

The Moment of Departure: Redefining Self and Space in Literacy Activism

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Abstract : Literacy practice is situated within the identity enactment in a particular time and space. The literacy practices in public places, ranging from city parks, urban slums to city roads are meeting places of discursive practices produced by dynamic interactions, and sometimes contestations, of social powers and capitals. The present paper examines the ways the literacy activists construct their sense of space in attempts to develop possibilities for literacy programs as they are sent to work with marginalized communities far away from their hometowns in Indonesia. In particular, this paper analyzes the activists' reflections of identity enactment - othering, familiarity, and sense of comfort - as they are trying to make meaning of the communities' literacy capitals and practices in the process of adapting with the communities. Data collected for this paper were travel diaries - serving as literacy narratives - obtained from a literacy residency program sponsored by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. The residency program itself involved 30 youths (18 to 30 years old) to work with marginalized communities in literacy activism programs. This paper analyzes the written narratives of four focal participants using Bakhtin's chronotopes - the configurations of time and space - that figure into the youth's meaning-making of literacy as well as their exercise of power and identity. Follow-up interviews were added to enrich the analysis. The analysis considers the youth's 'moment of departure' a critical point in their reconstructions of self and space. This paper expands the discussions of literacy discourse and spatiality while lending its supports to literacy activism in highly diverse multicultural settings.

Keywords : chronotopes, discourse, identity, literacy activism

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