Chapter 3
Marking Community Identity Through Languaging: Authentic Norms in TELL

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ABSTRACT
This chapter takes up the issue of authenticity in language pedagogy. Traditional views of authenticity take the native speaker to be the primary authority for linguistic norms. Written standard language is especially highly valued here. It is argued herein that TELL environments are equally valid as learning environments, and that students can use the freedom they provide to develop their own locally negotiated cultural and linguistic norms. Evidence is provided that students on a net-based MA program develop their own norms for reducing language, and use them and other means to mark membership of a local TELL community. Thus, TELL is a rich and authentic environment for learners of English to become what is referred to as “language practitioners.”

INTRODUCTION
In this chapter, the issue of community norms in Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) environments is the focus. Authenticity in language teaching has been debated for many years in relation to cultural or linguistic norms, but computer-mediated communication (CMC) is often not recognised as an authentic environment for language learners. The debate has moved towards seeing authenticity as a continuum which can be negotiated among language users in particular linguistic and cultural contexts. This very much mirrors the notion of translanguaging that has also been used to describe multilingual environments in education. Thus, instead of having a static view of norms as fixed values bound to cultural groups, especially native speaker communities, evidence is provided in this chapter to support a more fluid view where individual TELL communities negotiate their own norms through interaction. A related conclusion is that CMC is a rich environment that can be seen as authentic for language learning.
Linguistic norms are part of speakers’ identity, and can be seen as a projection of their selves as language users. In L2 contexts, this is particularly sensitive with respect to authenticity, as many still hold the view that it is specifically native speaker written language norms that are the only authentic ones for learners. Thus, the goal for learners is to be “as native speaker-like” or as “grammatically correct” as possible. Despite much research into the role of non-native speaker communities in the development of English around the world, this is still a commonly held view by teachers and learners.

Evidence will be provided herein that users of English as a second language develop their own cultural and linguistic norms through interaction in a TELL environment. The specific users come from Vietnam and Bangladesh, cultures where respect for teachers and elders is very high. Yet, in a TELL environment, these users are able to develop their own linguistic norms which are not based on the norms of their native speaker teachers. In fact, their norms go against the norms of their native cultures in allowing them to address their teachers informally. Therefore, the conclusion of the analysis is that users can use the TELL environment to develop their own authentic norms as a way of marking membership of a second language user community.

The chapter begins with a discussion of norms and culture, and their relation to the debate about authenticity. The development of norms through interaction is also taken up. The specific norm that will be the focus of the analysis is the reduced form, where the formality of language and usually the orthography are reduced in some way, such as reducing message to mess, or yes to yep or yeah. In the analysis, it is demonstrated first that the students are marking their membership of a community through the use of inclusive pronominals like we and the metonymic use of seminar group names. Also, it is shown that the second language users are developing their own norms for reduced forms in interaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that, for them, authenticity means the cross-cultural norms developed through interaction by their community in this TELL environment.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter gives us insights into how communities are developed and norms are negotiated in cross-cultural contexts. Specifically, here, the focus is on native vs. non-native cultures in English. Is it still the case that native cultures are the most appropriate for learners, and therefore, when learners interact with native speakers, it is native norms that will be adopted? It is demonstrated that this is very much not the case for the community being analysed. They interact and thereby develop their own community and norms. This demonstrates that it is the community of non-native speakers from different cultures that develop their own norms independently of those practiced by native speakers of English. Let us begin with the background to the issues of norms, identity and authenticity.

AUTHENTICITY AND NORMS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Norms and Identity

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) described five principles fundamental to how linguistic identity is studied. They are: emergence (the identity of an individual can only be determined by its emergence in linguistic practices), positionality (individuals position themselves during discourse with respect to their identity),