invitation in return and, usually, we do not let people that we do not know into our houses, speaking to them on the doorstep instead. In this regard, hospitality is always demanded of us; it is a call to push our limits in welcoming the Other and be prepared to absorb a violation or forgive the unforgivable (Derrida, 2000). It is then a project for us to offer hospitality beyond our current practices, as a way of grappling with internal tensions that, in effect, keep the idea of hospitality alive (Caputo, 1997).

Such an ethics of hospitality poses a radical challenge to English language and literacy education. If education is to be hospitable to the Other, it should be open to the multiplicity of identities, knowledges, texts, languages and meanings that students bring with them into the classroom. Hospitable or welcoming education is what education is called to be in multicultural conditions. However, schooling in its current configuration – its curriculum frameworks and accountability regimes – includes all kinds of discourses and practices that marginalize and exclude, discipline and punish, homogenize and normalize. In this regard, the professional ethics of teachers, their hospitality to students and their dialogical relations with the Other, are circumscribed by the 'third' that is always on the scene. The 'third party', be it in the form of education policies and initiatives or curriculum frameworks produced by
education authorities, mediates situated relations. The third injects the 'rules of engagement' into the ethical. While the neo-conservative and neo-liberal frameworks of teaching English recognize and even celebrate difference, their understanding of how to teach the Other - i.e. pedagogical responsibility for the Other - is often framed by the discourse of empowerment through the acquisition of the dominant ways of meaning-making and cultural literacy. This discourse is similar to the previous discourse of cultural-linguistic assimilation, but is very often masked behind seemingly progressive approaches to teaching.

Here lies an ethical aporia in English language education, one that Janks (2004) has defined as an 'access paradox'. As Janks (2004) argues, many English language and literacy educators see the provision of access to the dominant literacy as a way of empowering the marginalized and the disadvantaged. This social and political position drives their moral responsibility for educating the Other. Yet, the 'access paradox' contains precisely the following contradiction:

if you provide more people with access to the dominant variety of the dominant language [and literacy], you contribute to perpetuating and increasing its dominance. If, on the other hand, you deny students access, you perpetuate their marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise this language as a mark of distinction. (Janks, 2004: 33)

No one would deny that migrant and minority students should be provided access to discourses of power and know how to use them. Still, providing access should be informed by a dialogical perspective on learning, thereby including students' life-worlds, experiences and textual practices, rather than excluding them in the name of empowerment. If English language and literacy can alienate the experiences of students, teachers should provide pedagogical spaces that are welcoming to different cultural and social experiences and, in turn, to differences in meaning-making. It is in such pedagogical spaces of hospitality that students can appropriate 'ways with words' in English rather than simply reproducing them (Bakhtin, 1981; Brandt, 2001). This approach to language and literacy pedagogy can only work if education is hospitable to, and inclusive of, students' texts and communal 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, 2000). By attending to the mediating role of culture in learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000), socio-cultural perspectives on language and literacy call for 'infinite hospitality' to students' cultural and textual resources. The question is how this infinite hospitality can be realized in a particular political context of education.
It is probably at this point that we need to make a distinction between pedagogical practice (i.e. teaching the Other) and ethics (i.e. responsibility to the Other). In doing so, we need then to argue the primacy of the ethical in teaching. It is only then we can say that being hospitable to and responsible for the Other is the very possibility of justice in and through pedagogical practice. In transforming cultural-linguistic monologism of English education, dialogical ethics as a reciprocal hospitality is particularly powerful because it addresses the very act of annihilating the Other as an ethical impossibility. Central to this is the idea that the textual and cultural practices of the Other introduce me to what was not in me, their alterity overflows my self by affecting and transforming my consciousness and understanding of the world. The value of the Other in learning is captured in Bakhtin’s (1990) idea of the ‘surplus of vision’ that the Other provides to me. An excess of seeing through the eyes of the Other contributes to the recognition of my limitations, particularly the limits of my own worldview. We can, of course, ignore these limitations, but to do so means we may erase any chance to see, to speak about and ‘read’ the world differently. To welcome the Other through the dialogical engagement in learning means, therefore, expanding the horizon of meaning-making and intercultural understanding. In this regard, dialogical ethics springs from a recognition of the fact that the Other has a power to shape my consciousness. The Other is both my reason and my obligation (Levinas, 1969).

Returning to the question of professional ethics, hospitality injects a moral dimension into how language teachers can relate to culturally and linguistically diverse students; before these relations have become mediated by curriculum frameworks and rationalized as teaching targets and learning outcomes. The key issue here is shifting the focus away from the ideologically mediated ways of relating to migrant and minority students and to the primacy of ethics in everyday classroom events, as a responsibility for their welfare, their futures and, in turn, for the future of multicultural society in which they live. This is a question of shifting away from learning how to live side-by-side with strangers and to learning how to live with them face-to-face. Needless to say, the possibility of interrupting the cultural, linguistic or epistemological violence towards cultural-linguistic diversity will depend on the possibility of engaging all students in dialogical learning from and with difference and restoring a sense of the agency of those ‘others’ who have been excluded, marginalized or demonized in the process of inhospitable education.
This brings into view a set of issues about English language and literacy education that will be responsive to the Other's appeal. Developing this critical agenda in English language and literacy education requires laying aside the orthodoxies of the normative curriculum and normalizing teaching practices (i.e. their cultural monologism) as an impediment to a responsible education in multicultural conditions, but also recognizing that hospitable education, in a sense of pure, unconditional hospitality to difference, is currently impossible. In this respect, the idea of hospitable English education is a project that is yet to come; it is a 'messianic' project that will continue to 'haunt' schooling, if it is to be just and democratic (cf. Derrida, 1994). One of the ways towards a more hospitable and just education is transculturation (Kostogriz, 2004, 2005; Kostogriz & Tsolidis, 2008).

Concluding Remarks: Towards Transculturation

Current debates in Australia about a national curriculum have brought to the fore the issues of the cultural and the multicultural, the language and languages, cultural literacy and multiliteracies, the metanarrative and minor narratives (Luke, 2005). These debates reflect the binary logic of engagement with the national and the particular, where the national is itself one particular among many that have been mobilized in the process of educating and imagining the nation. The challenge for English educators in multicultural and multilingual Australia is how to teach ethically within the national curriculum frameworks that remain regulated by laws of conditional hospitality, whereby the difference of Other vanishes in the political space of professional obligation to the nation. It is in this space that a singular responsibility for generalized others harbors injustice to a concrete Other. In contradistinction to this culturally monological approach, dialogical ethics keeps the idea of hospitable education alive, 'haunting', as it were, teaching practices and demanding justice in relation to the Other. The ethical question in English language and literacy education thus becomes an issue of transcultural pedagogy – a practice that enables one to respond to a call from the Other by acknowledging its Otherness (Kostogriz, 2004, 2005). This pedagogical practice is centrally about the recognition of a transcendental potential of transculturation as a way of learning and meaning-making between cultures.

Transculturation is a phenomenon of the 'contact zone', which, according to Pratt (1998: 173), refers to the space 'where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly
asymmetrical relations of power'. Textual practices in the contact zone are not constituted in separate communities, but rather in relations of cultural differences to each other – that is, in their co-presence and dialogical interaction. Central to this pedagogical process of transculturation are the ways the Other is acknowledged. While dialogical interaction can start initially from locations that are outside the contact zone, power relations between self and the Other can intervene so that this zone becomes an are(n)a of conflict and struggle for meaning. This, according to Bakhtin (1984), represents a clash of the extreme forms of monologism because both self and the Other do not transcend their preoccupation with self-consciousness, enclosed within itself and completely finalized. However, even though there is a clash of different meanings, the self cannot negate the Other completely because alterity is the main source of self-understanding. To engage in a pedagogical dialogue is to listen and to be open to the Other; it is to be immersed in the discursive space where both teachers and students become responsive and answerable when face-to-face with alterity. The Other, therefore, is the origin of our everyday experience, and we become conscious of our answerability as educators only while revealing ourselves to another, through another and with the help of another (cf. Bakhtin, 1984).

Recognizing the transformative power of the Other is perhaps the most challenging task in teaching ethically. This would depend on how far language teachers can push back against the powerful constructs of nationalism and neo-colonialism that are sedimented in the curriculum and pedagogical practice, in order to develop tools necessary for the re-imagining of pedagogy beyond cultural borders and between self and the Other. To transcend the current policies of assimilating differences in and through education, as Luke (2004: 1438) argues, we need to re-envision a teacher in a globalized, multicultural society as ‘a teacher with the capacity to shunt between the local and the global, to explicate and engage with the broad flows of knowledge and information, technologies and populations, artefacts and practices that characterise the present historical moment’. In a word, we need a vision of a new professional who can work on and between cultural borders and take responsibility for the future of difference by creating possibilities for transculturation in meaning-making – i.e. classroom events of hospitality. A pedagogical focus on such events acquires a paramount significance for teachers working in multicultural classrooms. Because members of these communities of difference are caught in a double bind between ‘here and there’, between dominant culture and other cultures, the paradoxical nature of transcultural literacy is that it can never be understood as a
'pure' or fixed system of meanings (Kostogriz & Tsolidis, 2008). It evolves as a distinctly new cultural-semiotic way of making sense of multicultural complexity in and beyond classrooms.

Transculturation is a central process of cultural transformation itself (cf. cultural hybridity in Bhabha, 1994). For this reason, it becomes important to re-think the professional ethics of English language and literacy pedagogy in times when classrooms are becoming increasingly multicultural and when the neo-liberal politics of managing difference through assimilation stifles a possibility of large-scale transformations. As an act of hospitality, transculturation would enable students to understand and negotiate differences, their connectedness and meaning dynamics in a dialogue of acknowledged differences, at a cultural crossroads. This, in turn, can inform the re-visioning of teaching and learning such as needed for a hospitable multicultural society. As Pratt (1998: 184) has emphasized, ‘our job... remains to figure out how to make that crossroads the best site for learning that it can be’, looking for the ‘pedagogical arts of the contact zone’ in order to foster a dialogue between differences in schools and beyond. This delineates the ethical horizon of English language pedagogy today. It is through its openness to the ethics of hospitality that language education can meaningfully perform its social justice agenda.

Notes
1. The 'Tampa crisis' refers to a diplomatic dispute in August 2001 between Australia, Norway and Indonesia after the Norwegian vessel Tampa had rescued 438 refugees from a distressed fishing boat in international waters. The refugees wanted passage to nearby Christmas Island. The Australian government sought to prevent this by refusing Tampa entry into Australian waters, transporting the asylum seekers to the small island country of Nauru. The Australian government was criticized both at home and internationally for evading its human rights responsibilities.

References


