

Language Matters: A Study of Teachers' Uses of Language for Understanding Practice

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ABSTRACT

Amy L. Anderson: *Language Matters: A Study of Teachers' Uses of Language for Understanding Practice*
(Under the direction of Madeleine Grumet and Lynda Stone)

This dissertation asks how thinking about language can help us think about, and perhaps think differently about, education. Based on interviews with practicing classroom teachers who are also alumnae of a Master's in Education degree program for Experienced Teachers, in this work teachers describe encounters with various languages of education, including administrative languages and languages of the academy. Based in Bronwyn Davies' (2000) assertion that theorizing language allows us to make visible and disrupt our positioning through language, thereby repositioning ourselves, this study interprets practices of education through theories of language to explore both the contradictions and the possibilities for change that are revealed when languages of education are theorized.

Located at the nexus of phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, and literary criticism, this work applies a postmodern hermeneutics (Nash, 1997) to the study of languages of education. Texts of teacher interviews were put into conversation with other key texts that inform thinking in education. Arguing that contemporary politics of education block meaningful conversations among educators, this work also confronts reductions of language that reduce practice. This work advances Kristeva's (1984) notion of the semiotic for its potential to open up and expand discursive situations and positions in education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In this work, I explore the idea that language and conversations are gifts. Lewis Hyde's (1979) text, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, is central to this exploration, and I turn to this text to share how he explores the notion of gratitude in relation to gifts:

In each example I have offered of a transformative gift, if the teaching begins to "take," the recipient feels gratitude. I would like to speak of gratitude as a labor undertaken by the soul to effect the transformation after the gift has been received. Between the time a gift comes to us and the time we pass it along, we suffer gratitude. Moreover, with gifts that are agents of change, it is only when the gift has worked within us, only when we have come up to its level as it were, that we can give it away again. Passing the gift along is an act of gratitude that finishes the labor. The transformation is not accomplished until we have the power to give the gift on our own terms (p. 47).

At every step of this process, I have been the beneficiary of precious gifts that made this work possible. The teaching has "taken" and I express my gratitude here. In this dissertation I work to "come up to [the] level" of these gifts and I embrace the opportunity and responsibility to keep them in motion.

I begin by acknowledging the contributions of the teachers I met in the Master's in Education Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, especially the six women who participated in this research and were so generous with their time and insights. The compassion and rigor with which they meet their work in education is inspirational; knowing that these women introduce the next generation to the world, and the world to their students is encouraging.

I am grateful to the faculty who served on my dissertation committee: Madeleine Grumet, Lynda Stone, Jane Danielewicz, George Noblit, and Dwight Rogers. Their teaching and scholarship inform and inspire me, and their contributions to this work are invaluable. I am particularly indebted to two women: Lynda Stone, who welcomed me into the doctoral program and advised and encouraged me with unwavering enthusiasm and care; and Madeleine Grumet, whose interest in my thinking motivated my work and was the highest form of respect. Theirs are gifts I can scarcely repay but will do my best to keep in motion.

My experience at the University of North Carolina is richer for knowing and learning from many colleagues in Peabody Hall. Three women in particular have shared gifts of support, inspiration, and humor: Sydney Brown, Beth Hatt-Echeverria, and Lan Quach are tremendous friends; their gifts dance in my heart and head and around my arm.

Finally, I am a lifelong beneficiary of the gifts of family. It was there that I first learned lessons that propelled me in this work: that things worth doing are worth doing well, and that there are few things we cannot do with enough thought, persistence and care. My parents nurtured a love of learning, provided access to the wonders the world holds through travels and interest in this country and beyond, and created a loving home that launched our explorations and welcomed our return. I am incredibly lucky to be a part of a caring family that continues to grow and celebrate each other's accomplishments, and I acknowledge their gifts with gratitude and love.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Language matters. We use language in many ways: to communicate, express, evaluate, understand, argue, mislead, persuade, teach and learn, always in relationship and negotiation with others. We use language as members of multiple and varied language communities, each with different norms and expectations governing language use. Following contemporary claims, we might more accurately consider how language uses *us*.

In education, language is the medium of our work, guiding the delivery and exchange of information not only between teachers and students but also between teachers and other significant discourse communities, including administration and academia. How thinking about language might help us think about teaching and education is the focus of this research, with a particular focus on the languages and language situations that help teachers understand their practice. Using philosophies of language to interrogate teachers' practices of language and vice versa, this study joins research that has made the languages of education the object of inquiry.

This chapter introduces the study, exploring the evolution of my interest in language, specifically teachers' languages. I begin with a description of the Master's in Education (M.Ed.) program that served as the initial context for my work with the teachers in this study and include a discussion of my relationship to these teachers. Following the description

of the M.Ed. program, the chapter outlines the moves that led to the research questions that shaped this study.

Masters in Education for Experienced Teachers (M.Ed.)

According to program materials,

The M.Ed. for Experienced Teachers program is based upon the model of “teacher as change agent.” The conceptual framework is organized around the themes of educational change that blend knowledge of current reforms, theories, research and pedagogy using a collaborative cohort model. In this way teachers focus on their roles as change agents meeting the needs of students in a democratic, complex and multicultural society.

Two additional tenets of the program emphasize “Teacher as Content Area Specialist” and “Teacher as Researcher.”¹

The M.Ed. program is a thirty-one hour, two-year graduate program designed for experienced classroom teachers who are teaching full time while pursuing coursework (see Appendix A, Program of Studies). The program is cohort-based and grounded in specialty areas (including math, science, language arts, social studies, and literacy). Each cohort is assigned a faculty cohort leader and a graduate teaching assistant (TA). For two years, from May 2001 to August 2003, I worked as the TA for a cohort of 18 elementary and middle school teachers specializing in language arts and social studies. All of the teachers in this cohort were women, and all of the women were white. Sixteen of the women in this cohort taught in elementary schools in one county. Two additional teachers traveled from a neighboring county to participate in the M.Ed., and took classes with both the language arts/social studies cohort as well as a cohort specializing in literacy. As program TA, my

¹ This was the original framework of the M.Ed. program at its inception in 2000-2001. In a 2004 realignment, the School of Education brought the M.Ed. conceptual framework in line with the SOE conceptual framework, LEEDS: “Preparing Leaders in Education for Equity and Excellence in a Democratic Society.”

work included academic and administrative responsibilities. Academic responsibilities included attending each class meeting of every course. Teaching responsibilities varied from course to course from no teaching (in fact I was often learning along with the teachers), to taking responsibility for one or more course sessions, to active involvement as teaching assistant. Administrative responsibilities included attending M.Ed. faculty meetings, acting as liaison between teachers and the university, and helping troubleshoot issues that emerged in the cohort.

Ultimately I came to see my primary role in the cohort as support person and advocate for the teachers enrolled in the program. As a TA, I was the only university person who maintained continuous contact with the teachers, traveling with them through all the courses they took, and as such had a particular perspective on their experiences as students in the M.Ed. Along with cohort representatives, I represented teachers' concerns to M.Ed. faculty when they reflected programmatic issues (versus interceding in course issues). We also shared a lot, from brainstorming ideas about assignments to conversations about personal celebrations and hardships. As will be elaborated in Chapter III on Research Methods, these pre-existing relationships supported conversations that are critical to this research.

Why Language?

While reflecting on experiences of language in the M.Ed. program one teacher observed that a significant difference between educators at the university level and those in public school classrooms is that “we just don’t speak the same language.” When pressed on this, another teacher suggested that the language use in her graduate classrooms failed to

capture the “overwhelming complexity” of classroom life.² A disturbing perception that emerged in these conversations about language was that differences between the language of the academy and teacher language frustrated thoughtful communication between university faculty and classroom teachers and hindered teachers’ ability to engage with and critique the work. Beyond the struggle required for them to understand and use a discourse that was new to them, a primary concern was that languages of the academy failed to generate adequate connections to *teachers’* work. Teachers thought that there were occasions when faculty seemed too invested *in the words*, failing to give adequate time to exploring the concepts behind the words. In these instances, languages of the academy frustrated conversations that met teachers’ desires to delve into complex classroom issues. It is important to note that this sentiment was not limited to the “theory” classroom; “methods” courses also disrupted conversation when research-based justifications of a strategy trumped teachers’ experiences of the strategy.

In their concerns about language, teachers were less interested in simplification than in having sufficient time to understand how academic or theoretical language explored and explained classroom practices. Theirs was not a frustration with the traditional “theory/practice” debate (wherein theory and its language belongs to the academy, practice to the teachers), but rather with understanding how educators in different spaces could talk together to understand the complexities of classrooms. The teachers’ interest was in expanding the discursive circle.

These teachers’ observations about language were the foundation for this study, for their comments led me to broader questions about how teachers experience and use language;

² A detailed exploration of several teachers’ reflections on experiences of language within the M.Ed. program can be found in Anderson, Franklin, Midgette, Montagne, Naegler, Parks, & Rogers, 2004.

about the characteristics of various educational language communities; and why and how teachers might experience a discrepancy between their languages of education and other educational language communities. In addition, how might teachers use and receive language differently in different language situations, for graduate classrooms are not the only spaces in which teachers confront languages that discuss education and teaching in ways that seem alien to their practice. Does teacher language or experience of language change based on the interlocutor? Language matters because the words we choose and that others choose, as well as those that choose us, matter to our interactions in and with the world.

I was challenged by what I perceived as these teachers' resistance to languages of the academy, because as a student, scholar, and future professor in education, I am seduced by language, including the languages of the academy. The teachers' frustration led me to think about my own investment in language and how I use (or am used by) words. I am intrigued by the ways language both enables and refuses the hope we have for our work in education. Ideally, language connects people to each other and to concepts. Yet because language is simultaneously saturated with and bereft of meanings, from every utterance and essay there is always something that escapes. That language comes with escape and excess – that which is not easily communicated – means language users continually wrestle with understanding and with being understood. These ambiguities can frustrate communication and thus inhibit opportunities to pursue something better or something more than the status quo. Theoretical language, for example, is often criticized for being too challenging to decipher, sometimes used strategically to exclude those not “in-the-know.” Yet the words of “high theory” *do* have a particular meaning, and with adequate conversation, that meaning can be shared. One

word can do the work of ten, but only when we take time to elaborate the possibilities of the one word.

Seduction is a word I chose intuitively when considering my relationship with language. Words tease and frustrate in their approach and escape, and I both wait for and chase the word or words that express my intention or an author's meaning. Language seduces in its intimations, for within language I find challenge, promise, and the hope of something more. For me, language beyond the everyday – beyond the most “accessible” (Lather, 1996) or obvious usage – facilitates more communicative and imaginative access and pushes us toward something more. In the best sense, it expands the horizon of what we imagine as possible and teases and tempts us in that direction. But language is also subject to reductions, ellipses that limit our engagement with the worlds it describes. This reduction can be a literal abbreviation of concepts that troubles our understanding of particular words or concepts – as in the excessive use of acronyms and abbreviations, or a reduction that compromises our access to the imaginative possibilities of language – as when language is presented as static and unchangeable.

These sentiments, however, emerged over time and through conversations with other graduate students and faculty who were willing to share their own enchantments and frustrations with language. The term, semiotics, for example, has meanings that merit its discussion in graduate classrooms, for it is a useful concept for thinking about classroom life. But its choice can lead to a breakdown in communication. Defining it as a “theory of signs” is insufficient without also elaborating the concepts of signs and signification, having conversation about Saussure, and bringing in poststructuralist theory and Julia Kristeva. One word begins as more than ten, but the theoretical language used in the academy can have no

relevance to teachers if we fail to reveal our commitment and attention to linguistic and extra-linguistic features and insights and how they form analytic lenses for understanding classroom life.

I have my own memories about my induction into the languages of the academy. My first came in *Higher Education in America*, a course taught by Robert Nash in my master's degree program at the University of Vermont. On the first day of the course, he distributed an 11-page syllabus outlining our tasks for the semester. In addition to "aphorisms for moral conversations," guidelines for how we interacted with each other such as "read as you would be read," and "find the truth in what you oppose, the error in what you espouse" (see Nash, 1996), he shared expectations for our preparations for each class, his heuristic to help us engage with texts. For each class, we were to come having outlined each reading along several domains: "CEPTS" outlining the text's main *concepts*; "SUMPTS" listing the main *assumptions* of the piece. We puzzled out "big T Truths" from "little t truths." We also developed a vocabulary list of new terms encountered in each reading and brought dictionaries to class to help us when we struggled with a word. At times, class stopped so that we could all turn to a definition and puzzle the author's possible intentions for using a word.

I loved it. I was often frustrated because there were many times when I could not puzzle out the *cepts* and *sumpts*, could not make heads nor tails of the article, and came to class with what I thought were embarrassingly short lists. But I loved the technique and what it represented. Rather than having to receive the text as a calcified, as the last word, I could dig into it and tease it apart. I did not know at the time I was being introduced to deconstruction; that set of readings didn't come until October. But I ate it up. My friend

Rachel,³ on the other hand, hated it. For her, the experience of encountering words that were so mysterious was an affront, a form of violence that she has yet to forgive. The point is not that I was the better student; Rachel in fact was a much better student, but I responded to this strategy because it gave me a place to locate my self as a reader and a way to participate in the interpretation of what the text means. I have no memory of it but my mother tells me I used to read encyclopedias as a child.⁴ I learned early to consult books for the knowledge they contained, but it was not until I took Robert Nash's class that I learned to interact with the texts and lift the words off the page.

I also remember my first courses in this Ph.D. program, and feeling the same frustrations when I could not understand an article or text. A blessing of this dissertation is that I have been able to go back and recover some of those texts, encountering them from a different place. I needed them more now, and understood them better because I was ready for them. The words and concepts they contained were relevant for me now. Looking back through these texts, notes in the margins define words that I have incorporated: reify, epistemology, incommensurability, praxis, dialogic. There are many more. I am not always certain I use them in the ways I want to, so I return to the original sources or to the same dictionary I purchased for Robert's class, *Merriam Webster's 10th Collegiate*, and check the meaning, and meanings.

My concern is that conversations about language that take it beyond the everyday, taken-for-granted transparency generally presumed for language, are limited in education. These conversations may be a part of doctoral work, but that most often prepares future professors of education, thus re-tracing the boundary of those who have the language from

³ A pseudonym.

⁴ Those red-bound 1963 *World Book* encyclopedias lined shelves in four of our homes and were only discarded in 1997. Not that they remained my primary source material, but those books were highly symbolic.

those who do not. How often do we parse concepts in pre- and in-service teacher education courses? Imagine their possibilities? And even within doctoral work, students come to the classroom with different experiences and libraries. In that training, too, expectations for students' familiarity with diverse literatures frequently go unstated.

Dictionary definitions of seduction describe both its appeals and dangers, and my seduction by language recognizes and embraces both connotations. Seduction is defined variously as *an allurement, the condition of being led astray, and inducing someone* (interestingly, a woman) *to lose her innocence*. Seduce also shares etymological ties to education. The Greek root for both educate and seduce, *-duct*, (*-ducere* in Latin) means to be drawn out of oneself, a condition that appeals. It is the modern spin that links seduction to transgression (i.e., loss of innocence). To seduce, then, is to entice, to tempt to do something, sometimes something wrong or unintended. For me, the appeal of allurement is enhanced by this potential defiance, the refusal of the "right" and the risk of doing the unintentional. Innocence, after all, is sometimes over-rated and under theorized, for it can presume a naïve worldview as well as transparency, or "language that assumes a mirroring relationship between the word and the world" (Lather, 1996, pp. 526-527).

It is through language that we challenge others, and feminist theory has led the way in questioning the male bias embedded in language use and theory. Smith (1987) articulates a space of feminist resistance when she argues that women (especially those in academia) work under the dominance of the "father tongue," the consequences of which play out in intellectual, cultural, and political worlds. It is possible that women in the academy, for example, face risks similar to women in public schools as they contemplate overthrowing, or

at least ignoring, institutionalized power exercised in language. Yet it is within language that we can take on the status quo.

The suggestion, however, that seduction invokes unwilling participation on the part of the one(s) being seduced may be useful when considering the relationship these M.Ed. teachers had with languages of the academy. While wanting to participate in graduate classroom spaces, perhaps the teachers in the M.Ed. program were frustrated or deterred by language that did not seem to *invite* their participation; the terms of the relationship seemed pre-established. Willinsky (personal communication, April 2004) offered another interpretation when considering the seductive capacities of language vis-à-vis teachers. He suggested that seduction, at its most effective, requires sustained suspension of satisfaction, and that perhaps this is a luxury not available to teachers whose work and environment are always moving in the direction of resolution, of assessment, even. What are the impacts of languages of administration for teachers' relationship to languages of the academy?

The idea that teachers *are* willing to lose their innocence is worth pursuing, for being led astray or suspending resolution might lead to other ways of thinking about education. If teacher educators can share their vulnerability and fascination with the complexity of language and the disrobing of meanings, it might allow us to wander astray and unmask the spurious innocence with which normative practices are presented. Participation in a more rewarding examination of those languages and practices of schooling that work so hard to efface and contain teachers' intentionality in the move to accountability might then seem possible.

Working with experienced teachers in particular, we must listen to their appeal to lift discussions out of the theory versus practice debate in a way that contextualizes and honors

their passionate commitment to children in classrooms, in a way that honors praxis. This study explored teachers' perspectives on how language works – and fails – to facilitate relationships and connections between and among classroom teachers, school, district and state administrators, education school faculty, and students and their families. What seems significant in the work we do with teachers in relation to language is a discussion and examination of the qualities that make it generative and help transform the world (Freire, 1990). My interest in language is an exploration of the something more that words hold for us, and discussions about the deeply personal investment we have when we choose a particular word, seduced by its intimations. Seduction, however, is *my* relationship with language and while it explains my foundational interest in this work, as this study demonstrates, that framework may not be as salient for the relationship these teachers have with language. Echoing Willinsky's caution, seduction requires a particular vulnerability vis-à-vis the desired other, and contemporary structures and practices of schooling are not conducive to teachers' vulnerability. As the chapters that follow demonstrate, teachers may require more certainty and fidelity from language. Given the extreme vulnerabilities engendered in this age of accountability, suspending resolution and being led astray may not be risks they can afford to take.

This is not to suggest that language plays a purely functional role in their teaching lives, devoid of poetry and emotion, but spaces for that kind of imaginative suspension are limited. Yet Atwell-Vasey (1988) argues that “we pay a high price for the splitting of response into two worlds, one that counts and one that does not, one that is poetic, sensual, experiential, and private, and one that is structured, coded, abstract, and public” (p. 64). This notion of splitting the world also reintroduces a feminist thematic, for Atwell-Vasey's two

worlds are overlaid by gendered orientations to the world: the more objective, abstract and public – read male – orientation, and the more subjective, sensual, and private – read female – orientation. Introducing seduction could prove problematic unless we also disrupt any strict binary and introduce the fluidity of possible orientations. My passion with language does not have to be the teachers’ passion, but can exploration of and play with language help teachers think about, and perhaps think differently about, themselves in relation to the educational language communities of which they are a part?

Research Questions

My interests in language combined with the M.Ed. teachers’ frustrations with its successes and limitations provided the foundation for this research. From these interests, three central questions initially framed this study:

- What are the languages and language situations in which teachers claim understanding of their work?

As suggested by the original statement, “we just don’t speak the same language,” teachers in the M.Ed. program suggested that different language communities have their own ways of speaking in and about education. What are the languages teachers use and receive, and to what effect?

- What do teachers say about how they are positioned within educational discourses and how do they use language to position themselves? For example, what does teacher language share with neighboring discourses in education: the languages of education policy, of parents, and of graduate study?

The M.Ed. teachers claimed unique languages or uses of language for teachers, suggesting others do not speak the same language or understand languages as teachers do. If this is the case, how would teachers prefer to position themselves through language, and how do they think others position teachers?

- Much is claimed for language, including its potential as a source (or effect) of personal and professional identity, authority, and agency. Yet to what extent do teachers understand and use language in these ways?

A review of the literatures in language theory reveals a number of claims for what language does for individuals and society. These claims will be explored in Chapter II, focusing particularly on claims to identity, authority, and agency so certain in a modernist read, so problematic in poststructuralist theory. Will an examination of teachers' languages reveal similar claims for language?

These are the questions that shaped the literatures reviewed in Chapter II and guided data collection as elaborated in Chapter III. As this work developed and data interpretation began, these questions moved closer to a question suggested by Bronwyn Davies' (2000) assertion:

By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist (pp. 179-180).

Building on Davies' assertion, the question this study seeks to answer is how thinking about language can help us think about, and perhaps think differently about, teaching and education.

Chapter Overview

This introductory chapter has shared some of the factors that led to this research, exploring why language? And, why these teachers? Chapter II outlines literatures significant to this work, beginning with language theory, then moving to relevant literatures that have studied teachers and language. This will not be an exhaustive review but will serve as an introduction to subsequent chapters that will continue the conversation that situates this work with research extant in the field. Chapter II reflects my interest in how understanding the world *through* language has evolved with the linguistic turn that situates language at the epistemic and ontologic center.

Chapter III shares the research methodology of this study – its theoretical framework and methods of data collection as well as methods and theory of data analysis. As will be elaborated in that chapter, this work is located at the nexus of phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, and literary criticism. The process this work performs is hermeneutic, putting the texts of teachers' language in conversation with other texts in the search to understand how language can help us think about education.

Chapters IV, V and VI present and situate the empirical research among relevant theories to see how we might better understand education through an exploration of teachers' languages of and about education. Chapter IV takes up the original statement, "We just don't speak the same language" and considers how various interpretations of the statement provide insight into teachers' practice. Chapter V focuses on teachers' experiences of administrative languages of schooling, confounded by the pervasive climate of accountability. Chapter VI returns to the teachers' experiences with the languages of the academy, exploring the

obligations and continuities of gifts of language. Chapter VII concludes the study with an exploration of the significant themes shared in Chapters IV, V, and VI.

The Terms

The ubiquity of language and its myriad connotations and denotations requires some effort to characterize how the term is used in this study. The review of relevant literatures in Chapter II will focus this study in a particular tradition of research in language, but this section provides a brief introduction to how language is conceptualized in this study.

The idea that language is self-referential and transparent is a taken-for-granted notion characteristic of modernity, taken up and challenged by contemporary theorists in a number of fields. The modernist orientation assumes clarity in language; words have a particular meaning that is (or should be) obvious to those who encounter it. Self-referentiality is buttressed by transparency, or the idea that nothing hides behind language and nothing escapes it. In this project, however, I am working within poststructuralist and feminist theories regarding language that undermine any correspondence between language and “Truth.” Instead, contemporary language theories view language as layered, as contingent as leaky. These perspectives challenge the very idea of objectivist and universal truth, pointing our attention to the ambiguous, the local, the useful, and the personal as well as political dimensions of language.

In spite of the impossibility of offering a precise *definition* of language, in this study, language has several referents:

- The actual words we speak in their *communicative* aspects
- The sum or accumulation of these words particular to a *community* and its sub-

communities (e.g., the educational language communities that contains the teacher language communities)

- The domain of language or discourse *theory* that suggests the meanings and/or functions of language in society

In this study, I primarily use ‘language’ to identify the domain of inquiry, although the terms *language* and *discourse* are sometimes used interchangeably. ‘Discourse’ is often the preferred term when discussing language in contemporary social theory, understood as describing both the linguistic and extra-linguistic force of language in defining the parameters of what can be said by language and language users. I use ‘language’ because it is the word chosen by teachers in this study. It also links to various literatures on the study of language in education.

Literatures in social theory and education often name the categories I have elaborated in Chapters V and IV “administrative discourse” and “academic discourse.” I have tried to be careful to use “languages of administration” and “languages of the academy” as the signifiers. In part, this comes from previous conversations M.Ed. teachers in which they took issue with the idea that academics corner the market on academic languages, as if teachers’ languages were not academic (see Anderson et al, 2004). I did not always give the languages of administration the same consideration in Chapter V, but I took my cue from the teachers in that, often referring to “administrative languages.” By the same token, I took my cue from the teachers in Chapter VI with languages of the academy, for there is a greater spirit of reciprocity when teachers talk about the university.

In the end, this work is as much about education as the languages of education. It is not enough to lift teachers’ language out of its particular contexts and strip it of its culture.

The hope is to capture the dynamic interaction between theories and practices of language. To do this, this work must return teachers' languages to schools in order to help us think about, and perhaps think differently about, education.

Language matters. In "Where the Stress Falls," Sontag (2001) captured its possibilities:

Nothing new except language, the ever found. Cauterizing the torment of personal relations with hot lexical choices, jumpy punctuation, mercurial sentence rhythms. Devising more subtle, more engorged ways of knowing, of sympathizing, of keeping at bay (p. 29).

Language is the ever found, always already spoken prior to our induction as members of various language communities. Sontag reminds us that there are innumerable combinations and choices within language, opening up space for change or something different in education. The exploration of how we use languages and how languages use us animates this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Language has a long and rich history as an object and a subject of inquiry, and the languages of education constitute a part of that history. One premise I bring to this work is that education is embedded in the legacy of modernity. Because I am interested in being a part of efforts that reduce the influence of those dominant values, I am interested in understanding how confrontations between modernity and its successors are represented in language. This review traces and defines the tensions between the modern and post-modern in the domain of theory, and then looks at how those tensions are described in literatures about teachers and language.

This review of literatures is another opportunity to consider how thinking about language helps us think about teaching and education. Language is the central domain of this research because it is a site of tension named by teachers in this study; it is both appreciated and rejected for what it does and does not reveal about the world; and it shapes how we understand and interact with each other. The first section of the chapter situates *this* research in traditions of language study by following the emergence of language as an object and subject of study. I then turn to a review of how teachers are positioned in research that explores their practice vis-à-vis language. Finally, because I am interested in how shifts in theory play out in language, I trace three concepts that take form in modernity (i.e., identity,

authority and agency) through the linguistic turn to see how post-modern theories re-imagine these concepts.

If the aim of education, and of this master's program in particular, is to strengthen teachers' knowledge and capacity to assume leadership in the development of the schools where they teach, then it is interesting to think about whether graduate work that proceeds through the study of theory and language has the capacity to enhance teachers' experience of teaching and confidence in their initiative and influence.

The Emergence of Language as an Object and Subject of Study

Language as an object of study considers the ways language is positioned in modernity. As a subject of study, language is considered through modernity's successors in poststructuralist and feminist theories. The arrival of successor theories, the "posts-," does not signal an end of the original; post-modernity exists alongside modernity and poststructuralists alongside structuralists. St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) remind us that "we are always speaking within the language of humanism, our mother tongue, a discourse that spawns structure after structure after structure – binaries, categories, hierarchies, and other grids of regularity that are not only linguistic but also very material" (p. 4). St. Pierre and Pillow make an interesting choice in naming the language of humanism our "mother tongue," for as we will see, the structures they name, the binaries and hierarchies and grids of regularity are interpreted elsewhere as the language of the father (Kristeva, 1984; Pagano, 1994). It is important to note that some feminist theorists are not always happy to be grouped with poststructuralists. For my purposes, what they share is a way of thinking differently about language that may prove useful in this study of teachers and language. In particular,

they each challenge dominant, patriarchal norms that presume to speak from a universalizable (read western white male) perspective. I believe these orientations are of interest in this study of teacher languages because educational language communities operate within the horizons of these orientations.

Modernity

According to Toulmin (1990), the “standard account” of modernity holds that it is based on the “adoption of rational methods in all serious fields of intellectual inquiry” (p. 13). Toulmin argues that this account of modernity began in the 17th century in Western Europe, securing a hold in North America as it was colonized; modernity then flourished through the first half of the 20th century, during which time rationality challenged theology as the guiding theoretical order, and “the emancipatory power of reason generated a ferment of enthusiasms” (p. 15). In modernity, reason was the standard against which all other effects or explanations (e.g., emotion, theism) were measured. These enthusiasms included descriptions of ever-expanding prosperity that took shape in industrialism and capitalism; a refiguring of “ecclesiastical constraints and controls” (p. 18) into Catholic dogma and Protestant ethic; and an intensification of the effects of foundationalism in ‘universal’ truths. The enthusiasms advanced values of individualism and the unitary sense of self, of control, of scientific reason that could contain the world.

In keeping with the overarching project of modernity, the modern orientation to language sought to make a science of language study such that “with sufficient caution, the properties of language may help us to understand the structure of the world” (Russell, 1940, p. 23 as quoted in Harpham, 2002, p. 4). The science of language held that man created language as reflection of thought; reason precedes language in this account. This mastery of

language, in fact, justified man's domination of the natural order. That language helps us understand the world maintains currency through and beyond its modernist (and pre-modern) origins, but modernist orientations to language assume a particular relationship between people and language such that man controls his world through language.

Saussure's (1916) quest to make a science of language was an emblematic development in the history of modern language theory, for he proposed a theory of signs that sought to decode both the structure *and* meaning of language, signaling a transition later developed in contemporary theories of language. Saussure's structuralist model of sign = signified (concept) + signifier (sound image) suggested a structure for analyzing language as a discrete, closed system; this represents the modern orientation. Yet Saussure's legacy is both structuralism *and* post-structuralism: "Saussure could be said to have contributed decisively to modernism through the principle of a social systematicity determining language, and to postmodernism through the principle of difference without positivity" (Harpham, 2002, p. 18). As will be elaborated below, in his efforts to represent language, Saussure also named the impossibility of any exact representation through language. In naming the difference between the signifier and the signified, Saussure also pointed to the spaces that may come to exist between the word (the signifier) and its object (the signified).

In *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End*, Willinsky (1998) critiqued the imperial project of the English language. If we read 'language' in place of "English language" and 'people' in place of "colonized peoples" in the quotation that follows (n.b., these substitutions are made in the quotation below), it is possible to read an exemplary description of a modern orientation to language, as well as its critique:

It is simply too easy to teach [language] as if it were the soul of civilized knowing, the heart of great literature, and the very tongue of democracy.

[Language] is some part of this and more. But the story of its dominion reminds us that it is also less than that. With the expansion of the British Empire, [language] was made an instrument of domination and silencing; it was used to regulate and police access to authority and knowledge among [people] (p. 191).

Without diminishing the tremendous advances of modernity, Toulmin (1990) argues that its historical narrative is “one-sided and over-optimistic. ... We need to balance these truths against its major errors of history and interpretation” (p. 16). Saussure begins this transition by clearing the way for subsequent theories of language, for he signals a shift from the individual to the social when it comes to meaning in language, for “the meaning of words is given by their relation to other words rather than by their reference to objects” (Harvey, 1990, p. 28). Further, Saussure’s insistence on the arbitrary and mutable nature of the sign through time also made possible subsequent challenges to language as a knowable and controllable system of meaning. Arbitrariness and mutability introduce the idea of slippage between a signifier and signified such that the “meaning” of words is not as evident and concise as was previously theorized. With Saussure we have the introduction of the socio-cultural nature of language taken up by theorists in a number of fields, including linguistics and anthropology, as will be discussed below.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, I argue that as an institution, education is embedded in the modern project. This project can be seen in the continuing narrative that efficiency, progress, and normative standards of achievement are foundational concepts of education (Apple, 1993; Giroux, 1992; Popkewitz, 1998). Hierarchical bureaucracies are the normative structures of schooling, and language works to support those structures by privileging the discourse of the elites. In education, language is prized for its most basic communicative qualities of clarity and transparency. In this model, teachers become

handmaidens to the project by repeating the stories that undergird the hierarchical and patriarchal structuring of that order. Although I agree with Willinsky (1998) that “It is simply too easy to teach [language] as if it were the soul of civilized knowing, the heart of great literature, and the very tongue of democracy,” language *is* “some part of this and more” (p. 191). Modernity also brought us narratives of emancipation and transformation, stories and energies that continue to bring hope.

As will be elaborated below, however, I believe the effects of modernity writ large mask the complexity of life and reduce language to the merely functional. My premise, following poststructuralist theory, is that such a structure limits language, and by extension our access to the imaginary. The suppression of the imaginary is a goal of the patriarchal order because the imaginary violates the impersonal, bureaucratic register claimed in modernity and characteristic of so much educational policy and rhetoric. My lament is that education practices embedded in modernity stifle creativity and mask complexity.

As noted above, Saussure ushered in conceptions of language that introduce its situatedness in the social order and in the next section I discuss certain theorists who took up the notion of language as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

Language as a Socio-Cultural Phenomenon

Understanding language as a socio-cultural phenomenon emerged in relation to a pre-modern conception of language, maintained in modernity, as “a primordial and defining human endowment, the foundation of human cognition, human society, and human nature itself” (Harpham, 2002, p. 7). Language was first understood as an innate, *individual* capacity that reflected consciousness; other people were not necessary for language or

meaning to emerge. The modern turn to language that sought to create a science of language (in a positivistic, explanatory sense), placed language at the center of inquiry.

Saussure's (1916) *Course in General Linguistics*, a critical contribution to the science of language, was *also* an influential text for Soviet linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, and for Lev Vygotsky in developmental psychology. Challenging the idea that language is an innate capacity that emerged *fait accompli* to reflect thought, Vygotsky and Bakhtin argued instead that language is primarily a socio-cultural construct. Vygotsky (1986) suggested that language is first external to the child who was exposed to its usage in a language community; language is then adopted and spoken by the child as she becomes a member of that community. Individual consciousness emerges linguistically and *in relation* with others (versus innately) and the acquisition of language and culture are socially mediated activities. In other words, we come to understand ourselves and the world as we interact with others; language is the medium that facilitates this understanding and interaction.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin (1981) understood the self as a “dialogical locus of multiple voices” (p. x). This understanding was opposed to Enlightenment ideals that posited unitary individuals for whom others were unnecessary in their development of consciousness and understanding. Bakhtin's idea of language was more expansive in scope and origin. He said:

Language... lies at the borderline between oneself and the others. The word in language is half someone else's.... Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions. It is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others (pp. 293-294).

This is Bakhtin's *heteroglossia*, a condition that governs language such that “at any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions... that will insure that a word uttered in that place and in that time will have a meaning different than it would have under

any other conditions” (p. 428). In other words, language is not as static and impenetrable as modernity would have us believe because it changes as it passes from person to person. We share language with each other, but we all receive it differently. As populated as the word is with the intentions of others, when we pass it along, our use is partially our own, but the word retains the others’ intentions. Further, Bakhtin (1986) argued that speech communities (e.g., of education, or teachers) develop genres, or vocabularies particular to the communities’ needs. As members of speech communities we access different genres as required by the communicative situation. Genres articulate common themes and relationships between words and ideas characteristic of that community.

Bakhtin’s contributions to thinking of language as a socio-cultural enterprise are significant in contemporary theories and studies of language and education (Gee, 1996; Heath, 1982, 1983; Lemke, 1995; Miller Marsh, 2003; Rorty, 1989, 1999). Language as a socio-cultural phenomenon has implications for the work of teachers, for it highlights the relational aspect of language. In this conception, language use is no longer understood as an individual enterprise, but is developed and shared in relation to others. Teachers are thus initiated into the cultures of education as they learn the languages that shape its practice. Thinking of language as a socio-cultural phenomenon also highlights tensions among educational language communities as those in different organizational positions (i.e., teachers, school board members) struggle with issues of ideological control. Understanding language as a socio-cultural event means that the tension that emerges in those confrontations, between teachers and school board members for example, can be understood as the confrontation of communities. As a relational concept, then, language can be understood to shape or be shaped by teachers and other powerful stakeholders in education.

For this research, studying genres of teacher language and how teachers understand language as a socio-cultural phenomenon are ways of identifying how teachers use language to understand their work.

Post-modernity

Modernist efforts to create a science of language (and thus meaning) had significant implications in philosophy and emerging theories of language. Contemporary theories of language are shaped by and react to, sometimes against, the modernist belief that understanding and controlling language contribute to the speaking subject's mastery of life. However, as Toulmin (1990) said, "we need to balance these truths against its major errors of history and interpretation." Postmodernism and its denials of the "grand narratives" (Lyotard, 1984), is the counter-narrative to modernity that signifies a theoretical shift in ways we understand the world. While postmodernists work to slip the bonds of the master-narrative, they can hardly suggest its demise without positing a narrative of their own.

Nevertheless, the advent of postmodern theory challenged certainty as a goal and attitude, even if it did not signal the end of modernity (Toulmin, 1990). Emerging as an aesthetic movement through which artists and intellectuals sought to distinguish themselves in opposition to the dominant, modern order (McGowan, 1991; Toulmin, 1990), the effects of postmodernism can be seen in multiple domains and disciplines. These include a reintroduction of the local and particular vis-à-vis universal meaning (Toulmin, 1990) such that we cannot assume that meaning maintains from community to community. In addition, with post-modernism we move from epistemological determinacy to indeterminacy (Harvey, 1990) such that in language, there is no guarantee of correspondence nor certainty in words or concepts; this is also the shift from foundationalism to anti-foundationalism. And "the

atomization of the social into flexible networks of language games' suggests that each of us may resort to quite a different set of codes depending upon the situation in which we find ourselves" (Harvey, 1990, p. 46, quoting Lyotard, 1984). In this move, language as language becomes strategy. McGowan (1991), although tentative about the benefits of postmodernism, acknowledges its gifts: "Phrased positively, postmodernism is the attempt to legitimate knowledge claims and the moral/political bases for action, not on the basis of indubitable truths, but on the basis of human practices within established communities" (p. 24). In this study, postmodernism is introduced as a transitional concept that signals a break with the over-determining effects of modernity in relation to language, redirecting our attention to local, social, and indeterminate practices of language. This move thus clears the way for poststructuralist theories about language.

Poststructuralist Theories of Language

Poststructuralist theory is in many ways a theory *about* language (Weedon, 1997), in which "language is understood as the most powerful constitutive force shaping what we understand as possible and what we desire within those possibilities" (Davies, 2000, p. 181). In poststructuralist theory, language supplants man as an organizing construct. Recall that Saussure insisted on the arbitrary and mutable nature of the sign. The very *structure* he suggested, the existence of signifier *and* signified, introduce the possibility of space *between* these components of the sign. Theorizing this space becomes the task of poststructuralist theorists, for the possibility of the gap makes possible challenges to language as a system of meaning both knowable and controllable by man. Significant for this work, there are two directions that can be loosely coupled under the heading poststructuralist, although it is worth noting that neither would likely adopt that label. In social theory, Michel Foucault *follows*

structuralism in proposing a new theory of the subject. In psychoanalytic theory, the path that leads from Jacques Lacan to Julia Kristeva begins in structuralism and takes us somewhere *beyond* it.

Foucault's influence on poststructuralist theories of language is substantial, at least at the level of contemporary social theory. Foucault's scholarly coming-of-age in post World War II France positioned him in relation to specific conditions at a particular moment in time. As a student of philosophy, his primary theoretical influences were phenomenology, hermeneutics (existentialism in some accounts), and structuralism (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). However Dreyfus and Rabinow named Foucault's task as the repudiation of these early influences:

[T]o avoid the *structuralist* analysis which eliminates notions of meaning altogether and substitutes a formal model of human behavior as rule-governed transformations of meaningless elements; to avoid the *phenomenological* project of tracing all meaning back to the meaning-giving activity of an autonomous, transcendental subject; and finally to avoid the attempt of commentary to read off the implicit meaning of social practices as well as the *hermeneutic* unearthing of a different and deeper meaning of which social actors are only dimly aware (pp. xxiii-xxiv, emphasis added).

In other words, Foucault's project works to restore the significance of meaning to structuralism given its focus on the structuration of language. At the same time, he wanted to avoid essentializing meaning, that is, making meaning complicit to an individual's autonomy, as he understood the phenomenological project. Foucault argued that his genealogical method could help us trace back the meanings we receive, thus avoiding the idea that humans are unwitting puppets, blind in the face of existential meanings. Between *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* (1990), Foucault articulated a newly synthesized theory of discourse that decentered the humanist speaking subject and pushed the linguistic turn another degree to suggest that discursive

practices create subjects. Like socio-cultural theories of language, Foucault's theory recognizes of the social aspects of language. But in poststructuralist theory, we see an emphasis on how language practices shape or construct individuals, deposing the autonomous speaking subject. As Popkewitz (1998) said, "When we 'use' language, it may not be us speaking" (p. 60). This radical emphasis on language called into question *the individual's* command of language by challenging long-held assumptions about individuals as the locus of control.

So why are Foucault and the poststructuralist theories he facilitated at least as useful as frustrating? What we gain from this perspective (shared by some feminisms) is a more expansive sense of the possible; we are no longer tied to the singular, unified notion of individuality that is characteristic of modernity. Rethinking the subject allows us to rethink and imagine different possible subject positions and actions. Yet a poignant critique of this theory came from Hartsock (1990) who asked:

Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? (p. 163).

Hartsock's is a significant challenge that is important to various feminist and multicultural theories. Other feminist poststructuralists have taken advantage of the positive possibilities created when we are no longer limited to a unified and singular self. This first section began by tracing theories of language from roots in modernity, introduced socio-cultural theories of language, and continued by introducing the posts- to modernity. This brings me to the iteration of poststructuralist theory that introduces my commitment to feminist theory.

Feminist Poststructuralist Orientations to Language

Feminist action and theory emerged in response to the dominant culture of patriarchy that framed the world and those in it within an overwhelmingly male point of view. On the heels of the first feminist critiques of patriarchy came various other feminisms that questioned the overwhelmingly white, Western and heterosexual biases of the dominant culture, as well as their traces in liberal feminism. Twenty-first century feminisms may continue to share a concern with the persistence of patriarchy, but the means of addressing this concern differ. While feminist poststructuralists are as diverse as any category, there are theorists in education drawing from both strands to direct a different lens on problems in education, including the persistence of patriarchal discourse and its effects in education.

As a theory about language, a poststructuralist orientation allows us to interrogate language as a means of thinking about practice. The *feminist* contribution to this model is the introduction of alternatives that can help us conceive of events, people, and importantly, change, differently. Feminist poststructuralist theory offers the positive possibility of recognizing multiplicity (neither as relativism nor duplicitousness) in language, and understanding the contingent, in-process nature of people and actions. Davies (2004) revealed the patriarchal assumptions embedded in concerns about the death of the subject by arguing that feminist poststructuralist theory reminds us that it is the death of a particular subject that is noteworthy. She is quoted here at length:

The idea that the subject is dead is only meaningful within a masculinist humanist understanding of the subject in which the individual and the collective are understood as separate and in an agonistic relationship. The individual male hero who rose above, conquered, was separate from, and who often fundamentally controlled and changed the collective might well be dead. The female subject, who is of the collective, who knows in connection to, rather than in separation from, is more alive than ever. Through poststructuralism she has her subjectivity confirmed – she claims her once-derided ways of knowing in the world, her fragmented, contradictory, always unfolding, embodied knowing. Her subjectivity becomes, through shared

discourses, her connection to the universal, rather than the dismissible opposite of “true” objective knowledge (p. 47).

It is important to remember, however, that these are conversations generally occurring at the level of *theory*. St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) remind us that poststructuralist theory, for example, is “largely academic in nature” (p. 2). I share concerns raised by Britzman (2000) about the relevance of such theoretical choices for the pre-service teachers with whom she worked. She said:

Such theorizing, after all, may not make sense to the people behind my text. Indeed, there still remains the messy problem of whether the people in my text, if asked, would see themselves as inventions of discourses and as fragmented subjectivities. Most, if not all, of my participants were deeply invested in the humanistic notion of an essential self that had somehow been repressed by some condition, person, idea, or social structure. They all believed there was a real self to possess and to represent and yet, in a general sense, they viewed the context of education as a site that demanded they hold these real selves in abeyance.... (p. 37).

Britzman’s concerns are central to the questions I am asking in this research. But I believe that from the diverse theories introduced above, we might find ways to use language theory to help us think about education. This research joins feminist poststructuralist researchers in education “working the ruins” (Lather, 2000, p. 284) of humanism’s legacy, for the goal of this research is not to uncover truth through generalizations. Despite the positivistic grip in much research (including the efforts of the current administration to limit the parameters of “what counts” in research), I believe that within these discourses are theories useful for helping us think change differently.

In what follows, I look at extant research on teachers and language to see how this work is conceived in education.

Teachers and Language

The work of teachers is positioned within various structures of schooling and society that have tremendous impact on their practice. As will be described below, studies that look at teachers and language often provide pre- and in-service teachers with particular models for “teacher.” These models take their origin in modernity and name the paradox that animates this study: teachers are romanticized as guardians of the child, idealized for their nurturance and care, but at the same time this idealization condemns teachers to reproducing the status quo that subordinates her in the hierarchy. Given the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of educational structures (e.g., schools, districts, local and state school boards), I argue that teachers are generally spoken to, or for, or about in spaces that shape teacher practice, often in ways that assume their acquiescence (e.g., couching administrative changes in the vague language of “best practices”) and limit their participation. Fullan (1993) described this as the conservative nature of education, such that:

The way that teachers are trained, the way that schools are organized, the way that the educational hierarchy operates, and the way that education is treated by political decision-makers results in a system that is more likely to retain the *status quo* than to change (p. 3, emphasis in original).

Structures and practices of schools thus perpetuate themselves and engender particular behaviors.

The work of the teachers in this study is embedded in the languages and practices of education administration. According to Anderson (2001), educational administration has borrowed vocabulary from business, the military, engineering, and industrial psychology, “fields that have been socially constructed as high in status, legitimacy, and efficiency” (p. 205). Vocabularies of democracy, participation, and diversity are also influential as administrators in education are acutely aware of their public function and work to legitimate their organizations to multiple constituencies. Because of this, “administration programmes

increasingly are in the business of providing future administrators with ‘safe’ discourses that will not offend pluralist interest groups” (p. 211). This also works to maintain the status quo. Anderson also noted the tendency of administrative language to use the passive voice of scientific language that seems to speak from nowhere and so everywhere (i.e., the “author” whose death Barthes (1984) predicted) thus “hiding human agency” (p. 205). In sum, Anderson characterized administrative languages by the function they play:

This legitimation role, which requires different discourses of legitimation for different constituencies (central office, faculty, parents, community, media, etc.) produces a discourse similar to that of presidential candidates who use language in such a way as to not offend any particular constituency (p. 211).

These legitimating discourses operate to conserve administrators’ position among various constituents, relying on languages that are safe but efficient. Popkewitz (1991) agreed that the languages of regulation operate by being *acceptable enough* to persuade diverse constituencies to accept them. These discourses mask difference or disagreement in the service of stability. The maintenance of the status quo, however, also reinscribes hierarchy and patriarchy.

In *Women Teaching for Change*, Weiler (1988) elaborated this hierarchical and patriarchal nature of schools and school decision-making, describing the negative consequences of maintaining the status quo:

Their hierarchical structure, the content of the formal curriculum, the nature of the hidden curriculum of rules and social relationships all tend to reproduce the status quo. Those who are in control, who dominate and benefit from this structure, attempt in both conscious and unconscious ways to shape the schools so as to maintain their own privilege. In this way, school organization and practices tend to reproduce classism, racism, and sexism... (pp. 150-151).

Popkewitz (1991) also described the negative consequences of these languages for teaching, for regulations proliferate and limit educators’ ability to make decisions for themselves. In

addition, languages of regulation crowd out important conversations about issues of social justice and learning that might challenge the status quo.

Hierarchy is also gendered and this is one way education maintains a division of spheres with teachers responsible for the private, child-rearing roles deemed appropriate for women, that is, behind classroom doors, while more powerful policymakers assume responsibility for the public sphere in traditional, patriarchal fashion. In *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, Grumet (1988) traced the historical moves that established the public-private, gendered split in education:

As social science laid claim to the child and identified the devoted mother as a threat to normal social development, the early twentieth century brought an attack on the very maternal solicitude that the nineteenth century had valorized. Nevertheless, the contradictions that evolved in the nineteenth century between the doctrine of maternal love and the practice of a harsh and regimented authority, between women's dominance in numbers and our exclusion from leadership, between the overwhelming presence of women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only persons with the capacity to know, are still present in the culture of schooling (p. 44-45).

This study will seek to understand the ways in which language contributes to the persistence of this gendered division in schooling.

This is not to suggest that teachers never have power and control, for the classroom generally remains the teacher's domain (and I recognize that many teachers believe this is just where the focus is and *should* be). Teachers, however, are increasingly held responsible both for facilitating and fixing low achievement, their double bind. Nor are teachers excluded from all decision-making in spite of tight institutional reins. Schools rely on teacher participation in numerous committees or site-based teams that keep schools functioning as well as they do. There is a body of literature that exhorts teachers to be change agents in the system (see Fullan, 1993; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). This literature

invokes teachers' moral responsibility to "make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background and to help produce citizens who can live and work productively in increasingly dynamically complex societies" (Fullan, 1993, p. 4). Making a difference, it is suggested, is achieved through continuous innovation and change, at the classroom and school levels, and beyond. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) aimed to empower teachers by offering "guidelines imbued with a new mindset and a bias for action," such as "locate, listen to and articulate your inner voice; practice reflection in action, on action and about action; develop a risk-taking mentality; commit to working with colleagues; and seek variety and avoid balkanization" (p. 64). This literature does not, however, explore the place of language or discursive practices to how teachers understand their work and conceive of change.

Literatures that take teachers and language as subjects of inquiry tend to leave language un(der)theorized. A brief review of these literatures follows, including a discussion of their relationship to this research.

Teachers and Language: A Review of the Literature

In discussing research that takes on the issue of teachers and language, in this section I describe the literatures that takes on teachers' "thinking," "personal practical knowledge, and "talk." Recognizing that much of this work left *language* (or discourse) un(der)theorized, feminist poststructuralists in education have, in the past decade, taken up that task. Their work concludes this section.

Three areas of research that have generated significant literatures related to teachers and language are studies of "teacher thinking," teachers' "personal, practical knowledge," and "teacher talk." Interest in teachers and language in the classroom emerged gradually from research that took student learning and achievement as its primary focus (Clark &

Peterson, 1986). *Teacher* behavior was studied only insofar as it affected student performance, the “process-product paradigm” that examined teachers’ processes in terms of their products, student learning.

Teacher Thinking

Efforts to understand teachers’ lived experiences emerged in the 1970s. Lortie’s (1975) *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, for example, argued that even though “teaching is the root status of educational practice... empirical studies of teaching work... are rare” (p. vii). As studying teachers and teaching became central to understanding student achievement, teacher behavior and language became a focus of inquiry; research on “teacher thinking” developed out of this focus. Elbaz (1991) described the interest in teacher thinking as an effort “to redress an imbalance which had in the past given us knowledge of teaching from the outside only” (p. 10). The focus became teacher thinking as measured by teacher language.

Considered through the various language theories elaborated above, much teacher thinking research recapitulates the modernist project, for language is studied for its representational capacity. In this work, “teachers’ words are taken as isomorphic to their mental worlds: their words are assumed to capture their thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, and feelings” (Freeman, 1996, p. 734). Teacher thinking was presumed to be a gateway to understanding classroom life; teachers’ language was the conduit for understanding teachers’ thinking. However, this focus on teacher thinking as isomorphic to thought is problematic with the postmodern turn because it assumes a direct correspondence between teacher language and teacher thought, as though language always faithfully represents thought. My concern is that assuming this correspondence cements thought and language as they become

steps in a linear path to understanding. This understanding masks complexity, however, for what about teachers' thinking *not* represented in language? In addition, the dynamism of the communicative situation requires that teachers' languages change to meet different situations. More recent interpretations of teacher thinking that take socio-cultural theory as well as the postmodern turn into account when considering teachers' talk, reintroduce complexity and attend to the influence of others in a person's language and thinking. First, however, we consider literatures that support theories of teachers' personal practical knowledge.

Personal Practical Knowledge

Consistent with the teacher thinking literature that centered teachers in the field of inquiry was the subsequent emergence of the study of teachers' "personal, practical knowledge," taken up notably in the research of Clandinin and Connelly (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Based in their concern about the marginal status of teachers in educational research, Clandinin and Connelly proposed a focus on teachers' personal, practical knowledge articulated through teacher narratives. Personal practical knowledge is understood as expressions of teachers' individual insights about students, teaching and classrooms. Collaborative narratives are the instruments for describing those insights. These narratives are co-created by teachers and researchers. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1986), these narratives thus became the primary medium for integrating and expressing teacher thought and action. The goal of these narratives was to study and write about practice in order to generate changes in practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1987). What distinguished personal practical knowledge was that it transformed teacher thinking by

giving teachers the chance to reflect on practice through narratives, in essence to narrate their thoughts.

This research, however, does not take us far from thinking of language as isomorphic to thought. Willinsky (1989) and Freeman (1996) speak to the limitations of this research. According to Willinsky (1989), personal practical knowledge is limited for two reasons: first by suggestions of narrative unity, and also by its failure to locate teachers' experiences in the larger institutional field. As we have seen, advancing the "unity" of co-created narratives is risky for several reasons. First, narrative unity is another holdover of modernity – the idea that our narratives reveal some essential self. Narrative unity risks homogenizing or normalizing teachers' experiences, creating "signs of a common script" (Willinsky, 1989, p. 250). In addition, it may be misleading to suggest that teachers and researchers can "co-create" when the relationship between teachers and researchers is likely to be laden with power and gender subtexts, to name but two. Willinsky (1989) suggested that Clandinin and Connolly "might be encouraged to... examine the seeming transparency of their own representations and query what they would construct out of people" (p. 253). This move that Willinsky suggests is the postmodern move, the idea of multiple representations are possible and a talking back to the grand narrative that positions unitary individuals.

Willinsky (1989) draws the parallels between teacher thinking and personal practical knowledge research by reminding us of the limitations of isolating teachers' thinking and narratives apart from the larger educational communities of which they are a part: "I remain concerned that this focus on the individual's actions limits the basis of collaboration and conceptually isolates the teachers' practices from their inescapable institutional element" (p. 251). Stone (1994) also criticized the "teacher personal theorizing" research for its

consequences for teachers: “What results, to my mind, is that teachers believe they are gaining greater control of their professional lives but are doing so only within pre-prescribed boundaries that perpetuate masked but manifest top-down control” (p. 4).

Freeman (1996) elaborated a critique of the assumptions behind teacher thinking and personal, practical knowledge: “The assumption is that the teacher’s world is there to be revealed” (p. 748). He returns us to Bakhtin to argue against the idea that an individual’s inner world is revealed through language, for a Bakhtinian analysis proposes “that voice is created on and for the occasion of the researcher-teacher collaboration out of utterances that each person borrows from existing social voices” (Freeman, 1996, p. 748). This is heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), the idea that utterances, while drawn from the socio-cultural milieu, have different meanings based on conditions at the time and place of the utterance. Following this logic, each subsequent utterance has yet another meaning, and so on. With this in mind, we have to trouble the unity of narratives or risk a certain stasis that “scripts,” and thus limits, possible responses. A socio-cultural focus also argues that no one individual’s inner world is adequate for explaining phenomena, for we are all members of communities that shape our language or discourse; focus on the individual masks the influence of others. In addition, a poststructuralist critique would argue that notions of “individual,” “inner world,” and the transparency of language are legacies of modernity, inadequate to theorizing the complexities of teachers’ experiences. This brings us to teacher talk, moving language out of the head and off of the page, so to speak, but as we will see, this too has its limitations for the work I propose.

Teacher Talk

In a review of language study in education, Heath (2000) described the emergence of another body of research that focused on teachers and language. According to Heath, “teacher talk” developed as a field of inquiry in education following a year-long collaborative study between linguist Hugh Mehan and teacher Courtney Cazden in 1979 (Mehan, 1979). This and subsequent studies of teacher talk focused on interactions between teachers and students in the classroom. Findings from these studies demonstrated varied language behaviors between teachers and students, a diversity rooted in different family and community influences, as well as in different roles within families and communities. The nature and expectations of teacher questioning, for example, showed marked differences in students’ responses based in race and class (Heath, 1982, 1983; Ochs, 1988). “This work showed how much the language of recitation, examination, and even discussion in classrooms or within authority-dominant situations lay in long standing ideas about a transmission model of socialization in which teachers teach and students learn” (Heath, 2000, pp. 51-52). In other words, this work showed the dominance of the patriarchal order in education.

Distinguished from teacher thinking and personal, practical knowledge literatures, this work paid closer attention to the politics of language. Responding to the influences of the linguistic turn, the status of individual, unique identity is now understood as tenuous. In addition, these studies (see for example, Casey, 1993; Danielewicz, 2001; Miller Marsh, 2003) differ from previous teacher thinking literature in examining the *social* (versus individual) nature of teacher thinking. The motivation is not to fix teacher identity in some narrative unity; teacher identity is more aptly described as teachers’ identities.

Language qua language, however, remained un(der)theorized in much of this research. Leaving language untheorized meant that it remained a taken-for-granted and sometimes simplistic form of communication. The imaginative possibilities of language get lost when it is assumed to seamlessly represent thought, when it is treated as the province of individuals (versus a socio-cultural experience), or when its implications in the politics of education go unrecognized. There is, however, a body of feminist poststructuralist research in education that takes language as its subject.

Feminist Poststructuralist Interpretations of Teachers' Language

Bronwyn Davies' influence has been substantial for understanding language as she conceptualizes the idea of positioning through language, including how languages in schools and society position students: "As children learn the discursive practices of their society, they learn to correctly position themselves as male or female" (Davies, 1989, p. 5). Going beyond theories of socialization that leave analysis at a more amorphous level, and also beyond the socio-cultural focus on interactions in language, Davies works to understand what kind of subjectivity is produced in language. She argues that children not only learn the 'gender roles' of a community; they also learn that these roles are discursive practices that position them as male or female. Children "correctly position themselves," but Davies also introduces the idea that they could transgress the received positioning and position themselves differently.

Rhedding-Jones (1995) combined structuralist and poststructuralist modes of analysis to study language in an Australian primary school. She argued that structural methods can provide a useful lens for revealing structures of sexism in language (e.g., word counts for gendered pronouns, gender differences regarding use of active vs. passive language, bias

regarding representations of women or men). To this, Rhedding-Jones adds poststructuralist feminist analysis, a concept of analysis that uses deconstructive methods of “outlinings, examinings, analysings, interpretings, criticizings, and evaluatings” (p. 489).

These theorists work to bring a poststructuralist analysis to practices of education, but Alison Jones (1997), reminds us of the difficulties of the project: “Terms such as ‘subjectivity’ are regularly interpreted via a particular, humanist discourse which education students typically bring to their studies” (p. 261). These humanist discourses, which I have associated here with modernity, block access to theorizing language, and through language. This tension is central to the work of this dissertation.

Concepts in Language Inquiry: Claims and Counter-claims

Because I am interested in how shifts in theory play out in language, in the final section of this chapter I trace three concepts that take form in modernity through the linguistic turn to see how post-modern theories re-imagine the concept. When proposing this study, I chose these concepts because they are very influential in feminist theory and I was interested to see their relationship to how teachers’ reflections about how language helps them understand practice. What follows is an experiment in tracing the linguistic turn through these concepts.

Various claims are made about the ways language helps us make sense of the world, or how it creates our experiences of the world. There are three claims that are the focus of this section: language as an expression of identity, language as a space for agency, and language as a source of authority. Among the many potential claims, I chose these because of their import in modernity and their continued importance post-modernity; the concepts are

also implicated in feminist projects. I believe they provide me an opportunity to put language theories in conversation with the language and language communities of education. Because this study is positioned amid poststructuralist and feminist theories of language, language is debated both as a source *and* effect of identity, authority and agency as well as a means of confounding such claims. In each section, the potential significance for studying language and education is discussed.

Language as Expression of Identity

Identity is a challenging concept for it is laden with the weight of the modernist individual that “takes as its prototype a coherent, unified, and originary subject” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain, 1998, p. 7). This modern identity is rooted in the *cogito* and values consistency and integration; language is mastered in this conception, the complementary tool for articulating an individual’s experience. Yet this modern conception of identity has faced significant theoretical challenges with the linguistic turn. Foucault’s work on the genealogy of the subject, for example, presented a radical critique of conceptions of autonomous, objective individuality and individuals. The solitary individual has been decentered and identity – like language – is understood as a socially mediated process, as ongoing and not fixed, as multiple and not unitary. Psychoanalytic theory also undermines belief in a unified self as the ego, superego and id wrestle for control. These contemporary theories “invite us to see persons taking form in the flow of historically, socially, culturally, and materially shaped lives” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 5).

Yet it is clear that the arrival of the post-modern does not signal the end of the modern. Modernity retains influence in our understanding of the world, and its valuation of competition and achievement maintain influence when considering the relationship between

identity and language. As suggested by “we just don’t speak the same language,” there are many communities, and thus language communities, within education. Multiple language communities increase the chance that one community will fight for dominance and to name significance, for “people are exposed to competing and differentially powerful and authoritative discourses and practices of the self” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 29). This becomes an ideological battle for identity with languages wielded as weapons (Bakhtin, 1986; Gee, 1996). As Bakhtin (1986) noted:

The tendency to assimilate others’ discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual’s ideological becoming.... Another’s discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth – but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very bases of our behavior (p. 78).

Poststructuralist theory offers different possibilities for identity symbolized by language. Ermath (2001), for example, offered a different way to think about identity in this framework: “Identity is not something essential and atomic, like the vestigial ‘soul’ of early modernity; identity is sequence and palimpsest.⁵ Its singularity exists in the unique and unrepeatable sequence of a life, but not in some essential ‘subject’” (p. 47). Drawing from the same structuralist legacy as socio-cultural theory in language (i.e., Saussure’s insistence on the arbitrary and mutable nature of the sign), Foucault (1972) pointed us away from the study of identities *per se* to the study of the languages or discourses that shape identities. Subjectivity, in fact, emerged an alternative signifier for identity, suggesting a move from static attribution (identity) to the particular and processual (subjectivity). This is similar to the significance of language for identity as discussed in psychoanalytic theory, for following

⁵ Defined as “Something having unusually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface” (Merriam Webster, 1993)).

Lacan we are structured with in the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic; or following Kristeva, the symbolic and semiotic combine through language.

For the purposes of this study, the relationship between language and identity is significant, for this research explores the languages that characterize teacher communities. In particular, how do teachers understand the positioning of teacher identities through language?

Language as a Source of Authority

Language as a source of authority has deep roots established over time, culminating in the modern project. If the unique human characteristic is the use of language (rooted in antiquity), then mastery of language accorded its user significant authority in society. As noted above, the modern conception of language presumes a correspondence between what is said and claims to truth. Naming – in the physical sciences as well as social sciences – was a powerful act, and facility with language accorded users significant authority. Authority also carries the patriarchal stamp of modernity. Feminist theory, however, refused to conflate authority into maleness. Pagano (1994) raises the question of authority: “what it consists of, who can legitimately exercise it, whether it is possible for a female teacher to exercise authority or be an authority” (p. 252).

As seen in the previous discussion of identity, the locus for authority moves from individuals to language in the “death of the author” suggested by Barthes (1984) and Foucault (1984). The freeing of language from its authorizing subject reverses the relationship as users become subject to language. For Grumet (1988), the assassination of the author “is a coup d’etat that can return the text to teachers and students, once again material, malleable, to be fashioned by them into what it is they need” (p. 146). This

repositioning of authority places it between the text and its interlocutors, a move that prefigures the analysis of language in Chapter VI.

For teachers, the decision to engage administrative or academic authority – by participating in debates or questioning those politics – carries risks. Teachers may challenge a decision, but doing so attracts attention and has the potential to undermine the authority they do have. Pignatelli (1993) argued that

teachers exercise their agency caught within a typically modern, complex paradox of knowing subject and manipulated object. Ironically, if teachers test the limits of “regime[s] of truth” for example, by asking not, “Is it true?” but rather, “Who wants it to be true? What are the *effects* of saying this is true and not that?” they erode the authoritative ground upon which they speak. Asking such questions forces teachers to recognize that they are not only critically engaged with, but are also constituted *within*, these regimes (p. 421, emphasis in original).

In Pignatelli’s argument, teachers actually risk undermining the authority they *do* have by engaging in “conversations and controversies” (Weis & Fine, 2003, p. 2) in education. We might also consider how faculty and administrators are positioned in those same regimes.

The potential for language to name or challenge issues of authority is significant in this study as I try to understand these teachers’ relationships to language. Pagano (1994) reminds us that “women have traditionally been excluded from public authority – that is from access to public language used for public purposes” (p. 271). How do the women in this study position themselves vis -à-vis languages of authority? How does their authority talk back to traditional authority?

Language as a Space for Agency

In its modern legacy, agency is traditionally understood as a unique human capacity for meaningful, goal-directed action in the world. In the modernist orientation this is not blind action, but action that is the willful behavior of individuals intent on imagining and

effecting change in and on the world. Language is understood as one site for the expression of human agency rooted in belief about individuals' autonomy.

Agency as a unique human capacity, however, becomes problematic in the postmodern turn. The decentered subject is often interpreted as introducing a denial of agency. Yet where does such a denial leave people, for example teachers, who would do more than merely act, searching for experiences of efficacy in their work? As Holland et al (1998) said: "The conundrum is the seeming contradiction between humans as social producers and as social products" (p. 42). Shaw (2001) suggested another possibility: "Plainly, however, even Michel Foucault cherished resistance.... Whatever the stability of the self, the question of its ability to act meaningfully and to change meanings... has remained an open question" (p. 4). Butler (1992) took this a step further:

We may be attempted to think that to assume the subject in advance is necessary in order to safeguard the *agency* of the subject. But to claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked, resisted? (pp. 12-13, emphasis in original).

So while the agency of the *humanist* subject may disappear, poststructuralist feminist literatures maintain an interest in the recuperation of agency and so suggest a reconceptualization, or reconfiguration, of agency (e.g., Butler, 1990, 1992; Britzman, 2000; Mayo, 2000; Davies, 2000). The reconceptualization of agency contends that just as the subject is now understood to be formed *discursively, in-process* so as to avoid stasis and autonomy, and *performative* so as to suggest choice and alternative performances, so is agency. This agency is not a possession or product of an individual, but a strategy that acknowledges choice, contingency and process.

From this new recognition new questions arise... What languages do I employ and how? If making a difference is not a choice but a condition – if we are not essential agents picking up tools in neutral space and time but simply “are difference”⁶ – then how do we learn to recognize the difference we make? (Ermath, 2001, p. 52).

Following Foucault (1972), Ermath posited that we cannot help acting, yet she located agency in language, not in individuals. This shift is critical to this study that seeks to theorize agency in teacher language.

Conclusion

The goals of this research are to explore the ways teachers use languages to understand their work in an effort to understand how thinking about language helps us think about teaching and education. Embedded in various educational language communities, how do teachers use language to make sense of their work? This focus is distinguished from but responds to the literatures described above, for the goals of this research are to explore relationships between teachers and language, using philosophies of language to interrogate practices of language and vice versa. However the inquiry is not for the sake of theorizing language alone, but to explore how teachers use language to think about practice, the “radical interaction” that Freire (1990) called praxis (p. 75).

The literatures in this chapter bridge the linguistic turn that centers language as an object and subject of inquiry. In this chapter I have drawn on diverse literatures to trace language theory from its origins in modernity through its most recent theorization in poststructuralist theory. As will be explored in the coming chapters, this work is not only an academic exercise for the study of teacher language; it also expresses my own personal and

⁶ From Foucault (1972), *The archaeology of knowledge*: “we are difference” (p. 131).

intellectual reach for the positive possibilities I imagine for education when language is presented as a subject of inquiry.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the theories and practices of research that guided this study. As described in Chapter I, based on a teacher's observation that "we just don't speak the same language," I began this research with questions about how language can help us think about education. I have drawn on different theories and traditions of research to answer that question and to guide the collection and interpretation of data. This chapter begins by describing the theoretical frameworks that informed the research, then moves to describe the research procedures, including data collection strategies. It is in this section that I introduce the teachers with whom I worked. Finally, I discuss how I interpreted the data.

Theoretical Frameworks

In this study, I drew on theories of research that I believed useful for understanding language in teachers' lives, primarily anthropology, phenomenology and feminist poststructuralist theory. An unlikely partnership, perhaps, but each was valuable to the collection, analysis and presentation of the research. Anthropology informs this work inasmuch as this was a study designed to understand the experiences of a cultural group, in this case teachers. Because I was interested in understanding the concept of language, and understanding meaning made through language, phenomenology informs this work. Finally, feminist poststructuralist theory informs this work by tempering the humanist underpinnings

of the other two, as I join traditions that talk back to patriarchal narratives, what St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) called “working the ruins” of foundationalism.

Philosophies and Practices

I begin by discussing this study’s connections to anthropology, especially as mediated by feminist poststructuralist theory. I begin here because in my work these theories organized the initial collection of data. Phenomenology figures more strongly in the hermeneutic interpretation of data.

Anthropology

As the science of man [sic], anthropology focuses on understanding social and cultural aspects of human relations. Anthropology has roots in modernity, and before its confrontation with post-modern theories, was sometimes complicit in imperial projects and was often complicit in romanticizing an exotic other. Just as the postmodern turn in language troubled the question of naming a true fact, so too did the postmodern turn trouble the ability of research in anthropology to tell *the* true story of a culture. As Weedon (1997) said, “Poststructuralist discourses reject the claim that scientific theories can give access to truth.... Science can only ever produce specific knowledges, with particular implications” (p. 28). “Truth” is not as transparent as positivist research would suggest, and knowledges are understood as multiple, context-dependent, and political. In anthropology, Clifford (1988) questioned the ability of any one anthropologist or researcher to speak authoritatively about a subject or culture of inquiry, synthesizing concerns raised by a number of his colleagues (e.g., Asad, 1986; Behar & Gordon, 1995; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Visweswaran, 1994). Feminist ethnography is not immune to critique either, for as Lather (2000) pointed out, “Western feminist ethnographic traditions of romantic aspirations about giving voice to the

voiceless are much troubled in the face of the manipulation, violation, and betrayal inherent in ethnographic representation” (p. 305). These challenges to traditional forms of ethnographic authority led to the search for more complex models of representation in which ethnographers “struggle self-consciously to avoid portraying abstract, ahistorical ‘others’” (Clifford, 1988, p. 23). The danger on the other side of abstraction, however, lies in confessional tales that figure the researcher more prominently than the research.

When discussing the relationship of language to ethnography, Denzin (1994) pointed out that traditional ethnographic methods are presumed to reveal and name “lived experience” through attention to language use, for in the traditional model, “the literal translation of talk... equals lived experience and its representation” (p.x). This is the critique of “teacher thinking” research that takes language as isomorphic to thought. Denzin continued:

Critical poststructuralism challenges these assumptions. Language and speech do not mirror experience; they create experience, and in the process of creation, constantly transform and defer that which is being described. The meanings of a subject's statements are, therefore, always in motion. There can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said, only different textual representations of different experiences.

And as will be taken up later, this is where phenomenology bears on this work, in the interpretation of data as texts following a postmodern hermeneutics (Nash, 1997).

Poststructuralist feminist researchers take Denzin’s point one step further, arguing that poststructuralist *feminist* ethnography embeds a deliberate interrogation of traditional and taken-for-granted theories of research that take objectivity and the scientific gaze of reason as status quo (see Britzman, 2000; Davies, 2000; Gavey, 1989; Lather, 1991, 1992; Rhedding-Jones, 1995). The feminist emphasis in this work attempts to “[focus] on the

possibilities opened up when dominant language practices are made visible and revisable”

(Davies, 2000, p. 179). Davies continues, explaining the importance of this focus:

By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist (pp. 179-180).

In sum, research methods and their results have been subjected to the same critiques as other foundational practices and sciences such that Truth becomes truths, iconic Subjects become subjects who speak from limited local perspectives, and generalizable results become findings that are partial and contingent. In spite of the challenges to traditional methods and analysis, ethnography and its methods maintain a role in speaking about the world, by describing – if only in contingent and partial ways – interactions in and with the world. Contemporary ethnography has created space for acknowledging the plurivocity or polyphonics (Clifford, 1988, p. 46) of ethnographic accounts. Accordingly, the goal is no longer to describe reality, or the truth of a culture, but rather to offer interpretations located in the moment and in acknowledgment of *all* participants’ – the researcher’s included – subjective presence in the situation.

In this study, data *collection* methods are more properly understood as modified ethnographic work, for while I had extended access to these teachers as a participant observer over the course of their program of studies, *this* work is limited to interviews with several members of the cohort. Specific data collection strategies are elaborated in the Research Methods section of the chapter.

Phenomenology

In its quest to understand meaning, phenomenology works to focus our attention on those concepts or events – the phenomena – that constitute and animate lived experiences. Phenomenology in the Husserlian tradition assumes intentionality, that our intention to act in the world is in the direction of something, “that all thinking is always thinking about something... grasping is grasping for something, hearing is hearing something, pointing is pointing at something” (van Manen, 2002). Van Manen goes on to name the significance of language to phenomenological understanding:

Words often mean more than they mean. Sometimes the surplus or transcendent meaning is symbolic as in myth, or rhetorical as in political text, or motivational as in graduation speeches, or inspirational as in prayers. And sometimes the surplus meaning is phenomenological. It is phenomenological when the meaning is evocative of lived experience, when it re-awakens some possible human experience in a manner that is immediate and yet prompting reflection. Thus language is a source of meaning; it makes our experience "recognizable."

As is stipulated throughout this work, language is much more complex than the transparency assumed in modernist orientations to language. Van Manen characterizes various effects of this surplus of meaning, including symbolism and rhetoric; he also indicates that the surplus is phenomenological to the extent that taps into our lived experiences, to the “life world.” While I take up and lament forms of reduction that limit understanding through language in subsequent chapters of this work, this notion of reduction must be distinguished from heuristic reduction as applied in the phenomenological method. According to van Manen (2002), heuristic reduction requires a bracketing of taken-for-granted understandings in language in order to awaken a sense of wonder in our search for understanding and meaning. As Roche (1973) characterized it, this calls us to “see the ordinary as strange and in need of some explanation” (p. 27). In this attitude we suspend closure in order to find the strange in the familiar and wonder at its import and impact. In this work, phenomenology is significant

to the question of how language helps us think about education for it directs our attention to possible meanings.

Hermeneutics is also concerned with meaning. From the Greek *hermeneuin*, hermeneutics is about making things clear and understandable, about interpretation, and about expression. Nash (1997) says the hermeneutical question is “What can I take and use from a cultural system that predates me, that to a large extent exists outside of me, and that will most likely survive me long after I am gone? (p. 179). Drawing on Gadamer (1984), Nash presents a postmodern hermeneutics: “Because nobody can discover a ‘truth’ independent of significant interpretive variables, it is only in a mutual sharing of partial perspectives that people can arrive at some common understanding of the ‘given object’” (p. 179).

In this study, hermeneutics provides the framework for data analysis, or more properly the interpretation of the data, beginning with the texts of the interviews I conducted with teachers. This approach encounters the data *as* a text, and asks Nash’s question – what can I learn from this cultural system? What is its meaning? My question has been framed as a “how” question – *how* can thinking about language help us think about teaching and education?, but it could just as well be a “what” question – *what* does language tell us about teaching and education? I return to hermeneutics when I discuss specifics of data interpretation.

Discourse Analysis

Finally, I turn to discourse analysis, which as a method has its roots in several theoretical traditions. I begin by orienting it in traditional linguistics, but my interest in discourse analysis comes from its practices in socio-cultural and feminist poststructuralist

theory. In more traditional linguistics, discourse analysis is a largely structural enterprise, analyzing language use through methods such as frequency counts and word or topic ordering. According to Johnstone (2002), a discourse analyst's basic question is "Why is this text the way it is? Why is it no other way? Why these particular words in this particular order?" (p. 8). The primary critique of this model of discourse analysis is that language is studied in isolation, as a discrete practice of "grammars" (Duranti, 1985).

Bakhtin's (1981) socio-cultural perspective allows us to expand practices in discourse analysis beyond a telescoped attention to words. In a study of parent-school interactions about a student's disability, for example, Valle and Aponte (2002) framed their analysis on Bakhtin's organizing questions: "Who is doing the speaking, to whom is the utterance addressed, and in what context?" Speakers and audiences draw on discourse conventions of their particular language communities; meaning emerges in the interaction of these language communities, through dialogue. Relations between the language communities (current and previous) affect the success of the communication. *Heteroglossia* (Bakhtin, 1981) is the concept that reminds us that conversations are always more than the utterances of the particular event, for languages are imbued with the legacy of prior utterances. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (1962) argued that we speak within a world already spoken.

Hymes (1980) brought perspectives from cultural anthropology to discourse analysis and developed ethnographic methods attending to socio-cultural factors of communities and cultures (what he calls ethno-linguistics). According to Duranti (1985), Hymes' methods differed from traditional linguistics in two important ways: first, the goal was to relate text to context (i.e., study language in context, not isolation), and second, recognition of "the need for a characterization of speech not simply as a tool for describing the world but also as a tool

for changing the world” (p. 196, emphasis added). Remember that my question asks how thinking about language can help us think about – *and perhaps think differently about* – teaching and education.

Poststructuralist theories of discourse insist on the constant slippage of meanings in language, arguing that in its lack of transparency, there is always a beyond to language, always something more. Poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis is concerned with what is said (the text) and how the text constitutes understanding. Gavey (1989) described this theory:

Discourse analysis involves the careful reading of texts (e.g., transcripts of conversations or interviews, or existing documents or records, or even more general social practices), with a view to discerning discursive patterns of meaning, contradictions, and inconsistencies. It is an approach that identifies and names language processes people use to constitute their own and others’ understanding of personal and social phenomena. These processes are related to the reproduction of or challenge to the distribution of power between social groups and within institutions. Discourse analysis proceeds on the assumption that these processes are not static, fixed, and orderly but rather fragmented, inconsistent, and contradictory (p. 467).

The theoretical framework of this research thus draws from anthropology, phenomenology, and feminist poststructuralist theory and the methods of data collection and interpretation also derive from these traditions. In what follows, I described the procedures of this research.

Research Procedures

This section describes the methods of data collection used in this study, including a description of the participants, the phases of the research, data collection and interpretation. To understand how thinking about language helps us think about teaching and education, I began by interviewing teachers to elicit their understandings of the languages of education,

including their uses, their effects, and their practices. The goal was to understand ways teachers negotiate the ever-shifting educational terrain expressed and experienced through language and its games (Wittgenstein, 1953).

Data collection was designed around the original research questions, repeated here:

- What are the languages and language situations in which teachers claim understanding of their work?
- What do teachers say about how they are positioned within educational discourses and how do they use language to position themselves? For example, what does teacher language share with neighboring discourses in education: the languages of education policy, of parents, and of graduate study?
- Much is claimed for language, including its potential as a source (or effect) of personal and professional identity, agency, and authority. Yet to what extent do teachers understand and use language in these ways?

When proposing this work, I chose these questions to try to puzzle out the meaning of “we just don’t speak the same language” for our work in education, and these were the questions that guided data collection. As I have indicated, over the course of the research, the question I applied to the interpretation of data was: how can thinking about language help us think about teaching and education?

Participants

The women who participated in this research are alumnae of a Master’s in Education (M.Ed.) for Experienced Teachers program. From June of 2001 through August of 2003, I worked as a graduate teaching assistant to a cohort of teachers as they pursued their M.Ed.

with a specialty in Language Arts and Social Studies. The eighteen teachers in this cohort were all women working in kindergarten through eighth grades. Other cohorts in the M.Ed. are based in different disciplines and grade levels (e.g., K-8 mathematics; high school science). This cohort of teachers was one of the three first cohorts to matriculate in the M.Ed.: “pioneers,” I called them; “guinea pigs” they sometimes replied. Sixteen of the 18 women who enrolled in this cohort practiced in a rural county experiencing growth due to both suburbanization and immigration, each with a significant impact on schooling in the county. In addition, this county had a long history of “good ol’ boy” leadership that in my experience often patronized their teachers (Marshall, 1997, 2000). The other two women in the cohort worked in a much larger, mostly urban, neighboring district. Both of these districts are in a state leading the way in educational reform efforts characterized by high-stakes accountability.

Over the two years of our time together in the program, I developed close relationships with many of these women, caring about them as teachers/learners and as individuals. I share this story of our time together to speak to the closeness of the relationship. In the last year of their program, the teachers took a course called *Ways of Knowing* in which we explored just that, different ways of knowing the world. Although organized largely around traditional learning theories, there was also an effort to consider alternative routes into the curriculum. To encourage a spirit of creativity, the professor asked me to talk about a way of knowing I valued, and so I shared how I think of sewing, and more particularly quilting, as way of knowing. I shared the ways quilting connected me to history – my family’s history in textiles, and women’s history as well; how it informs my understanding and appreciation of art – through texture and color and composition. Sewing

and quilting represent my closest connection to mathematics in the measures and angles that shape the project. I shared fabric samples and quilt squares to illustrate the narrative, and I also shared how quilting connects me to literature, for there is a genre of writing that takes up women's quilting as art and craft, in poems in particular. In *Looking at Quilts*, Marge Piercy (1982) challenges interpretations that strip art from craft:

Who decided what is useful in its beauty
means less than what has no function besides beauty
(except its weight in money)?
Art without frames, it held parched corn,
it covered the table where soup misted savor,
it covered the bed where the body knit
to self and other and the
dark wool of dreams.
...
This quilt might be
the only perfect artifact a woman
would ever see, yet she did not doubt
what we had forgotten, that out of her
potatoes and colic, sawdust and blood
she could create; together, alone,
she seized her time and made it new.

I share this story of quilts for several reasons. The first is that the coda to this class on ways of knowing is that at the end of their M.Ed. experience, the cohort and I made gifts of quilts to each other to mark our time together. They presented me with a lovely quilt made by a woman from their county, and I gave them quilt squares I made for them, choosing colors and fabrics that reminded me of each teacher. So these women and I are tied together by quilts. While the exchange of quilts represents our relationship, it also introduces a complexity to the research process. While I am not working within a positivistic paradigm and so I do not believe prior relationships compromise the objectivity of this work, it is

possible that the ties that bind us together created a sense of obligation when I invited their participation in this research two years later.

Additionally, I think quilting can be a metaphor for research as well. Aunt Jane of Kentucky, as the author is known, described quilting this way:

How much piecin' a quilt is like livin' a life! ... You see, to make a quilt you start out with jest so much caliker; you don't go to the store an buy it, but the neighbors give you a piece here and there and you'll find you have a piece left over every time you've cut out a dress, and you'll just take whatever happens to come.... But when it comes to cuttin' out the quilt, why, you're free to choose your own pattern. You give the same kind of pieces to two persons, and one'll make a Nine Patch and the one one'll make a Wild Goose Chase and so there'll be two quilts made of the same kind of pieces, but jest as different as can be."

While there are ways research is not like quilting – collecting data is not as haphazard or random as Aunt Jane suggests for quilting, for example, but in the process you discover unanticipated resources that come to you as gifts from a neighbor. Lévi-Strauss (1966) called this bricolage, construction by means of what is available to hand. Suggestions for readings, stories of others' processes, these are also pieces that come to the process in both the collection and interpretation of data. In the process of composing and presenting – the quilt top or research – Aunt Jane reminds us that no two creations are alike, for this is an interpretive process, a hermeneutics of design.

Data Collection

The participants in this study came from the original cohort of 18 women. One woman left the cohort after a year, and a second moved out of the state after graduating from the M.Ed. program. In the spring of 2005, I contacted the remaining sixteen women, describing this research and inviting their participation. Appendix B is the text of the letter I sent via email and post. Following the initial contact, 14 of the women responded, 11 of

whom expressed interest in learning more about the research. After one-on-one or small group discussions about the research, its requirements and timeline, six women agreed to participate in the research (see table below).

Cass, Rebecca, Maggie and Audrey teach in the rural school district that provided meeting space for course meetings; Molly and Stella⁷ traveled about 30 miles each way from a neighboring county to attend classes with this cohort. Because I was interested in understanding teachers' uses of language, I anticipated having several small groups of teachers for interviews. Based on exigencies of time and availability, the groups formed as described below: Molly and Stella were interviewed together, and they both teach in the same school. For our first interview, we met in Stella's classroom at their school on an end-of-year work day. Our second meeting was in a coffee shop, and the third at a restaurant near Molly's home. Molly's newborn daughter came to all of our meetings, providing welcome breaks as we admired her coos and gestures. Maggie and Rebecca teach at the same school, and with Cass formed a second group. All of our interviews took place in the same restaurant in a community central to everyone's home. We generally sat outdoors on those hot summer afternoons with birds chirping all around; we were sometimes assaulted by smells from the neighboring cow sheds, driving us inside for relief. Interviews with Audrey were held one-on-one, once at my home, once at hers.

	Name	Grade Level
Group 1	Molly	4 th grade
	Stella	4 th grade
Group 2	Cass	5 th grade
	Rebecca	5 th grade
	Maggie	2 nd grade
Individual	Audrey	3 rd grade

Table 1: Participating teachers

⁷ All names are pseudonyms

With the exception of Audrey, with whom I had two interviews, data were collected over three or four small group interviews the two groups. Consent forms were signed at the first interviews (see Appendix C). For each meeting, I had protocols prepared that started the conversation, but did not direct it (see Appendix D). The first interview focused on teachers' descriptions of language; the second was structured around languages of the M.Ed., and third interview was more generally about teachers' positioning in language. For each group, the second and third interviews were structured to begin with a review of the previous meeting. I brought hard copies of transcripts to the subsequent meeting and we began by discussing some of my interpretations of their responses before moving on to the focus of that interview. Although I brought protocols to each meeting, I was less interested in getting responses to each question than in providing probes and allowing the teachers to take the conversations where they would. When necessary I would provide another question to provoke more conversation. Each interview was between two and three hours long. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, and transcriptions were sent to participants for member-checking.

Data Interpretation

As indicated above, hermeneutics provided the method for data interpretation. My process began with many close readings of the transcribed interviews. I drew on methods from socio-cultural discourse analysis, including structuralist attention to particular words and phrases and how they function in conversations (text analysis), as well as socio-cultural attention to the ways languages interact and represent various language communities.

The theory of registers as interpreted by Lemke (1995) and Heath (2000) also suggested domains for structural analysis. Register theory encourages attention to how the languages of different professions differ. According to Heath (2000), attending to register

emphasizes the “penetrating influence” of professional socialization in shaping career identity and naming appropriate uses of language. “The use of a specific register in a single situation represents a layering of different language socializations within the same individual, enabling people to be secure in playing a variety of roles, including their chosen professional role” (p. 54). Register, then, looks at language use in specific communities, considering the role of professional socialization and sanction in terms of language choices.

In the interpretation of data I studied different registers of teachers’ languages, trying to identify its variances within the community. The most salient domains included:

- the named community (e.g., I, we, they statements; pronouns; insiders, outsiders)
- sources of authority (e.g., appeals to experience, reason, research, lore)
- markers of responsibility (e.g., teachers as victims, leaders, change agents)
- functions of language (e.g., rhetoric, persuasion, argument)

These elements were chosen to facilitate understanding the teachers’ languages and language situations. Drawing on register theory, I began by coding sections of transcripts along several domains including: the community or communities named (e.g., teacher-teacher, teacher-student, teacher-administrator, teacher-faculty); the action described (e.g., belonging/orientation, punishment, defiance); and teachers’ positioning (e.g., authority; maternal; objectified).

While these categories *described* teachers’ languages, my interest in *understanding* how thinking about language helps us think about teaching and education required a different lens that was provided by hermeneutics. Gadamer (1984) describes hermeneutics as putting texts in conversation with each other, looking for instances of congruence as well as contradiction, asking questions of texts and “reaching behind” texts in an effort to increase

and amplify understanding. Thinking of the interview transcripts as texts allowed me to read them as stories that in turn recalled other stories – from education, social theory, anthropology, psychoanalytic theory, phenomenology, and literature in particular. These are the primary texts in my library; others' libraries would necessarily lead to the selection of different texts. My choices reflect my interests in language, with a particular focus on the fate of language given the linguistic turn. With these choices, I could then put transcripts of my interviews with teachers into conversation with theoretical texts to gain a greater sense of their possible meanings. Returning to phenomenological method, van Manen (2002) names this exegesis:

Exegetical reflection is the careful studying of related texts in search for insights or perspectives that may further your research. But exegetical reflection is more than a systematic review of the available literature. Some exegetical reflection is prompted precisely because we happen to stumble over something that we had not foreseen or expected. Sometimes we gain surprisingly profound insights in the most unlikely sources or in the most contingent situations. While searching for one particular book in the library or the bookstore, the title of another book catches my attention. I peruse the book, and a passage in it gives me an entirely new insight into the material that has been preoccupying me in my research project. Or as I listen to the radio, a story told by someone interviewed gives me a wonderful example of a situation that I have been wondering about for my paper. By remaining open to unexpected sources of insight, exegetical reflection becomes a process of reading and studying related and unrelated literature for background information, helpful insights, other ways of looking at a question, or new understandings.

Consistent with the multiple readings of research as text advocated by Lather and Smithies (1997), I was also interested in creating different possible understandings for these stories. Remembering that feminist poststructuralist theory introduces the possibilities for alternatives that can help us conceive of events, people, and change differently, I considered what was contained in as well as what was missing from the transcripts when considering teachers' relationships to language.

Given these methods of interpretation, the interpretations are, of course, mine. Teachers and other readers might choose many different texts to bring into conversation with this data and would likely find different meanings as a result of their texts and lived experiences. Because I allowed teachers some control of the direction of our conversations, certain teachers figure strongly in particular discussions in the chapters that follow.

The meanings I derived are presented in the following three chapters. Chapter IV deconstructs the original statement, “we just don’t speak the same language” to present numerous interpretations of the meanings teachers make through language. Chapter V focuses on interpretations of the teacher – administration relationship, and Chapter VI the teacher – university relationship. In this process, these women have enriched my story with their own.

CHAPTER IV

“WE JUST DON’T SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE”

“We just don’t speak the same language.” I return to this statement again to deliberate its significance to this study and to open it to multiple interpretations. The interpretations suggested here are not discrete, for sometimes a lament is related to frustration, sometimes one teacher’s complaint is a point of pride for another, and so on. How we understand the text depends on the context, the encounter, the speakers, the readers. These interpretations, and the theories that support them, provide different lenses for considering the languages of schooling. How thinking about language can help us think about, and perhaps think *differently* about, teaching and education is the process this work performs. This chapter explores different registers of teachers’ languages by examining the organizing statement and its multiple interpretations. For Lemke (1995), this is seeing their language as a social semiotic, “a set of possible kinds of meanings that can be made” (p. 27).

Bakhtin (1981) reminded us that languages are local and context-bound:

All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions (p. 293)

The task of this chapter is to explore those intentions in the context of education.

Interpretations

Based on any number of factors – the work I did as graduate assistant in the M.Ed. and the relationships I developed with the women in the program, my own experiences with the language of the academy – my initial assumption was that this statement, “we just don’t speak the same language,” was, at heart, a complaint. With reflection, I believe that comes from the tension I felt as the university’s liaison to these teachers and the teachers’ liaison to the university. I felt responsibility to both the teacher *and* the university and resisted (while remaining sympathetic to) implications that either party was at fault for any breakdowns in communication – from the mundane to the theoretical. As a graduate student myself, I had also experienced the frustration of feeling inadequate in the face of new academic languages. As an ally of the teachers, I sympathized with their frustrations with the M.Ed. program and often felt responsible for resolving issues. Having been seduced by language, and perhaps by the academy as well, I was equally frustrated by what I read as the teachers’ resistance to language. With these tensions in mind, when I started this research, I understood “we just don’t speak the same language” as a problem, more specifically, a complaint. Given these contextual factors, this interpretation was reasonable.

Sartre, however, reminds us that meaning overrides its banks and so I return to the statement here to reconsider and play with its seeming transparency, to consider alternate possibilities that emerge from analyzing conversations with and among the teachers in this study. In this work the pronoun “we” always includes teachers, as in “*teachers* just don’t speak the same language.” “We,” in this case, marks a shared identity. At other times we served as a container for other people and relationships. The most intimate “we” referred to relationships between teachers and students and between teachers and certain colleagues. Not

every colleague was inscribed within the circle of this usage, and it is likely that not every student was either. The intimacy of this “we” described those interpersonal relations that animate teachers’ practice.

Sometimes “we” introduced particular interlocutors – the university faculty who served as the initial foil, for example. As the research progressed, this relational “we” came to include other interlocutors such as school administrators, parents, and teachers’ family members and friends. Finally, “we” indicated a more adversarial “us and them” relation, when “they” generally named district and state school administrators. Many of these points will be taken up below. The point here is that “we” is not as self-evident as might first be assumed.

In terms of languages, the original concern named in the statement is that the language of the academy was not adequate for describing classroom life, so one type of language invoked in the study is *academic language*, the so-called language of high theory, or the acontextual language of methods divorced from actual classrooms; there are also instances where this language connects. Another language named in the original statement is *teachers’ language*. As described by the women in this study, this language is relational. In addition to these, a third primary category of language named by these teachers is *administrative language*, a language that often positions teachers at a deficit in relation to administrators likely subject to their own superiors in the hierarchy. Each of these languages will be described in more detail below or in the chapters that follow.

Examining “we just don’t speak the same language” also calls into question the issue of sameness. The statement actually calls attention to differences – specifically between teachers’ languages (“we”) and the languages of the academy, but also between teachers and

other education language communities. At the same time, it leads to questions about issues of sameness and difference: Would we truly want to speak the same language? What would communication look like were everyone to speak the same language? Given the creativity and expressivity I imagine for language as expressed in Chapter I, is speaking the same language a worthwhile goal? Given teachers' primary focus, would they want to speak the same language as, say, accountants? Or plumbers? Taken to the extreme, what are the possible dangers of everyone speaking the *same language*?

Read as a complaint, the statement marks those occasions when communication broke down. Interrogating this statement, however, has led me to explore alternative readings to "we just don't speak the same language." It can be read as accusation, Althusser's (2001) "hey you!" that is the teachers' ideology confronting the academy or education administration. It can be read as a lament, expressing sadness that we don't speak the same language at those times when we should. The statement can be understood to express a teacher's anxiety in the face of new and different languages that challenge or confront. The text can be read as resistance, intentionally distancing teachers from those who would meddle or misunderstand their work. Similarly, colleagues who speak in ways that compromise or diminish the work of education can engender contempt. "We don't just don't speak the same language" can be a statement of belonging, expressing one's insider status. It can signal differentiation, for teachers and their interlocutors necessarily speak different languages based on the different requirements of position. Each of these interpretations assumes a teacher or teachers as speakers, and the first part of this chapter considers the statement from the teacher's point of view. There are also times when others say "*you* just don't speak the same language." Parents, other teachers, and significant others emerged as interlocutors

most likely to confront a teacher about her language outside of the teacher-administrator and teacher-professor relationships that are the focus of Chapters V and VI respectively. These significant others are represented at the end of this chapter.

The presentation of the research that follows uses the research orientations I claimed in Chapter III: part description, part interpretation. We learn about the teachers through their words as they describe relationships and conditions in schools, sharing their insights about how languages impact practice. The interpretations bring other texts to bear on how we think about education to help us consider how we might think differently about education.

Belonging

Colleagues

The first you learn is your school language, because each individual school has its own inside jokes, it has its own shortcuts of speaking that people learn as they come in. Like the room key at [our school] is also the key to the bathroom, and to the workroom where the phone is. So if you don't know about the *pee key*, then you're in big trouble (Stella, personal communication, 2005).

How might we consider “We just don't speak the same language” as a statement of belonging? For the women in this study, fluency in the languages of schooling marks a significant accomplishment in the life of a teacher. As Stella noted in the passage above, the one of the languages teachers must learn is the local, the language tied to the cultures and practices of a school. Understanding the variety of dialects and gaining fluency, however, takes time and work. Rebecca likened the process of learning the language to an extended initiation: “In the beginning you feel so inadequate hearing it all. But after a couple of years you feel like you can say something intelligent.”

Shibboleth comes to us from Hebrew; in the *Oxford English Dictionary* its first definition is “a word used as a test for detecting foreigners, or persons from another district,

by their pronunciation,” and “a catchword or formula adopted by a party or sect, by which their adherents or followers may be discerned.” In this way, a shibboleth names who belongs. All of the teachers in this study indicated that the process of learning teachers’ languages was a ritual of belonging. The learning of the language was likened to learning a second language replete with nuanced dialects. Stella extended the analogy when describing teachers’ languages:

Most of the languages have a big amount of acronyms and words used in a way that sound... teacher-y, you know? If somebody was an outsider and there was a mixed group of grade levels and educational levels – like some working at the college level and some people teaching kindergarten and everything in-between – I think they would see more commonality, because we’d all sound the same to them even though we’d be able to detect the levels.

Outsiders listening in might identify the field as education but could not appreciate the nuances that determine belonging in a particular education community. As will be elaborated below and in subsequent chapters, those nuances become clear to teachers along a variety of domains including state, school district, school, and grade level, but they are not immediately obvious. Equating teachers’ languages, or the languages of education, to a foreign language invokes the struggle involved when learning a new tongue. *French Lessons* is Alice Kaplan’s (1993) memoir as a student of language. She tells the story of learning the shibboleth of the French language, the “r”:

The spot is on me. I’m poised as I speak my lines with muscles quavering. I come up again and again on that “r,” the sound “r” in French, which is one of the hardest sounds for an American to make. In September my “r” is clunky...*Je le heurte* – I come up against it like a wall.... It happened over months but it felt like it happened in one class. I opened my mouth and I opened up; it slid out, smooth and plush, a French “r” It was smooth, and suave. It felt – relaxed. It felt normal! I had it. (pp. 54-55)

In this instance, Kaplan’s transition from outsider to insider hinged on capturing the sound of the “r.” In spite of years of French lessons, acquiring vocabulary and mastering the rules of

vocabulary, it came down to the nuances of the “r.” Merleau-Ponty (1962) called the acquisition of language a phenomenon of identification. Learning the languages of teaching is like getting the “r,” it is a phenomenon of identification.

Maggie described the experience of newcomers to a school encountering its catchwords:

So first year teachers, or people new to the system come, and we’re all sitting around throwing this language around, and if one of us realizes it or they’re brave enough to pull one of us aside and say, “What are you talking about?,” then they learn it. You’ve got to learn it fast though, because you’re expected to look at your own students’ EOGs and if you don’t know what that is...

The linguistic markers unique to teachers or a school become obvious any time someone new is introduced to existing relationships. In this case, the proper orientation to teacher language is not only a matter of belonging, but also of performance, for End of Grade (EOG) tests are ubiquitous in contemporary practice. Each teacher in this study referenced the many acronyms – the “alphabet soup” – used in their daily lives: DPI, Standard Course, EOGs *or* EOCs, ILTs, IEPs, TAT, PEPs *or* PDPs *or* IGP, etc⁸ Not as plush or suave as the “r,” but no less significant. Chapter V, however, introduces issues that complicate teachers’ acquisition of the right passwords.

Molly offered a perspective on the efficiency of acronyms for facilitating conversations among teachers:

I think one reason we have all the acronyms is because everything is made short and efficient – I really do. As a classroom teacher you don’t have time to sit around, and you know, discuss in-depth all these great things. You just don’t have time for that day-to-day, and so everything is short so that you can write it down quickly, you can converse quickly.

Cass, however, emphasized this experience for new teachers:

⁸ Department of Public Instruction, Standard Course of Study, Initially Licensed Teacher, Individual Education Plan (for students), Teacher Assistance Team, Personal Education Plan or Personal Development Plan or Individual Growth Plans (for teachers)...

I've had new teachers come in that... actually I heard of one last year ... where a new teacher just burst into tears finally due to the frustration of, you know, "I'm hearing DPI and SCOS and... I don't know what they mean!" [said with an empathic sob]. They felt like they were supposed to have come into the system already knowing what these things mean and because they didn't it was, "Oh my God, I was supposed to learn that in college but my college didn't teach me that!"

Molly credited education's acronyms with the creation of a form of shorthand, the jargon that facilitates communication, but Cass pointed out that until a new teacher or newcomer is initiated into a school or school district's language, local language can confound belonging as much create it. Teacher education programs may apprentice pre-service teachers, but similar to the children in Heath's (1983) *Ways with Words*, many teachers face a critical confrontation between home (including pre-service) language and school (in-service) language. Some may be more prepared, but all continue their apprenticeship when they begin their professional careers. Teachers assume responsibility for teaching or initiating each other because the language is critical not only to belonging but also to practice. In Audrey's words: "Young teachers want to learn and they're hungry for help. If they couldn't turn to teachers I don't know what they'd do." As will be explored below, teachers assume this responsibility at the same time as they accuse others (most notably district administrators) of failing to properly orient newcomers.

Words also operate as code among teachers in another sense, as the euphemisms that Stella shared:

Some words have alternate meanings. Like when you look at a teacher and say: "That child has an issue," what you're really saying is "this is a problem." Whereas out in the general world, I don't think they interpret the word "issue" the same way that we do. It's a nice way of saying: "watch out."

In euphemism, we substitute a more favorable word for a distasteful one – "problem" becomes "issue," signaling a particular meaning familiar to initiates.

Language thus creates the opportunity to include newcomers or signal colleagues, but it also creates the possibility of exclusion, as described in this exchange between Stella and

Molly:

Stella: In fact, one of our colleagues this morning said she sure was glad she wasn't on the second grade team this year because their new second grade teacher knew everything. And she kept saying: "Well, I don't know how you do it here, but...." And so our colleague was tempted to say, "Well then, shut up if you don't know how it's done here because you're kicking the dog that's already ruling the fort."

Molly: Sometimes you educate those people quickly and sometimes you let them flounder for a little while before you educate them.

While orienting new teachers to local languages is seen as an obligation among teachers, Stella and Molly shared an example in which inclusion might be inevitable but is preceded by sanction.

As these teachers indicated, there is the inside and outside to teachers' languages. Getting inside, learning the passwords, is a rite of passage, but attaining insider status is not the final step. Languages of teaching are fluid and change for a variety of reasons including location, grade level, and length of service. A constant among the teachers in this study, however, was the centering of students in teachers' codes of practice.

Students

While preceding examples focused on conversations among teachers that created belonging, this exchange between Cass and Maggie grounds teachers' languages in their focus on students, what they named a teachers' language of caring:

Cass: "Here's some teachers' language. It's called 'I love that kid.' That's teacher language. 'How's he doing? His home life has really settled down.'"

Maggie: "Right. Or 'I'm struggling with this. Do you have any ideas?' We talk more on a realistic basis of what's happening. We're child centered. We'll focus on the child."

As described here, caring reflects an active focus on the child's or the colleague's need. There are also ways that this language of belonging represents teachers as they "should be," as they are romanticized in the popular imagination. However because that same social order patronizes teachers by circumscribing their practice, at the same time making them more and more accountable for proving students' learning, this language of belonging can be interpreted as teachers' defensive responses to external discourses that challenge a teacher's intentionality.

Another characteristic of teachers' languages as described by the women in this study is its importance in establishing practices. Maggie spoke about how language shapes practice in the classroom:

I think that the language changes – there's the management language talk at the beginning – job training. And then as the year progresses there's a lot more personal sharing with the kids, letting them in on my life – and that's modeled through both written and oral language. Getting more of a sense of their life... and sharing back and forth. And sometimes having those hard parental-type, or authoritative-type – "this behavior is unacceptable..."

In Maggie's description of how her language changes through the course of the school year, we can see how language defines a relationship that becomes more and more personal.

These changes mark the in-process character of language, the post modernist break with language as static if not calcified. She begins the year with a "management language" that introduces children to the rules of the classroom, the presence of the Symbolic Order in Lacan's scheme. With time, however, that language is tempered by the semiotic as Kristeva describes it, that which gives language its meaningfulness. This is the maternal register.

As Molly describes it below, direct instruction at the beginning of the year echoes Kristeva's sense of the symbolic as that which gives language its structure:

I think you develop it. That's what you spend the first part of the year teaching. You almost do give more direct instruction to the students on the language of the classroom than you do for other adults. You spend the first few weeks of school getting them to know what you're talking about when you say things. Like I use SLANT in my classroom— that's an acronym, and they know what SLANT means. I couldn't necessarily walk into any other classroom and say that – they might not know what that is. There is a definite communication language and it creates a good classroom culture. You don't use it to exclude other students in other classes, but it's a bonding thing. You know that if you say that in the hall that your kids will get it and others might not.... And it has to be direct. It really has to be more purposeful teaching of the language.

These uses of language are clearly intended to orient students to classroom practices, in this case instruction, by naming expectations for belonging and participation. Molly also describes the usefulness of the acronym SLANT for creating a sense of belonging among students. She uses one word to represent five to positive effect – it is efficient and it gives students access to the code. As we will see in later in this chapter, as well as in Chapters V and VI, teachers are also ambivalent about others' efforts to use acronyms or other forms of shared language, pointing to their capacity to exclude as much as include.

Interpreting “we just don't speak the same language” as a shibboleth, euphemism and jargon, as a marker of belonging, means we must pay attention to processes of initiation and the importance of language to a teacher's sense of belonging. In the level of intimacy reserved for teacher-student and teacher-colleague languages, it reminds us of teachers' preferred foci. As will be discussed in Chapter V and VI, teachers have tenuous relationships with the languages of administration and the languages of the academy, and are tentative about their sense of belonging to those communities of educators. In addition, as will be discussed below, the languages that bind teachers to colleagues and students can entrap as easily as unfold. Of the various interpretations of “we just don't speak the same language,” belonging is the most positive.

Differentiation

The other side of belonging is differentiation. In object relations theory, the infant first experiences herself in relation with the mother, as belonging to the mother that provides for all her needs; the mother is her object and there is no other. Over time, the infant recognizes other “others” who compete for the mother’s attention, and she and begins to experience herself as a subject, differentiated from the mother (Chodorow, 1978). “We just don’t speak the same language” can be interpreted as a statement that differentiates teachers from other educators. As differentiation, it claims a subjectivity in saying “we just don’t speak the same language,” sometimes adding the coda “and we probably wouldn’t want to anyway.” In this interpretation, the statement acknowledges or works to create distance between teachers and other educators.

All of the women in this study are elementary school teachers and note significant differences in the languages of teachers at different grade levels. This was especially true for Molly, who teaches 4th grade:

I’m not saying middle school teachers care any less, I think it’s just different. They’re not with the same 28 kids everyday. I think they have their ones that they really just cling to and care about ... but you can’t care the same way about 120 kids day-in and day-out ... because you just don’t have time to know about them. You can’t get to know enough about all of the aspects of them if you’re teaching so many every day. And I think that’s *definitely* true in high school.... I find it very difficult to be able to relate as a teacher to high school teachers a lot of times because their world is so different and their educational concerns are so different than mine are. Mine are curriculum focused, but mine are student-centered curriculum focused. And I think a lot of times in high school the concern is more like the university – it’s more about their subject. They have such a passion for their subject and that’s more - it’s more the subject, then the student. And I feel like for us it’s ‘the student comes first’.... We’re trying to develop character and good little human beings first and then also teach them all - simultaneously teach them all. And I think it’s different to some degree in high school.

Respect and child-centeredness are critical factors in Molly's work as a teacher; these beliefs distinguish her work. In this instance of differentiation, Molly projects a world for her colleagues in middle and high schools. She imagines that middle school teachers cannot possibly care the same way she does about students because they have too many. At the middle school level, one task of the student is to assume more responsibility for her learning and this is supported by schools and teachers departmentalized by subject. Molly laments the plight of the middle school teacher who cannot get to know students well enough, or as well as the elementary teacher, they "just don't have time." In part a lament, she imagines and associates with the teacher who is left behind as the child begins her process of differentiation.

For the high school teacher, Molly imagines a world entrenched in the discipline first, the student no higher than second. Molly's statement invokes the hierarchical structures and ethos of education and of knowledge acquisition. However, it is not only the distance effected as students progress through school and acquire new skills that Molly is commenting on, but the affective differentiation that she imagines. She differentiates herself from high school teachers because "their world is so different and their educational concerns are so different than mine... Mine are curriculum focused, but mine are student-centered curriculum focused." Molly locates herself within the community of elementary school teachers, distinguishing herself from middle and high school. This differentiation reinforces her pride in belonging to a particular community, but we might also interpret this in part to be a defensive response to the hierarchical privileging of teachers in the upper grades.

At the same time, teachers are empathetic to the pervasive influence of accountability that shapes their collective experience. Stella and Molly redraw boundaries to indicate

teachers' shared frustration in the face of high-stakes testing, but maintain differentiation and a sense of hierarchy:

Stella: Go to a 4th grade teacher in [this state] and feel their pain about the writing test. But you don't feel the same pain that the 7th grade teacher feels about their writing test. They've got such a different focus and – can you imagine being responsible for 120 kids taking the writing test? That would scare the you-know-what out of me!

Molly: And it's just a different interaction with parents too. We're concerned about the writing test. But it's also our job to educate the parents because this is it – this is the first writing test for them. And 7th grade, they don't probably – I don't guess they have as much of a parental education issue as we do – I don't know, they might.... It's a different test and maybe the stakes are higher in 7th grade, I don't know.

Even within the elementary school Molly noted the care she took to differentiate herself from other teachers when it comes to teaching the child:

You're the professional in the school that knows your students better than anyone else, even than their previous teacher because [the students are] at a different point now.... I still feel like the other professionals in the school who know my students as well as I do probably are their previous teachers – more so than specialists or administrators. Certainly not more so than the parents, I don't mean that. But within a school, you can speak with authority about your own students. It's almost unspoken, but you've got to be very careful not to speak with authority about anyone else's students. Even if it's your past class, that's just stepping on toes. You've got to realize that even if they didn't do something last year when they were with you, they've changed. There's an underlying respect where I would not ever try to speak with authority about somebody else's students.

Molly makes a strong claim here to the students in her classroom, another example of the maternal register. This statement implies the fierce, proprietary and unique bond Molly creates with her students, yet must relinquish as students move on to the next grade and new teacher. She grants the child's next teacher the respect she expects for her relationships with her own students, signaling that previous teachers, specialists and administrators must be very careful when speaking about her students or risk stepping on her toes. Molly conjures

her classroom embrace in this passage, the arms she wraps around her classroom shielding it from outsiders who cannot possibly understand its workings. In this case, the interpretation of “we just don’t speak the same language” as differentiation calls attention to this unique classroom community. However it also signals the *temporary* claim that teachers have to students and the respect teachers must afford colleagues to develop their own bonds.

Stella echoes the isolation that can accompany differentiation:

And I really find it hard to talk to people on an in-depth level that are not teachers. It’s gotten to the point that my friends – my best friends – are teachers. And the friends that I have that aren’t teachers, I have trouble relating to them, I have trouble thinking of things to talk about – I kind of have to listen and go in with what they talk about because I can’t share a lot about school, especially if their kids go here. So it’s increasingly hard for me to speak the non-teacher language.

So different is her language from those around her who are not teachers, Stella’s circle of closest friends is increasingly limited to teachers. The circle that indicates belonging can also grow tight and entrap. She self-censors to protect the children who attend her school and so allows others to dictate the terms of the conversation because “If you complain about parents in front of a friend who is a parent but not a teacher, then they get the idea that you don’t like parents.... But you can just “argh” about a parent in front of another teacher and they know where you’re coming from.” Teachers understand the terms of the complaint, in Molly’s terms, the getting it off your chest and moving on, without misinterpreting or exaggerating the gripe.

As differentiation, “we just don’t speak the same language” means we must pay attention a teacher’s interest in individuation. This is difficult, however, in a profession that increasingly ties teachers’ recognition to their students’ performance on tests. As a category it is not discrete, for these statements also suggest other interpretations, for example,

belonging and lament. There are also times that the sense of difference hardens into resistance.

Resistance

“We just don’t speak the same language” as resistance highlights the pressures these teachers felt to adopt other languages, most notably administrative language and academic language. Definitions of resist offer two interesting possibilities for understanding teachers’ language. As a verb, to resist is to oppose, to stand up to something in defiance. As a noun, a resist is a protective coating, such as wax, that protects a surface from a reaction caused by application of a chemical, say, or ink. In batik, for example, the artisan applies wax to parts of fabric so that it will not take dye. Both of these apply to teachers’ stories of resistance. The examples shared here preview teachers’ resistance (among other reactions) to the languages of administration and academia. Relationships with administrators and with the academy will be explored more completely in Chapters V and VI respectively.

Maggie argued that languages have proliferated in schooling:

It’s very much about the language. It’s no longer about the child. “Level, level, level what level are they at? What level are they at?” You can’t just say “They’re at a level 17 so they’re proficient.” Reading is too much of a complex process. But everything is level. And now the parents are learning the levels. “Once you’ve reached the average level you’ve learned to read.” Well no – you never finish learning. So leveling has become a big thing...

Later she continued:

And people are so caught up in the laaaaanguage of it all. Reflection is quiet. It’s inward and thinking. It’s not necessarily out there speaking all the time. We get language-d to death!

Maggie names several dangerous effects of the ways languages are deployed in education. In the first instance, reducing interest in teaching and learning to the “level” masks the complexity of reading, and the only interest is in a minimum level of proficiency. Maggie

resists and laments the idea that “‘Once you’ve reached the average level you’ve learned to read,’” for she sees learning as a life-long task. Remember that reading is Maggie’s passion, so the impact of this reduction is amplified. Parent’s adoption of the language of leveling is also seen as a dangerous consequence. In addition, language becomes a code in this instance that also masks the child, for he is no longer a student, he is his “level.” In the second instance, the “laaaaanguage of it all” crowds out reflection that is quiet. The proliferation of language blocks teachers from what they consider important.

When reflecting on the excess of acronyms that govern teachers’ practice as well as apparent moves toward standardizing language through the assumption of common curricula, teachers in this study speculated that in the best case, the goals of common, shared language were to streamline practice and create shared meaning. As Cass indicated: I think that the goal ... is that we would all mean the same thing.... Two people would look at [something] and interpret it exactly the same.” Extending this reasoning, however, caused concern. Maggie reasoned that “the only way there could be a common language... is if we adopt a national curriculum,” a future Rebecca and Cass immediately shouted down. As will be explored more completely in Chapter V, federal, state, and district moves in the direction of standardization are resisted by these teachers for their effects on teaching, and thus students.

In terms of resisting academic languages, Maggie again described the most frequent reason cited for that resistance:

I think there is resistance when you pick up on the fact that someone is trying to talk over your head, or someone is trying to use a language – not even that you’re not able to understand, but that you don’t currently – you’re not in that world.

In this section, Maggie has been the spokesperson for “we just don’t speak the same language” as a marker of resistance. It is worth noting here, however, that she is just as

likely to embrace others' languages when they help her understand the work she hopes to do with the children in her classroom. As these various interpretations of "we just don't speak the same language" suggest, teachers work hard to position *themselves*, to belong to a community of teachers but to distinguish themselves within it. They especially resist efforts they interpret as positioning them at a deficit. There are also times when resistance provokes a speaking back to others, what I name accusation.

Accusation

Understanding "we just don't speak the same language" as an accusation marked those occasions when teachers called on others to acknowledge their claims to the child. Different from a complaint, the accusation ascribes intention to the actions of others. For Althusser (2001), interpellation is ideology confronting the individual. He describes it as a "Hey! You there!" that requires the turning of at least one person in response to the call, compelling them to react to accuser's ideology. "We don't speak the same language" as an accusation is a teachers' ideology – in this case child centeredness – calling out to other education professionals.

I think specialists don't always bow to the classroom teachers' authority. They teach them for 45 minutes once a week and a lot of times they'll *tell* you about your kids. You'll go to pick them up from art or music or P.E. and they'll *tell* you about them. I understand there might have been an issue, but they'll tell you about your class, as if you didn't know: "Well, so-and-so talks a lot." "Well, of course if you would've asked me I would've told you that." I'm not sure that all the professionals in the school see the classroom teacher as the authority, although I think they should.

Molly's statement confronts specialists' claims to the child. She interprets the specialist's "telling" about the child as a challenge to her authority, to her knowing the child. She imagines the exchange she would have with the specialist, or other professionals in the school, to reassert her authority, her claim to the child.

Maggie's call is to the administrators whose paperwork interferes with her relationship to the child: "All of this language and paperwork – with all the assessing that we're doing – allows for very little time for teaching. And the assessment creates a language of its own, and monumental paperwork, so that we have no time to teach." Like Molly, Maggie returns the focus to the classroom and the child. The discussion in Chapter VI interrogates the teacher's invocation of the child, but in this instance, Maggie's statement interpellates languages of administration hoping for relief from the insidious interference of paperwork.

In projecting an ideology, interpellation constructs others. In this case, interpellation accuses the other of blocking a teacher's intentionality. But the other may not always respond to the accusation. In that case, successive accusations can harden into contempt.

Contempt

Contempt is a more extreme reaction than differentiation, indicating a lack of respect for the other. Contempt is exemplified in Cass's description of school board meetings in her district:

But the meetings [the prior superintendent] would hold, the conversation [Cass speaks very low, very softly] would sound like this – and the school board and the superintendent would do their talking and then whoever had a presentation to make would come up and [Cass speaks loudly, projecting] make their presentation and, "this is where we are so far with our grant on whatever" and then [another person] would get up and [speaks low again] make his presentation on financial information. But they pretty obviously were intentionally keeping out the public, the people who sit in those chairs and come to those meetings to try to get information on what the hell is going on. Now it was [the just retired superintendent] who opened up just a little bit. He opened up some – especially when we got new school board members on board who weren't like the big five [former board members]. They were like this coterie – is that the right word? It's c-o-t-e-r-i-e, I can spell it! But they were a clique. They were going to have the communication and they didn't give a damn if anybody else heard out here.... And as far as that goes, it was better if they didn't.

Cass's choice hit the mark she intended, for coterie defines an exclusive group. In sharing this story, Cass shows her contempt for the board's public displays of exclusivity, an oxymoron naming leaders' attempts to deny their own accountability to the public.

Maggie, Cass and Rebecca commented on the newest superintendent's efforts to change the practices in the district:

Maggie: She already had her first meeting with the school board. And she purposefully opened up with the Pledge of Allegiance instead of a prayer –

Cass: Instead of a prayer? Good.

Maggie: And she said things are going to change.

Rebecca: So we may have [a school] breakfast without one too? ... You know there really is – and I'm a religious person – but there really is a good reason for the separation of church and state.

The women expressed a cautious optimism that the arrival of a new superintendent would make the county more accessible to diverse publics.

These examples of “we just don't speak the same language” as a statement of contempt describe the transition of this district from a rural, “old boys” enclave to a district better attuned to the needs of the citizens they serve. Change, however, depends on the hierarchy – those in district leadership – making changes that may result in changes at the school level (the elimination of compulsory prayers at teacher breakfasts). Instances where this type of effort fails provoke teachers' lament.

Lament

“We just don’t speak the same language” can be interpreted as a lament, sadness that teachers and others fail to communicate when they should be working harder to develop understanding.

Audrey calls attention to a shift in the nature of teacher’s language in the past five years. She notes a shift from the days of teacher’s sharing, instances of “I just found out this great new idea!,” to the current sentiment she hears: “I can’t wait until it’s over,” be it the day, the year, or the career. She elaborates:

We don’t have a lot of time. If we ever do, [conversation] is usually negative, to get things off your chest or to talk to a previous teacher about a child. We can confide in each other because we’ve ‘been there, done that’ and we need a shoulder to cry on.... We can empathize, but there’s a limit, a feeling of “I can only do so much.”

As Audrey explains, the context is significant. A spirit of collegiality is a thing of the past, when “we didn’t have the ABCs and everything wasn’t so regimented. We’re not so relaxed these days – that has gone by the wayside.” This culture of accountability will be elaborated in Chapter V, but in this lament, Audrey credits the change in school culture to several factors: the advent and pressure of high-stakes accountability, and changes in administration. The structure of her school also keeps teachers isolated from each other. The sense here is “we just don’t speak the same language that we used to, when we had more time and could be more collegial.”

Creating a sense of belonging among teachers and students can also backfire when new students join the classroom:

And I think you can see it when you have a new student come in. I had a new student come in in February. Well, if they come in – even before December – usually you’ve got yourself together and can organize what they need and they can get meshed in. But after that it’s so far gone. Everyone is knowledgeable about when I say “this” and they know to do this and that and the other. And it’s really hard – it’s almost like you can’t help [new students] get caught up

fast enough. They just have to struggle and learn. You just can't think of everything you have to tell them about. When I say "get out your red folder" you know that really means get out your folder and do this, do this, and do this. But you don't notice [the language]... it helps you notice it when a new student comes in. And you don't want them to feel excluded but...

Molly's story of a new child joining the classroom after discourse practices are already established echoes the experiences of new teachers confronting the jargon and shorthand of an established teacher community. In Molly's classroom, "get out your red folder" has become a symbol that represents a variety of classroom practices. She worked hard in the beginning of the year to develop this shared understanding, but Molly's story reminds us that the development of a sense of belonging among students in the classroom has its pitfalls when new students enter; she laments that new students "just have to struggle and learn" the passwords. "You don't want them to feel excluded, but..." is an indicator of how language becomes password, allowing some in, keeping some out. Time is a factor to, for after a certain point, December in this case, "it's so far gone... it's almost like you can't help [new students] get caught up fast enough."

Molly also lamented the distance that language practices can create between teachers and parents, even between students and their parents:

Unfortunately I think sometimes parents are [left out]. I think we work hard at Parent Night to educate them and help them learn what the language is. We spent that whole curriculum night talking to parents about "Just Right" books and some of the words we use in the classroom. But if they aren't able to come, or don't come, then they are excluded. And I don't think that's purposeful, I just think that it happens. And that can create a rift between those students as those kids are talking to their parents – those parents don't understand what they're talking about. You know, lattice multiplication and some of these new things that maybe they didn't understand. And it depends on the nature of the student - if they're patient enough to educate their parents or if they just get frustrated. And that can create – it has the potential to make the parents feel like they don't know what's going on.

Again, teachers and students create a particular community and language provides the key to entry; access depends on others willing to share the code. This lament acknowledges the repeated exclusions that are possible in language.

Anxiety

Understanding “we just don’t speak the same language” as anxiety signals a bodily response in the face of others’ expectations of the teacher. Anxiety conjures its proactive and reactive aspects: moderate levels of stress can allow us to focus energies and be more productive. It can alleviate boredom or attune us to danger. With too much stress, however, anxiety can be debilitating. Disabling responses include tension, feelings of inadequacy, fatigue, preoccupation, depression, and anger. Maggie’s example below evokes the complexity of anxiety:

You’re expected to speak with authority and you’re making decisions, or helping to advise decisions that affect the child’s education for at least the next couple of years.... It can be really frightening, that what you say really does carry weight. And it can be frightening if you’re not prepared, and it can be empowering. You definitely want your opinions heard – if you’re the one that called the meeting and feel like you need to be the authority because you see [a problem] happening and it’s not good.... It’s just interesting the dynamics because sometimes you’re trying to convince the parents that their child needs certain things. And sometimes, maybe I’m the only who’s done this, and maybe it isn’t the best strategy – but sometimes you do speak teacher talk because you want the parents to keep quiet. You still feel like you’re doing it in the way that’s best for the students, but if it’s a parent that’s resistant at all, sometimes you throw around some lingo so that they don’t speak up. And that’s not the nicest thing in the world and you don’t do it often, it just depends...

Maggie’s anecdote is full of the responsibility she feels for the children in her classroom; her concerns are acting in the best interests of the child. Her peers were also quick to reassure her that she was not the only one to “play the authority card” with parents. The story also evokes the anxiety that accompanies that responsibility and the playing of the authority card.

Because she has expert knowledge on the child's learning, she is willing to "throw around some lingo" to intimidate the parents into agreement. This is not a strategy for every parent but is reserved for those who resist what she believes the child needs. I believe this story properly belongs here and not in a category labeled "power" because invoking the authority card is replete with trepidation. Anna Freud described anxiety as an ego defense. It works to "protect and resolve... anticipations that threaten to undo our observations, coherence, and standing in the world" (Britzman, 2003, p. 77). In Freud's view, education is constituted of interference and "protracted conflict" (p.76), provoking anxiety in response to its anticipated effects. In the example above, Maggie describes speaking "teacher talk" to keep parents silent, to keeping parents listening long enough to convince them that the child "needs certain things." This strategy may also be an anxious response in anticipation of parents' resistance to her authority "it can be really frightening, that what you say really does carry weight." This may be especially true for new teachers who are still learning the languages that authorize their practice and recommendations, who feel unprepared for challenges that resist their authority. It will be interesting to revisit the anxiety response in Chapter VI when discussing relationships between teachers and faculty.

Maggie also calls attention to the anxiety that surrounds the assimilation of new languages. When asked what languages or concepts moved with them from the M.Ed. to their classrooms, Rebecca observed that Maggie was able to bring a lot of that language with her. Rebecca told Maggie: "You use it a lot – I think you do. I think I have to struggle to remember my terms to talk to you about reading sometimes." Maggie's response claimed her expertise (reading) and yet also revealed her anxiety about accessing "higher academic language:"

Well reading... but that's my passion! So of course I'm going to hold onto everything I can with that. ... But I'm getting very nervous that I've lost this ... higher academic language because now I've signed up for National Boards and I know I need to pull all that back in again. So I had, like, an anxiety attack and almost didn't do [National Boards] because I thought "I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do this." You did it with your master's but when you're not always using that language every day it's scary to think "okay, I've got to go back.... Where is it in there?!" It's not in my long term...

Maggie's response speaks to issues of learning, the usefulness of incorporating other languages, the importance of relevancy. She also anticipates the language requirements of pursuing National Board certification, language that "threatens to undo" (Britzman, 2003, p. 77). Reading is Molly's passion, so *that* language stays with her, is relevant to her. But the "higher academic language" requires her to talk back to the anxiety of "I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do this." Although she has succeeded previously in her master's work, she faces the National Board process with a sense of not knowing because that academic register is not something she uses everyday.

As already noted above, Rebecca observed: "In the beginning you feel so inadequate hearing it all. But after a couple of years you feel like you can say something intelligent." The languages that so intimately affect practice are not immanent; Rebecca and her colleagues note that they are social and relational and take time, experience, and sharing to acquire. They also express a level of competency that indicates "intelligence." Cass and Maggie elaborated complications:

Maggie: And it's not just getting it, it's keeping up with it, because it changes rapidly.

Cass: It's a way to keep us... um, bound

Maggie: So we don't acquire the language to have conversations - to obtain the professionalism that we should have. So there is a definite hierarchy centered around language.

This exchange will be examined more closely in Chapter V, but it is shared here to indicate the persistent anxiety of teachers confronted with the ever-shifting languages of education. While willing to stipulate that languages are not static but *do* change, the perceived manipulation of languages creates stress for teachers juggling competing demands.

“You Don’t Speak the Same Language”

To this point, the point of view for the originating statement has been the teachers.’ There are times, however, when teachers are the subject rather than the speaker of the statement. As these examples will show, they often receive the statement as an accusation, responding as the guilty party to *their* uses of language that differentiate them from others. This section explores occasions when parents, other teachers, and significant others told these teachers “*you* just don’t speak the same language.”

Parents

Teachers are concerned about potential breakdowns in communication with parents. As Molly noted previously, “we work hard – at Parent Night to educate them and help them learn what the language is.” Valle and Aponte (2002) outlined the challenge parents may face in relation to other educational discourse communities: “Without access to the professional speech genre..., parents enter the discourse in an unequal position. Rather than being accorded full status as a contributor of knowledge, the parent is expected to internalize the authoritative discourse” (p.x). Parents thus enter into these conversations with knowledge of the child, but without corresponding access to the languages of education. Maggie described the effect of the authoritative discourse: “It makes it very mysterious.... Parents don’t talk that language.... When you go to those IEP meetings, they are so... you just sit there and say ‘wait, you need to stop and explain this to the parents.’”

Cass echoed Maggie's assertion that many parents do not have access to the school language, and worse, that they are unaware of what they don't know:

Cass: And then there are secret words too, like "gateway year." If you don't know what a gateway year is it doesn't matter that the actual words are used and they're not saying GWY and that a gateway year is a guillotine year.

Maggie: I can think of parent conferences that I had where parents were totally unaware of any of this. What does this child need, being a second grader going to 3rd grade and I'd say "next year is a gateway year" – well, what does that mean?

This repeats the interpretation of language as shibboleth, as code for belonging. In this instance, it is the parents who are left out, not understanding that "gateway year" signals a critical juncture in the child's education. As a term it sounds inviting, a "gateway" to a new adventure. As Cass and Maggie indicate, however, gateways is more properly a euphemism for guillotine, for if a child fails to pass through the gateway, the consequences are dire.

Molly agrees that the communicative situation can prevent understanding between parents and teachers:

And I think at parent conferences when your purpose is absolutely to build understanding – that is your purpose – you're really trying to explain but you may not realize that they're still lost. Either because you're not aware of it or they're not comfortable letting you know that. And I think it fails when your purpose – sometimes your purpose is to exclude parents, and to do some things – but that isn't your main purpose most of the time and if your purpose is to bring them on board and you end up using language that excludes them – and their children use language that excludes them – then that's a real downfall of having this language. Because you want them to understand.

In this instance, Molly is frustrated because there is no overlap between her teacher's register and the parent's register. Language fails in this instance because even though Molly works to "bring them on board... you end up using language that excludes them." Molly describes the amplified poignancy of this situation in that the children have learned to understand the teacher and have taken her language as their own. Using this language at home, however,

means that children also exclude the parents and “that’s a real downfall of having this language.” Maggie discusses the paradox of shibboleth here, a theme that will be revisited in Chapter VII.

Significant Others

My husband says he wants to write a book about being married to a teacher. He says if you get teachers together at a party or anything, he swears that within five minutes it will all circle around teacher talk. And he says: “it’s like feeding.” He says “you’ll get over there and others are welcome to watch the action, but you really can’t participate” (Molly, personal communication, 2005).

Teachers also encounter “you just don’t speak the same language” from the most significant others in their lives, their spouses or partners, children, and friends. All of the teachers had stories to tell about family members commenting on teachers speaking a different language, but none are as graphic as Molly’s. Molly’s husband describes the experience of being outside the teacher community, watching “the feeding” that is teacher talk of schooling. There is humor in his statement, as well as a recognition of teachers as a community with distinctive language. Molly and Stella chuckled when discussing the characterization, recognizing themselves in this scenario: “‘It’s like feeding’ ... ‘he says you’ll get over there and others are welcome to watch the action, but you really can’t participate.’” There are at least two ways to interpret feeding here. As we will see in Chapter V, in gift giving folk tales, the gift often arrives in the form of food. “Feeding” in this sense, may represent teachers’ ingestion of the “nourishing words” (Atwell-Vasey, 1998) of their colleagues. Blocked from meaningful conversations inside the school, teachers may relish the opportunity to spend time together outside of school; this may be a gift. Molly’s husband recognizes the sense of belonging created in teachers’ talk with each other. There is, however, a certain violence to his language. In my mind it connotes countless *National*

Geographic photographs of wild animals feeding on the remains of a fresh kill, defending their bounty from other animals that would join the feast, Being confronted by the image of a circle of teachers who deny access to those outside their circle may provoke anxiety as Britzman (2003) described it, an ego-protecting response. Following the National Geographic analogy, this response also positions teachers as some kind of exotic other to be observed but not admired for their subjectivities.

In spite of challenges noted above of acquiring adequate fluency in the language, talking like a teacher (distinguished from “teacher talk”) begins early in the career, beginning pre-service in teacher education, and continuing as teachers enter any setting as a new or relocated teacher. Stella remembered the first time she was aware – or was made aware – of speaking as a teacher:

When I was in college I went shopping with my best friend, and she wanted my attention. She said, “Stella, look at this.” And I said “uh-huh” and didn’t look. And she went off on me: “Don’t speak to me like a teacher!! Don’t patronize me! I am talking to you!!” [Stella laughs] I went ooh! That was the first time it really hit me that there were ways of speaking, tones, language or whatever that were natural for – or became natural for– a teacher, ways that were different from the rest of the population.

In this example, Stella was made aware of some difference in how she interacted with her roommate, but even after twenty years, she remembers that her roommate equated this difference with being “patronized,” positioned by Stella’s non-responsive response. Stella remembers being taught procedural elements related to tone, pitch, volume, and proximity, but in her pre-service methods classes. She continued:

“And this is how you talk like a Kindergarten teacher” [Stella speaks in sweet, soft voice], all nice and sweet. I don’t know if they do that in upper grades, but in lower grades they talked to us about how we talk to children. So I guess that sort of bled over into how we talk to each other and to other adults.

Stella accepted her roommate's accusation that she was patronizing, believing that what she learned about teacher language pre-service bled over into other conversations. But there is also a positioning of the teacher here, as "all nice and sweet." Her teacher education program encouraged a certain subordination, in this case to kindergartners. This positioning of the teacher denies her access to a range of responses to children, giving her a performative script that denied her interpretation. It is also possible that her roommate carried an image of "teacher" that Stella's "uh-huh" matched. When asked if she thought she was still attentive to tone and pitch, Stella shifted the self-conscious reflections to issues of syntax:

We're expected to be models of perfection – especially elementary teachers because you're with [students] all day long. If you do something wrong then they're going to pick up on it and go with it. A lot of times I'll pronounce W-A-T-E-R "warter"... that's just how I've always said it "warter." And I'll call it out on a spelling test, like "water logged" and I don't know how many students spell it "w-a-r-t-e-r!" So you impact their learning, you impact what they know and how they feel.

The model of perfection is artificial for it refuses a teachers individuation. As with Alice Kaplan's (1993) experience learning French, Stella's anecdote describes a slightly different problem of getting the "r." For Kaplan, getting the "r" provided access to a community. In Stella's case however, the "r" describes the tension of the teacher as she is conflated with the child and so denied subjectivity; any sense of distinctiveness is punishable, for the child learns to spell wrong. Instead of providing access to a larger world by loosening of the ties that bind, in this case the horizon shrinks and traps the teacher in a limit situation (Freire, 1990).

Maggie, Rebecca, and Cass shared examples that return us to teachers' husbands and children. Maggie is married to a teacher, and shared that "I would love to talk about it, but

[my husband] wants to keep it at school. We'll have discussions but sometimes they're heated. I get very passionate about things...." Her children also scolded her for bringing her work home: "My kids are always saying: 'It's like being in school when we're at home!'"

Rebecca found ways to debrief with her husband:

I usually talk about my day – if something was particularly good or interesting or bad. [My husband] is a good listener – he'll listen for a while and then reach a wall, or I'll feel like I've talked about it enough. I don't want parents to call me at home, so in that respect I like to keep it separate. But you need to talk about your day...

And finally, Cass:

I used to talk about school a lot at home, then [my husband] complained that all I ever talked about was school and so I quit. And then after a couple of years he said: "You never talk about school anymore." Until things got really bad at school and things got bad with administration and then definitely, I talked about that. And both my girls would refer to the teacher tone and the teacher look and remind me: "Mom! You're not at school! Don't talk to me like that, don't look at me like that! You're not at school!"

In subtle and not-so-subtle ways these women are told to leave it at school. In some ways we can see this as the yearning for and yet repudiation of the maternal register. Valued at home when she projects her intentionality toward the significant others, the teacher is punished for her association with the classroom, positioned in the same patriarchal culture that demeans the woman's domain. Cass observed that "maybe we don't know how to draw the line and be a teacher at school and be a parent at home." The converse might also be true. One problem, however, is that both of those domains, the home and the school, are private domains, demeaned for their association with the feminine. Teachers' reception at school, however, is not always assured, as the next section demonstrates.

Other Teachers

While previous interpretations of “we just don’t speak the same language” marked teachers’ ties to a community of colleagues, these teachers also shared stories in which they received their colleagues claims that “you just don’t speak the same language” as an accusation. This was often associated with participation in the M.Ed. program such that language posed a form of danger for these teachers among their peers. According to Cass, the risk was “gettin’ above your raising” by enrolling in graduate school. Other teachers often seemed resentful at best, punishing at worst when the M.Ed. teachers returned to schools with languages of the academy. This vulnerability is exemplified in this exchange between Maggie, Rebecca and Cass:

Maggie: Well okay, you’re in this program, right, so you’re in this particular language program, but you’re not going back to school and talking that way –

Cass: No! Because you’d turn people off!

Rebecca: Right.

Cass: Your colleagues would get turned off... And they would say stuff too, stuff behind your back.

Maggie: ... I know one teacher in particular at my school, and we had a pretty good relationship. But when I entered this master’s program, she became threatened. She’d been teaching a very long time... I don’t think she meant it personally... it was just like “Oh, so you have your master’s.” [said dully or sadly rather than accusingly]

Rebecca: From my team I got a lot of “Oh, well, you’re the smart one, you’re getting your master’s...” so I made a real effort to –

Maggie: To play it down

Rebecca: Right, to not use that language at school because... it is...

Cass: Because you didn’t want to be labeled a show-off.

Rebecca: Right, you’re right.

As I discuss in Chapter V, these responses seem located in the anti-intellectualism of society

writ large. Taking its strength from powerful business interests that position schools as vocational training grounds, the obedient teacher does not get “above her raising;” She is satisfied with her position and accepts her role in the economic order. In her response to colleagues’ repudiation of her ambition, Maggie plays along: “I just use the language of money. [I tell them] “I’m only doing this for the money.” In the commerce of schooling, this is language that placates.

Summary

This chapter deconstructs the originating statement, “we just don’t speak the same language” in an effort to show how powerful language is to how we understand the world. Using themes introduced by the teachers’ descriptions of the languages of education, this work performs a hermeneutic analysis, offering interpretations of language as expressing belonging and differentiation, as well as resistance, accusation, contempt, lament, and anxiety. Although the presentation often suggests a progression or amplification of meanings (i.e., accusation to contempt, contempt to lament), these interpretations are not linear; these are meanings trapped in the web of relationships that surround a teacher. They dramatize the jeopardy of associating with children, of relishing community, and of extending beyond the limit languages of the school.

CHAPTER V

THE SYMBOLIC ORDER

Education at the turn of the 21st century is remarkable for the audit culture (Green, 2005; Popkewitz, 2000; Strathern, 2000) that pervades K-12 public schools, a politics of accountability that governs practices and languages in education. Britzman (2003) called this the managerial model in education wherein “[accountability] initiatives are based on the idealization of knowledge, the eschewal of doubting authority, and the expulsion of not knowing, not learning, and meaninglessness” (p. 109). She described the epistemological certainty that is inscribed in the beliefs and practices governing our schools, a testament to the legacy of modernity. In this model, a school’s performance is presented as the linchpin that sustains social order. Given the current level of public scrutiny, a school’s closure has significant risk for a community, setting in motion chain of events: job loss, civic humiliation, and the attendant consequences of lowered real estate values, and difficulty recruiting corporations to an area. In this model, knowing and meaning are not merely goals; we cannot admit *not* knowing and there is no room for ambiguity or talking back. This stance is institutionalized in the structures of school hierarchies and in the battery of tests teachers and students anticipate each spring. Administrators and teachers, students and families cannot afford to act as if these tests do not have very real consequences in the immediate future. Grumet (2006) named this “aiming schooling at schooling:”

Now...in 2006, ...instead of aiming schooling at the outside world, however distant, patriarchal, or apolitical, we are aiming schooling at schooling,

mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the most grade level of us all? In the name of accountability we have made schooling the goal of schooling, and have created tests to represent schooling (in press).

What happens to *language* when schooling is about schooling? The teachers in this study corroborate Grumet's characterization of the current state of education, and in this chapter I stipulate that schooling *is* about schooling. As this chapter will show, we see this self-reference manifested in the languages of education, primarily the languages of administration that infiltrate teachers' practice. These languages of schooling are instruments of "the insatiable maw of endless inquisition" (Grumet, 2006, in press). In these times, not only is schooling about schooling, but language in schools, in particular the languages of administration, are increasingly about schooling as well. As will be elaborated at the end of this chapter, as well as in Chapter VI, this is education for the Symbolic Order, Lacan's (1968) signifier for the social and paternal world of Law into which we enter when we become speaking subjects, when we enter the world of language. The Symbolic Order represents the adult world and is based in the authority of symbols and on rules and conventions that guide social practice.

This chapter focuses on interpretations of "we just don't speak the same language" that indicate the confrontation between teachers and the school, district, state and federal languages of administration they receive. In Chapter II, I argued that teachers are generally spoken to, or for, or about in spaces that shape teacher practice, patronized in a system that presumes their acquiescence. Originally a study of *teacher* language, teachers indicated that no matter *their* focus, no matter *their* interests, any discussion of teacher language has to account for the pervasive influence of administrative languages on teachers' practices for "they decide," "they claim," "they don't realize," and so on . These teachers are especially

concerned about the consequences of the press for accountability and standardization on their practices and relationships. In this instance, “we don’t speak the same language” is a clarion call warning of a dangerous and growing gap between teachers’ languages and the languages of administration.

Asad (1986) cautions that attending to discrepancies in language is crucial, for discrepancies can indicate asymmetrical power among “unequal languages” (p. 156). Asad’s essay, *The Concept of Cultural Translation*, named problems related to translation(s) of cultural difference in social anthropology. Asad argues that Third World languages are increasingly transformed through processes of exposure to and translation by “stronger” Western languages: “Western languages produce and deploy *desired* knowledge more readily than Third World languages do,” for “industrial capitalism transforms not only modes of production but also kinds of knowledge and styles of life in the Third World. And with them, forms of language” (p. 158, emphasis in original). The idea that “stronger” languages have the ability to silence or even absorb “weaker” languages has significance when considering teachers’ positioning vis-à-vis administrative languages. As this chapter unfolds, it is interesting to note that in spite of the influence of administration’s stronger language, or alongside that influence, teachers work to keep it at a remove from their relationships with students, refocusing their attention in the direction of students again and again. Asad’s warning that teachers’ languages are always vulnerable to administrative translations, however, reminds us to retain a sense of urgency in the face of the persistent downward pressure of strong administrative languages.

The danger of aiming schooling at schooling and allowing stronger administrative languages to overrun teachers’ language is the reduction of language, and thus education, to

the most functional, stripping both of the relational, the imaginative, the poetic. According to Britzman (2003), “[S]omething happens to language in groups: its symbolic qualities are lost, and language becomes a symptom of the loss when it is reduced to a mode of action” (p. 114). She offered an example of this flattening with a current turn of phrase in education: “Perhaps the most stringent example is the policy of ‘zero tolerance,’ where cause and effect are literally collapsed into crime and punishment.” Zero tolerance policies are education’s equivalent of “one strike, you’re out.” While taking a stand against a variety of issues that compromise a student’s education, including weapons, drugs, and alcohol, these policies require educators to expel students for any violation without exception; there is no tolerance. The cause, violating a policy, is collapsed into the effect, expulsion, no matter the extenuating circumstances. I might suggest that *No Child Left Behind*, as symbol, is similarly at risk for collapsing into the tests it engendered.

Britzman (2003) described the consequences of this reduction: “when symbolization cannot be thought, the symbol no longer *represents* the object; instead, it *becomes* the object. When this occurs, perceptions of the world become more and more literal and aggressive, and the capacity for thinkers to think is attacked” (p. 114, emphasis in original). This reduction admits no humanness, no ambiguity, no imagination. When we lose our awareness of language as a process of symbolization, language loses its communicative and expressive value. In the context of this work, language in schools risks collapse into the edu-speak that pervades administrative discourse. If the goal of this research is to ask how thinking about language can help us think about, and perhaps think *differently* about, teaching and education, the concern this chapter highlights is that the influence of these languages of administration confound teachers’ ability to imagine “something more.” One definition of

reduction holds that it is *the process by which one object or concept is shown to be entirely dispensable in favor of another* and it is this reduction we must guard against.

The languages of administration take their strength from the authoritative discourses they employ. Bakhtin (1981) introduced several of the themes this chapter takes up:

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us...; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected to a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 341-343).

Authoritative discourse demands our attention and allegiance; its authority is unquestionable. Authoritative discourses operate at a remove making it difficult, if not impossible, to challenge or change them. They work to reify an idealized past and they work to inscribe hierarchy and thus patriarchy. Bakhtin adds that these discourses are defended against change, they are “calcified.”

Beyond its implications for language, symbolization is crucial for how we conceive of education writ large. These reductions are important not only because they diminish teacher autonomy and status, but because they collapse the interpretive, imaginative and constructivist processes of education itself. Curriculum theorists in education continue to remind us that education is much more than the preparation of good (read obedient) workers for the globalized economy such that schools, educators and students have a singular focus on production, or the “bottom line” (Pinar, 2004). For teachers, “examination-driven curricula demote teachers from scholars and intellectuals to technicians in service to the state” (p. 2). For both teachers and students, Grumet (1988) argues that

in order for curriculum to provide the moral, epistemological, and social situations that allow persons to come to form, it must provide the ground for their action rather than their acquiescence. It must be submitted to their reform, be accessible to their response (p. 172).

We can look to anthropology for a heuristic for considering the languages of administration. Structural functionalism proposes that activities or behaviors have a particular function in social systems, namely the maintenance of social order. Evans-Pritchard (1968), for example, proposed that witchcraft beliefs worked to maintain good behavior and so social order among the Azande, an African tribe he studied in the 1920s. Following structural functionalism, activities are conservative in that they work to maintain stability, the status quo. Applying this analytic to the languages of administration we see how these languages maintain the social order, the status quo, in education. Although reform efforts such as *No Child Left Behind* pose as instruments of change, they in fact represent limit situations (Freire, 1990). The federal government failed to provide states with adequate financial support to fund this mandate, limiting the possibility for the kind of change promised. Children are still left behind as hierarchies, and the interests they represent, stay the same. Significant for thinking about the languages of administration, however, are the critiques of structural functionalism as an organization principle:

When the differentiation of roles is regarded as functional, no serious explanation of the political character of such function is given: any set of complementary roles may be called functional to the extent they promote stable operation within a system. ... Moreover, functionalist description inevitably becomes prescriptive. ... Functionalism finds it agreeable to operate in an endless present. Against the dynamism of growth and change it proposes an ideal of stability (Millet, 2000/1969, p. 220-221).

Millet joins other critics of functionalism to ask if homeostasis is possible, and if possible, is it desirable? How does the social system account for change? What kind of subjectivity is produced in functional systems? In addition, structural functionalism assumes the insularity of a social system; the beliefs and behaviors in question are those that are internal to a society. What happens when the system encounters others outside that system? Audrey

indicates why these concerns are significant when considering the functions and functionality of administrative languages to the system of schooling, for the functional culture limits possibilities for teachers and students:

We only hear from them [the district] when they want one more thing. What would I like to hear? I'd like them to say "You're doing a great job," or "You know, we've decided to revamp and we'll limit objectives." I'd like them to say "we need to eliminate grade level redundancy" and also, "we're expecting kids to tell time too early, maybe this is too soon. We're going to be more reasonable with out expectations because kids are developmentally different." And "we should pursue limited concepts more in-depth because when there is so much to cover, it's all at the surface, it's superficial. We should go deeper."

If the only function for language is to support the social order, there is no motivation to rethink existing practice. What students and teachers need, recognition and complexity, fall outside the functional domain.

Making language about schooling produces or reinforces several other effects that I find problematic for education, effects that teachers articulated over the course of our interviews. Reducing language helps entrench the culture of accountability that pervades contemporary practices of schooling and builds in a level of surveillance for controlling teachers' work. Reducing language reinforces the hierarchical structure of schooling and patriarchy therein. Reduction also creates distance and mistrust among people, complicating the exchange of ideas and information. These issues are overlapping and combine to tremendous effect for how teachers experience and understand their work. In spite of these functions, however, teachers and language still slip the bonds that work to contain them. The postmodern critique of structural functionalism is useful here for reminding us that functionalism works to reduce the variety and complexity of the realities it describes. Life, in particular life in schools, however, is tremendously complex and we ignore that at our

peril. Locating this chapter in the larger study, this chapter asks how looking at the confrontation of teachers with the languages of administration can help us think about, and perhaps think differently about, education.

Culture of Accountability

“The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341)

For the women in this study, languages of administration work to support the culture of accountability so pervasive in schools. The culture of accountability is served by a reduction of language that controls teachers’ work and creates vulnerability.

Control

Rebecca: I associate the language with paperwork.

Maggie: Right, that’s what it is.

Cass: There you go, the forms – “be sure you fill this form in.”

Maggie: We don’t use it with our students

When asked about different languages of school (versus languages of teachers), this exchange between Rebecca, Maggie and Cass, made it clear that administrative language exists apart from teachers’ engagement with their students. Language is associated with paperwork, the forms that hold teachers accountable. Following Saussure, this is a reduction of language to the signifiers (the paperwork) such that the signified (rules), and thus the sign (accountability), are controlled at the administrative level. As Saussure’s poststructuralist successors pointed out, however, language resists this reduction and escapes the structure. No matter its complicity with paperwork in contemporary schooling, teachers retain a language apart, the language of teacher-student relationships.

As noted in Chapter III and reflected here, Rebecca, Maggie and Cass work in a particularly parochial school district. Their conversations frequently made their way to discussions of administrative discourse, and they are the spokespeople for this section. Maggie indicated that district personnel do not go out of their way to protect teachers' time by filtering the initiatives and requirements that come from the state: "[Our county] doesn't reflect on the language.... DPI doesn't mandate all this stuff. They filter it down and say 'Look at it, decide, interpret, see what's going to work best.' But [our district] just passes it all along." They also clearly attributed the amount and intent of the paperwork to district and state efforts to control teachers' work:

Rebecca: It's out of control.

Maggie: But I don't think it needed to be that – I don't think it was ever intended to be that way. I think that it's just... I think there are better and more efficient ways to assess, but we're so accountable. Accountability is what it's all about.

Rebecca: And there is a hierarchy of pressure for accountability. The school feels accountable to the county who feels accountable to the state who feels accountable to *No Child Left Behind*.

Cass: Feels accountable... *is* accountable.

Rebecca: Is accountable. And so that's why they want all the paperwork to prove that everybody is doing what they're supposed to do.

While Maggie is willing to give administrators credit for the unintended consequences of the proliferation of paperwork, "I don't think it needed to be that – I don't think it was ever intended to be [out of control]," the women nevertheless indicated that education has fallen victim to the culture of accountability. *No Child Left Behind* is reduced to the paperwork it requires and schooling is about schooling. When Rebecca described the effects of the federal trickle-down policy, she observed that everyone "feels accountable." Cass corrected her: "*is*

accountable,” prompting Rebecca to complete the link between paperwork and actual practices of accountability.

Rebecca also introduced surveillance as a tool of accountability. She argued that the abundance of paperwork was put in place to monitor teachers: “And so that’s why they want all the paperwork – to prove that everybody is doing what they’re supposed to do.” She continued:

The form is supposed to show that you’re doing your job right. Like, I’m thinking of PEPs [Personal Education Plans]. But really, it’s so formulaic in the language that you have to put down and the way that you have to say that you’re doing something, that it just takes time away from doing your job right.

The focus here is on means of control; the consequences, “time away from doing your job right,” will be revisited below. The forms require teachers to prove they are doing their job, to justify and account for their time and production. Cass agreed that the PEP had little life beyond someone’s desk: “You rarely have even the parent come in to say ‘I’d like to see his PEP... I don’t think the PEP is being followed.’”

Surveillance can hardly be mentioned in contemporary theory without invoking the panopticon, the instrument of surveillance that takes its power from the compulsion of the observed to complete required tasks *as if* someone is watching (Foucault, 1995). In many cases in education, someone *is* watching, *is* measuring. The reduction of language to its function, monitoring, compels teachers to account for “doing something.” When asked what they believed happened to all the paperwork, Cass indicated the panoptic effects of accountability practices:

I’m not saying this is true for everyone, but in general, I think teachers would say that it’s a lot of busy work and it takes up a lot of space. Nobody ever actually looks at it. And I’m talking about examining it carefully. I don’t mean they’re not looking to see – “Do we have all the forms completed we were supposed to? Are they dated? Did the parents sign three times a year?”

Are they dated?” ... So what it’s really proving is that you filled the form in. It’s not proving anything about what you’re [doing]...

At this point, the system is working, for teachers continue to fill out the forms even though the sentiment is that “nobody ever actually looks at it” beyond verifying correct signatures and dates. Rebecca indicated that there were warnings about doing otherwise, noting that “inevitably, every year I end up in some meeting where I’m told if I don’t do something it could be my job.” Audrey indicated that surveillance also affected communications – among teachers, and between teachers and others. Noting that email had replaced face-to-face conversations as “the new space for everyday carefree talk,” she went on to add that the medium had subsequently lost its communicative value after staff realized that email was subject to district surveillance. Based on a court case that subpoenaed email exchanges, principals were warned and in turn warned teachers that email messages on the district’s system *could* be monitored and used against them. Audrey now gives out her home email address to parents to ensure that communication is confidential. Surveillance reduces language by making it dangerous. This language may be symbolic, but in the sense of acting as a euphemism that warns teachers not to resist. But as Cass indicated, although teachers comply, their buy-in is limited. They recognize the paperwork as busywork that takes up space and bears little relationship to what they are actually doing.

The district also calls attention to what it thinks is important by translating what is necessary for paperwork. Stella commented on the limited focus revealed by what the state, or district in this case, chooses to focus on:

I went to a meeting for ILTs – Initially Licensed Teachers – and they did give an acronym soup lesson for the ILTs on things specific to the ILT program. They went through what all those things meant. But it wasn’t for things outside the ILT, it was just things you need to know to fill out your paperwork.

In Stella’s example, new teachers had a lesson about language, but “it was just things you need to know to fill out your paperwork.” The state has prepared a handout of the acronyms teachers and parents encounter: “In education, as in most specialized professions, educators use terms that may be unfamiliar.... The list of the more commonly used acronyms or abbreviations and their meanings has been developed to help everyone involved in public schools communicate better” (from handout). The handout reads like the alphabet soup of *accountability*, for the terms defined include: ABCs, ADM, AYP, EOC, NCWISE, and SAS.⁹ Legal provisions that make the state accountable to parents are also shared, including IDEA and Title IX.¹⁰ There is only one quasi-instructional acronym on the handout and that is SCS, the Standard Course of Study. The SCS names state goals for education and provides a framework for curriculum instruction, but it has also been transformed into an accountability document for teachers must specify, to the level of “5.1.1” among competency goals and objectives, where their instruction meets the SCS. Like the PEPs named above and the IGPs (Individual Growth Plans), and PDPs (Personal Development Plans) named below, along with the host of other acronyms named in Chapter IV, the alphabet soup buttresses the audit culture.

The proliferation of forms may have emerged out of well-meaning efforts to insure that schools were ethically and instructionally responsible to children and their parents, but those good intentions have been overwhelmed by their unintended consequences. As Maggie said, “I don’t think it needed to be that – I don’t think it was ever intended to be that way.” The process invokes Hal in *2001: A Space Odyssey*: the computer once designed to assist

⁹ The ABCs of Public Education, Average Daily Membership, Adequate Yearly Progress, End of Course tests, NC Window of Information on Student Education, and Student Accountability Standards.

¹⁰ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

instead takes on a life of his own, destroying the very system he was meant to support.

Another unintended consequence of allowing language to serve the culture of accountability is the invocation of teachers' skepticism. They see through the paperwork and lose respect for those who would monitor them and interfere with teacher-student relationships in the process. Finally, Maggie shared yet another unintended consequence:

The amount of... what you hear now from new teachers and why a lot of them leave – the demands of paperwork alone is astronomical. So we're not only asked to do this incredible amount of paperwork, but also teach the curriculum and teach the child. And it's flip-flopped and the paperwork comes first.

So not only is language reduced, but practice is reduced as well.

Vulnerability

Administrative languages also support the culture of accountability by creating vulnerability among teachers through the seemingly arbitrary manipulation of the languages of schooling. The jargon is arbitrary, but you still have to learn it and *re-learn* it every time the language changes or risk being caught out of the loop. As noted in Chapter IV, education's "alphabet soup" is the collection of acronyms that pervade teachers' work.

Learning the jargon allows teachers "in," but it is a *required* token, as Molly described:

When the ABCs came in ... any new initiative brings its own language. We did have a whole handout ... about all of the acronyms [used in the new initiative]. I remember they said: "you need to study these, these are going to be used throughout the program." Everything is abbreviated – it is abbreviated everywhere, in conversations, in the actual manual. And if you don't know what they're talking about you're in trouble.

The signifiers, or the acronyms in this case, reference the components of the new program, the signifieds. Together they are meant to point to a sign, to new initiative. This is structuralism, as Saussure conceived it. Poststructuralist theory, however, calls attention to the space between the acronyms and the program. No matter our intentions, there is play in

the line between the acronym and its application; there are too many people involved to pretend that all users imagine the same practice or follow the same sequence of events.

Teachers, however, are accountable to the initiative and the tests that measure its impact.

The slippage between terms is also complicated by the ever-shifting vocabulary of practice at the hands of nameless bureaucrats:

Cass: Unless you know what the letters represent, there's no way you can understand the concept anyway. Like I still call PDPs PEPs, and I know a PDP is for me and a PEP is for a student, but I still constantly interchange those. But it takes too long to say Professional Development Plan or...

Maggie: And you've got to put the I in there so it's IPDP - Individual Professional Development Plan

Rebecca: It's IGP – there's an IGP now! It's just a new name!

Cass: Individual Growth Plan! They change it every few years – and I'm not sure if it's just to confuse us...you know!

Rebecca: So who's making these changes?

Virtually the same example was shared by Molly, who works in a different district:

Sometimes they change the language for the exact same thing. Like PGP: Personal Growth Plan – I think that's the fourth thing it's been called. It was definitely not that at the beginning – I can't even remember what acronym it used to be. And it's like they do it just to keep you on your toes. Individual Growth Plan? I think it was an IGP and now it's PGP - it's the exact same form. I mean they've revised it and changed three words on it and they changed the whole name of it.

For Cass, this was using language to “put us in our place,” what Rebecca named “our language war.” Rebecca continued: “We all immediately, after talking about all the DPI stuff, we had some pretty strong thoughts about where we stood in regards to that, where we stood in regards to all the acronyms and the renaming of things and the, you know, uselessness....”

Among the ascribed reasons for the manipulation of terms is confusing teachers, manipulating them. For Cass it says: “‘I know more than you do!’ ... It makes people feel stupid to say ‘what is that?’” Molly continued:

I think the central office just doesn’t realize. I think sometimes the ones making the decisions down there don’t realize how many other – that’s their world. It’s so specialized. Their world is assessment or their world is math or their world is this. They don’t realize that we’ve got to understand the language of *all* those worlds. And if they keep changing it, that really impacts us whereas it might not be any big impact to them. But if every department changes something, well we’ve got 12 new things we’ve got to understand.

These are yet other examples of the unintended consequences that accompany the proliferation and demands of administrative language for teachers. In confrontations of languages, administrative discourse is received as controlling and arbitrary. The consensus is that it amounts to busywork. It also causes teacher skepticism and anger, and makes them feel vulnerable to those who change the language, seemingly at whim. This section, however, also alerts us that two otherwise contradictory actions result from reduction: first, that languages of administration insist on teachers’ attention; and second, that teachers act apart from that insistence when with their students. Cass alluded to choosing or “doing” something else when she argued that paying attention to forms is “not proving anything about what you’re [doing].” Teachers’ choices will be taken up in greater detail below. In this section, the culture of accountability is one beneficiary of the reduction of schooling to schooling; the next section turns to another beneficiary, hierarchy.

Reinforced Hierarchy

And there’s a hierarchy there. I think that the higher ups do have to use the language they think is going to be intimidating to teachers and parents, otherwise they wouldn’t keep changing it. (Maggie, personal communication, July 2005)

Hierarchy may prove to be the most influential and resilient structure for organizing teachers' practice, with language one of its important tools. Its Greek origins define hierarchy as sacred rule (from *hieros* meaning sacred and *arkho* meaning rule); for those of us working to topple the structure, it often seems intractably sacred. Its modern definition as *a system of ranking and organizing things with each element of the system is subordinate to a single other element* is equally illuminating. Cass, Maggie and Rebecca invoked the hierarchical structure of education that consolidates power at the top:

Rebecca: The people that make it...

Cass: Those in power...

Maggie: People that are in decision-making roles.

Rebecca: People that understand it

Cass: ... that make the rules

Maggie: The policy makers

Rebecca: ...and then the people that don't [make or understand it] down at the bottom.

Maggie: They claim that they include teachers one step above the students....

This exchange mirrors Weiler's (1988) characterization of hierarchy in education and calls attention to its status-conserving function: "Those who are in control, who dominate and benefit from this structure, attempt in both conscious and unconscious ways to shape the schools so as to maintain their own privilege" (p. 150). Rebecca, Cass, and Maggie's description of the hierarchy named the positions: the decision-makers that are in power, the policy makers that make the rules, and teachers. They also described the positions vis-à-vis their relationship to language: those in power make the language, policy-makers understand

it, and teachers receive it. Hierarchy subordinates teachers as well as language. As Cass said, “Our ex-superintendent would refer to principals as ‘the almighty principal.’ That was his phrase, ‘the almighty principal.’ There’s some language! ‘It’s your school! Do it!’ Or, ‘don’t let them if you don’t want them to!’” The former superintendent reinforced the hierarchical structure with teachers clearly on the receiving end. As Cass continued, language is “dumped on us.”

Rebecca went on to describe teachers’ skepticism of policy-makers’ interest in and knowledge of the classroom:

And I don’t think the legislators who make the laws for education come into the classroom at all. ...A couple of years ago ... there was this whole group of people who worked in legislative offices, maybe one was a legislator, and they came through [our school]. My room was one of the stops, and it was like a dog-and-pony show.... They talked so loudly to each other the whole time that I don’t think they noticed two things that went on in the room in the 10 minutes they were there. And then they went on to the next room.

Weis and Fine (2003) argued that teachers’ participation in the controversies and conversations about education is critical because policy makers “know little of the life of a classroom, the curiosity of a child” (p. 2). In this instance, legislators could benefit from telling constituents that they visited local schools, but the policy makers squandered the opportunity to learn more about classrooms and consider the impact of their policies. They also disrupted the classroom, suborning Rebecca’s needs to their own.

Maggie also speculated that administrators reinscribe their power through language and keep those at lower positions in the hierarchy off guard: “There is a definite hierarchy centered around language. And it is changed so we don’t acquire the language, and so can’t have conversations that would help us obtain the professionalism that we should have.” In Cass’s explanation, the language “binds” teachers, echoing Bakhtin’s claim about

administrative discourse. Language becomes a tool that reinforces the hierarchy, keeping leaders at the top, and teachers at a deficit. Maggie's quote also invokes the renewed interest in teacher professionalism that followed the intensification of reform and testing ushered in with *A Nation at Risk* and its treatment *No Child Left Behind* (Noblit, Berry, & Dempsey, 1991).

“Teacher professionalism,” and more recently “new professionalism,” are movements that may have started out well-intentioned but can also be understood to demean teachers in a bargain with a different devil, this one presumed to support and protect them. A central tenet of professionalism is teachers' development of self-governance, “yet teachers must professionalize in the context of a large, established public bureaucracy that sees professionalism as serving its interests” (Noblit et al, 1991, p. 381). Maggie thus finds herself in a double bind: trying to keep up with the language that is a gatekeeper to professionalism even though teachers' professionalism is compromised by its embeddedness in education's hierarchy. Sachs (2001) named this one of the paradoxes of new professionalism, that we hear calls for teacher professionalism at a time when their work is being deskilled *and* intensified. Because the onus is on teachers for changing their status, professionalism positions teachers' concerns, or even complaints, as another instance of victimization. Professionalism in effect “blames the victim” for failing to create the conditions for her professional status. Site-based management was another goal of professionalism, but its successes were short-lived if achieved at all. Cass named the failure of the initiative in the face of the centralization that accompanied reform: “I think that overall the feelings of teachers on those [Site Based Management] teams is that the decisions have already been made – ‘this is a formality.’ There is no site-based management. It's a

farce.” Teacher professionalism placed the responsibility for changing their status on teachers themselves, while failing to provide adequate resources to support this work. Darling-Hammond critiques this trend and with McLaughlin (1995) described the “Policies that Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform” that require collaborative and extended models of professional development. Professionalism so understood is developed over time, is well-funded, involves teachers as learners and teachers, brings in the resources of university partnerships, and honors the complexity of teachers’ day-to-day lives.

In the wake of professionalism, Maggie has seen teachers’ work diminished by the paperwork: “It seems like a lot of our power has been taken – not that we want power, but a lot of our expertise and our decision-making has been taken away. And we’ve been asked to be - almost like record-keepers.” This again describes the issue of teacher deskilling in the face of intensification. Maggie, however, is also sympathetic to administrators facing these requirements:

You know principals have a huge amount on their plate right now too – they do. If their test scores aren’t up their contracts aren’t renewed. ... And where is all this coming from but our esteemed government – that claims, “oh yeah, states have say-so....” Okay, states *can* choose their own curriculum, but... not with AYP in there, no way. Remember when they came out and talked to us all about that and we were all blown away?! I still don’t understand the whole process. But I know that if you’re a low performing school in two years – woof! [the principal is gone.]

As noted in Chapter II, administrators in education are acutely aware of their public function and work to legitimate their organizations to multiple constituencies through languages that borrow from vocabularies of democracy, participation, and diversity (Anderson, 2001). As Anderson indicates, however, the appeal of these vocabularies is that they (presumably) avoid offending pluralist interest groups. Popkewitz (1991) named these

the languages of regulation that operate by being acceptable enough to persuade diverse constituencies to accept them. Molly drew connections between language and status:

It's almost – and this is an analogy – it's almost like politicians. Good politicians are the ones who can talk the talk and use those catchphrases that are the good sound bites and make you believe it. Talk the language of the people... and it's the same in a school.... I think the more awareness you have of that, the more you can get what you want.

As this section has shown, teachers in this study were skeptical that they counted among the interest groups administrators are accountable to, even though their work is embedded in the languages and thus practices of education administration. Languages of administration operate strategically by masking regulatory functions with safe-sounding discourse and crowding out conversations that might challenge the status quo.

Distance and Mistrust

Another way that languages of administration work to reduce the language and practice of teachers is by creating distance and mistrust between teachers and others. The teacher-principal relationship is most at risk, but teacher-teacher relationships are also compromised by the influence of administrative discourse.

Teachers described a difference in the focus of their work and the work of administrators, with teachers on the side of educating the child and administrators attending to the business side of education. Teachers in this study indicated that it is this business approach that can create distance between teachers and administrators, as articulated in this exchange that asked them to talk about where they used the languages of “I love that child”:

Maggie: After school, at the lunch table on the playground.

Rebecca: In the hall -

Maggie: Out of earshot of the administration.... They're not invited in on that conversation. I like my principal....

Rebecca: But she's only included as needed.

Maggie: Right – she's driven by, I don't know how to describe it....

Cass: The Standard Course of Study?

Maggie: ...she's driven by test scores, by the whole business aspect of education.... How about that?

Rebecca: Yeah, yeah

Cass: That's a good way to put it.

A teacher for more than ten years, Audrey talks about the principal's position in the hierarchy, above teachers but accountable to district and state. Like Maggie, she is sympathetic to the impact of reform practices for the work of principals. Audrey is quoted here at length as she traces the changes in administrative through succession of principals:

When I came back to teaching eight years ago [after staying home with two children for 12 years], [our school] was brand new and the teacher community was much different. We had a highly energetic principal who embraced the K-8 philosophy and was part of the design of the building. She was passionate, positive, and supportive, and her language was exactly what I needed. With her, any problem you had was not a big problem. She supported our decisions – she was 100% supportive in front of parents.... In meetings, everyone had a chance to speak and get answers to questions and she could bring humor into tough situations.... She used the language of connection..... Eight years ago, we had tests, but not as much, and not as much paperwork, so we had more energy. Three years ago she moved [out of state] and we were all extremely sad....

She continued:

An assistant principal took over, and we wanted that because he was very personable and he knew the ropes. And better the known than the unknown. He spoke the language of support, but he didn't speak curriculum language. He didn't know the expectations of each grade level... and because he wasn't familiar with it, he didn't take us any further... and because of that I became disenchanted with his language, and it became superficial to me. He used the

tag of “people person,” but it was to pacify. He was not an activist.... The more adversarial parents, they were more apt to come in and get their way.

This principal moved on after a year and Audrey now works with the school’s third principal.

When asked how things had changed, Audrey attributed only some of the changes to the principal:

We have too many mandates and too much paperwork. It is extremely stressful to push children when they’re not ready. It’s very hard when the principal pushes “90% proficiency.” The new principal is all about NCLB, so its all about the budget, “we won’t get our budgeted money if we don’t meet proficiency.” ... It’s all a game. This principal wants to be known as a “School of Excellence” [or the next higher ranking]... because that language is everywhere – it’s on the district website, it’s in the newspapers, it’s out there in the public, creating stress.... A teachers’ reputation is now based on EOG scores, it’s not about creativity any more.

Audrey tells a story of relationships that diminished as accountability increased. The tensions associated with reform are shared by teachers and principals alike. Her first principal in this new school was a teacher’s advocate – knowledgeable about administrative and curricular complexities and philosophies of education, she was supportive and compassionate, freeing teachers to enjoy each other and maintain their focus on students in the classroom. The second principal was a “people person,” but this was not enough for Audrey. He lacked knowledge of the curriculum and so “didn’t take us any further.” Audrey’s concern speaks to the emptiness of language devoid of the intentionality that projects a school – its teachers and students – toward the world. The enchantment was lost. The arrival of the third principal continues the school’s descent into the culture of accountability. In this very public, very accountable environment, creativity is lost. Audrey indicated that this effect on many teachers meant that “the only language you hear now is, ‘I’m tired’ and ‘I can’t take it any longer.’”

Maggie describes more recent encounters with her principal:

Our principal... there's not a lot of thinking on her part, not a lot of, "well, let me get back to you." She'll say "yeah, whatever," so there's that aspect of it, "yeah, whatever you want to do... jump off the roof," like she's not really hearing you.

She attributes this to the principal's shift in focus to publics outside the school. Teachers no longer feel supported in their work by their most immediate supervisors. Audrey describes teachers' 'thankless position,' indicating that with all the requirements that accompany reform, "that in all these years, I've never received from the county office a letter of thanks, never heard 'you did a good job.'" Maggie, too, described how teachers' work is taken for granted: "All of a sudden these EOGs [End of Grade tests] appear on my desk and I have to give these kids practice EOGs the last week of school. I was never even informed through an email or anything on that. They just appeared on my desk."

Teachers also indicated that accountability requirements worked to interfere with teachers' relationships with each other as this exchange between Maggie, Rebecca and Cass indicated:

Maggie: We are all seeing that – that we need to stick together. And unfortunately the hierarchy seems to do everything they can to tear it apart.

Amy: Meaning?

Maggie: ABC bonus money. They pit us against each other – posting the test scores...

Rebecca: Making scores public...

Maggie: Making teachers at different levels talk about other teachers – "you didn't do your job, you didn't prepare this child." Nobody is sitting there asking the important questions -

Cass: Like "How can we work together?"

No Child Left Behind's high profile and the annual rite of publishing ABC scores mean that the public is very aware of this particular discourse of accountability. Public involvement is not necessarily a bad thing, but the nature and tenor of the publicity that surrounds testing introduces a level of surveillance with significant impact on teachers. At a time when teachers might draw strength from each other, when they “need to stick together,” posting test scores and tying bonuses to scores that “exceed expectations” puts teachers on the defensive and leads them to strike out at each other in frustration.

Cass suggested on the most skeptical interpretation of administrative languages:

Maybe that's what it's really about, following directions... maybe that's what it's all about. Maybe the whole education thing is really political.... I mean the whole thing, and maybe it really is about training 90% of the people to be the worker bees, and the other 10% to be the managers and directors and CEOs.... That's scary.

This is not her general orientation to teaching. Remember that Cass characterized teacher language as “‘I love that kid.’ That’s teacher language.” She also lamented that “it is becoming the business of education, not the humanity of education.” That trends in accountability resemble tracking, and that teachers receive so many missives about accountability, however, make Cass question the intent of contemporary reforms. Rebecca also feels the consequences of these reforms and the attitudes they engender. She feels mistrusted by the state, challenged at the core of her practice: “And everything is getting so dictated by the state that it’s almost like, it’s good for us to know our theories but the state doesn’t trust us to know them and do our jobs.” Teachers are required to attend prescribed numbers of professional development sessions, often without any choice as to subject matter. In spite of the requirement and her confidence that she can integrate new theories into her

existing practice, she feels constrained to prove herself through only one measure, namely test scores: “The state doesn’t trust us to know [theory] and do our jobs.”

Thus a negative consequence of the proliferation of accountability language is that teachers feel marginalized and may become skeptical and cynical. They learn to mistrust whatever good intentions provoked the need for just one more form and grow cynical about their position in the process. Cass articulated one potential conclusion to the path teachers are on:

...someday we wouldn’t really need teachers anymore, we would just need teaching technicians – someone who could practically robotically say, “Okay, we need a form IOQ3. Here-it-is-now” [in a robotic voice].... You wouldn’t teach, you would record keep.... I heard the term so many years ago: teaching technician.

Pinar (2004), in fact, names the same conclusion: “In its press for efficiency and standardization, the factory model tends to reduce teachers to automata” (p. 28). In the face of all this discontent, it is important to remember that these teachers do stay. I met them in a master’s degree program designed for experienced teachers, so they are not just staying in the field, they are also working to continue their own education.

Effects on Practice

To this point, this chapter has focused on the confrontation between teachers and the languages of administration and its consequences for teachers’ interactions with administrators through a discussion of how these languages entrench the culture of accountability, reinforce hierarchy, and create distance and mistrust among educators. I turn now to teachers’ perceptions about the consequences for their relationships with students and their thoughts about the possibility of change.

Maggie is most critical of the reduction of schooling to schooling and its effects on her practice. As she indicated above, “we’re not only asked to do this incredible amount of paperwork, but also teach the curriculum and teach the child.” She also indicated that “we don’t use [the language of paperwork] with our students.” Nevertheless, reduction interferes with instruction. Maggie indicated that there was less freedom to teach in ways she believed best for her students, and increasing pressure to realign her teaching to prepare for testing.

She speaks here at length:

The whole idea of Dewey-ism – the project-based learning – I love, but project-based learning is in-depth learning that takes a lot of time, where you just cover maybe one topic for the entire year. It’s been two years since I’ve done my project-based community project. I used to do this project, huge project-based learning on community where the kids actually set up their own businesses and made products and we used money.... They had to keep track and they had a money log everyday. ... They had to buy their property space in the classroom. It was huge! We had a plant store, we had a jewelry store.... And we had field research – I got parents to drive... do you know the bureaucracy I had to go through to get that? So two kids went to the post office – those kids who were researching the post office went there and they came back and they had to teach the class, and set up a post office, and make their own stamp.... And then we invited the parents in to shop. They made really nice – we had a card shop. They made beautiful jewelry. And those kids that were not paper/pencil, boy were they great with hands-on.... And oh! Oh! I had my kids come to me and tell me, “that was the best thing we ever... that’s the only thing I remember.” It took about 8 weeks. I couldn’t take eight weeks out of the curriculum now and do that. I really feel like I can’t do it. Eight weeks... I can’t take 8 weeks now.

Maggie invokes Dewey as her source for classroom experiences that are meaningful. For

Dewey (1964):

Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind.... The only significant method is the method of the mind as it reaches out and assimilates.... The source of whatever is dead, mechanical, and formal in schools is found precisely in the subordination of the life and experience of the child to the curriculum.... “Guidance and control” are the catchwords of [the method of curriculum], “freedom and initiative” of [the method of the child]” (p. 343).

Maggie described her frustration with the current state of affairs:

I'm not a happy public school teacher because I'm teaching in a way I don't want to and don't believe in. But I've got kids who are going to go take a test the next year so I have to do things – I have to cut out a lot of stuff to get them ready.

As a second grade teacher, Maggie anticipates the testing that begins in another year for her students and feels compelled to change her teaching to prepare students for the tests that begin in third grade. The project she designed to introduce students to community as a concept seems to have no place in that preparation; eight weeks is too much to sacrifice. She does not believe in this way of teaching, but she has to “get them ready.” Tests reduce the curriculum such that students cannot recognize community – as they developed it – within the limitations of a standardized test. For Dewey, and for Maggie, “whatever is dead, mechanical, and formal in schools is found precisely in the subordination of the life and experience of the child to the curriculum.”

Rebecca also lamented that the language and justifying intentions of the audit culture are so formulaic as to reduce practice: “it just takes time away from doing your job right.” Doing your job right exists outside the realm of the paperwork. Other teachers talked about spaces where they *could* effect change:

Stella: Within their own classroom.

Molly: That's where you have the most.

Stella:Sometimes you have some agency within your county –

Molly : Not -

Stella: - Not always.

Molly: Not always. It sort of depends on the title that goes behind your name. Who you are...

Stella: What school you're from, what your experience is.... How you go about expressing your opinion.

Molly: And how far from the norm your opinion is. It's easier to effect a little bit of change than to turn things totally upside down.

Stella and Molly agree that the one place they feel they can effect change is in the classroom, the teachers' domain. The prerequisites for effecting change are seen as tangible, "the title that goes behind your name," and less tangibly your experience, how you express your opinions, how far you are from the norm. It seems clear that the only change to be effected in the public domain is "a little bit of change" that avoids challenging the status quo. Molly and Stella are not only talking about administrators having the power to change things, but those with the right title, with the right experience, with the proper tone and with opinions that align with the norm have more success. Molly continued to reflect on teachers' limitations in relation to change:

I think it's very difficult for one teacher's voice to change anything major in education. You just have to rally. You have to round up enough people in the right positions in the right places to really impact that change. No matter what the facts are, no matter how logical it is....

Effecting change seems as much about process as content, for no matter the facts and its logic, unless you have enough people, and the right people, nothing major is going to change. Education's hierarchies keep enough distance between teachers and decision makers that logical change based on supporting facts requires a critical mass of supporters. A teacher's work has never been contained between the school's opening and closing bells; the work travels with teachers to after-school ball games and covers the dining room table. Rallying the appropriate critical mass is confounded by structures, but also by the patriarchal ideology that resists challenges to its order, as will be explored below.

Molly and Stella close out this section by reminding us that the hierarchy does not always win. There are times when teachers believe in something so much that they will do whatever it takes, and with the right spirit of adventure make something happen:

Molly: Sometimes I think, though, it's easier just to change it in your own classroom ... it just requires a lot of time. Even you're using language and stuff to change it, you've got to use that language to a lot of different people. It requires time. So it depends on what it is. And sometimes, if you're very much – if it is that important to you, you will do whatever it takes... just do whatever it takes to be heard and make sure it happens.

Stella: As long as it's not something that's a state mandate, or in some instances a county mandate, we can find a way usually to do whatever we want to do. If we have good reasons, some evidence that it might work, some spirit of adventure...

We might skeptically conclude that policy makers let enough change through to pacify teachers and sustain their commitment, and there are times when the skepticism seems warranted. But to reduce administrators and teachers to such a degree perpetuates the very ethos we hope to resist, patronizing educators and positing a superstructure that denies any effective change. Teachers' persistence in the face of contemporary pressures reminds us that affecting the life of a child, introducing her to the world through science and literature and music are passions not easily relinquished.

Reduction

As I've framed this chapter, "we just don't speak the same language" calls attention to the problems when teachers encounter the languages of administration. Borrowing Grumet's question, I asked what happens to language when schooling is about schooling? As this chapter shows, not only is language reduced when schooling is about schooling, but practice is affected as well. Most basically, reduction is defined as *the act of reducing complexity*, and this is the significant issue here. Its denotation in photography, as *a process*

in which an image is made proportionally smaller, also suggests a reduction in complexity, for to make practice “proportionally smaller” connotes a shrinking borne of humiliation.

Symbolization (Britzman, 2003) is the “something more” I believe language holds for us; for me it is its seductiveness. Remember that seduction means to allure, to lead astray, it is an invitation to lose innocence. When we symbolize, we allow something to represent or express something else; we imagine and play wake to a palette of temptations. We do not assume correspondence, nor collapse symbols. Is this degree of collapse, of functionality, *ever* useful? Direct correspondence may be useful for marketers, but it limits language. And in education? In this chapter, the teachers have suggested that it limits practice as well. As Britzman indicated, when “symbolic qualities are lost ... language becomes a symptom of the loss” (p. 114). But more than the effects in language is the exhausting and insidious marginalization of teachers’ passions which are the creativity of teaching and their relationships with children.

Along with the imaginary and the poetic, I have used “the symbolic” to mark what is lost when language is reduced to function; it is that something more that seduces. This connotation of the symbolic, however, is distinguished from Lacan’s (1968) theorization of the Symbolic. For Lacan (1968), the Symbolic Order represents the social world of language; a child’s entrance into this world marks his acceptance of the laws, conventions and relationships that language maintains and also requires. For Lacan, the Symbolic Order exists in relation to the Imaginary Order that is the realm of fantasy, and “the child must move out of what Lacan calls the ‘Imaginary’ life of fusion with the mother by entering ...the ‘Symbolic’ realm” (Atwell-Vasey, 1998, p. 49). By contrast, the Symbolic Order is associated with the father. To enter into the world of language, the child repudiates the

maternal relation. Both the Symbolic Order and the Imaginary Order are in tension with The Real, a state we are forever cast out of by our entrance into language.

As I have conceptualized administrative languages in this chapter, they are complicit with the Symbolic Order. For Lacan (1968), we enter the Symbolic Order when we enter the “adult world” of language. The Symbolic Order is based in the authority of symbols and on rules and conventions that guide social practice. As described in this chapter, administrative languages function to order a teacher’s social world, imposing a particular order to their work, an order based in conventions of accountability and hierarchy.

However, following Kristeva’s (1997) critique, in its masculine bias Lacan’s Symbolic Order is inadequate for understanding language and signification more fully. Kristeva argued that signification is composed of two elements, the “symbolic” *and* the “semiotic.” As with Lacan, the symbolic is associated with the grammars of signification. Words have meaning because of the relationships established in the symbolic. For Kristeva, the semiotic represents the release of bodily drives in signification. It is associated with the rhythms, tones and movement of signifying practice (Kristeva, 1997). Both the symbolic and the semiotic are required in signification as the symbolic provides language with structure, the semiotic its meaningfulness.

Kristeva’s (1997) critique is critical for it is clear that the languages of administration and the practices they engender are complicit with the patriarchal Symbolic Order. Lacan’s repudiation of the Imaginary Order mimics the repudiation of the semiotic in the contemporary audit culture. Kristeva restores the maternal through the semiotic, amplifying the bodily rhythms that give language its poetics (Stone, 2004). The semiotic calls attention

to all that the symbolic order denies or repudiates in language. Grumet (1990) describes Kristeva's impact for how we think about language and resistance:

[Kristeva] has argued that our sense of connection to the maternal voice and to the world it sang us into never disappears, but lingers in language, in culture, and in fantasy as human possibility, always erupting to undermine the grip of language, of paternal law and symbolic code (p.279).

The semiotic thus gives insight into the drives that support teachers' resistance to the pressures of the audit culture.

Spender (2000), however, returns us of the culture of accountability, hierarchy, and distance and mistrust, and reminds us why the Symbolic Order retains its status in education:

Given that language is such an influential force in shaping our world, it is obvious that those who have the power to make the symbols and their meanings are in a privileged and highly advantageous position. They have, at least, the potential to order the world to suit their own ends, the potential to construct a language, a reality, a body of knowledge in which they are the central figure, the potential to legitimate their own primacy and to create a system of beliefs which is beyond challenge. The group which has the power to ordain the structure of language, thought and reality has the potential to create a world in which they are the central figures, while those who are not of their group are peripheral and therefore may be exploited.... In the patriarchal order this potential has been realized (p. 147).

This chapter has described the confrontations between teachers and languages of administration. I have attempted to show that the languages of administration are rooted in a worldview that clings to modernity and a psychology that clings to the Symbolic Order. In education, the results of these affiliations are the contemporary culture of accountability, reinforced hierarchical structures, and distance and mistrust between teachers and other educators. The intransigence of the Symbolic Order leads to a reduction of language and a reduction of schooling. As this chapter has shown, teachers are frustrated by the infiltration of the "stronger" languages of administration on their practice. Teachers work to resist these intrusions and thwart their intent by constantly refocusing on children, keeping the classroom

as the site of their attention and intentions. Cass indicates optimism that this is just another pendulum swing in education reform, but laments that she will likely have retired before that happens: “I just hate that I won’t be around when the pendulum swings back. Having kids learn real stuff and teachers teach real stuff. I think it’s sad, the whole focus, the whole testing, the standardization... it’s counterproductive.”

This chapter has also drawn from feminist critiques to the Symbolic Order to consider how we already work to confront existing structures and might continue to do so. My argument is that as educators we must watch for instances and opportunities for the semiotic and amplify its presence; we must restore symbolization and return schooling to the world. The next chapter describes teachers’ confrontations with the languages of the academy that often try to do just that. As Chapter VI will show, however, those efforts are also fraught with unintended consequences.

CHAPTER VI

GIFTS OF LANGUAGE

In *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Marcel Mauss (1967/1925) described practices of gift exchange characteristic of archaic societies that he called “*total social phenomena*” (p. 1, emphasis in original). The practices comprised political, economic, social and relational acts of exchange that went beyond simple exchange of goods. Mauss named this *total prestation*:

What they exchange is not exclusively goods and wealth, real and personal property, and things of economic value. They exchange rather courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts; and fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract. Finally, although the prestations and counter-prestations take place under a voluntary guise they are in essence strictly obligatory (p. 3).

In these societies, gifts are thus laden with intentions beyond the presentation of tokens denoting celebration or gratitude. In the societies he studied, gifts connote obligations – of giving, receiving, and reciprocation. Gifts become *commodities* in an economy of exchange and *gestures* in a politics of exchange.

In *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, Lewis Hyde (1979) offers a new theory of gifts. He transforms ideas about the value and power of gifts from the market economy to “an economy of the creative spirit: to speak of the inner gift that we accept as the object of our labor, and the outer gift that has become a vehicle of culture” (p. xvii). This gift-giving projects inward, through the accomplishment of our labor, and outward,

projecting something of us into the world. Hyde goes on to name the “cardinal property of the gift:”

Whatever we have given is supposed to be given away again, not kept. Or if it is kept, something of similar value should move on in its stead... its momentum transferred.... As it is passed along, the gift may be given back to the original donor, but this is not essential. In fact, it is better if the gift is not returned but is given instead to some new, third party. The only essential is this: *the gift must always move* (p. 4, emphasis in the original).

The defining characteristic of the gift is its fluidity, its passing from hand to hand to hand. Distinguished from the norms of gift exchange described by Mauss, Hyde’s theory of gifts does not obligate the recipient to respond to the original gift-giver, thus containing the exchange in the original dyad. Rather this theory depends on the life of the gift that continues its projection into the world.

In this chapter, I revisit the organizing statement of this research, “we just don’t speak the same language” in its original context, in which M.Ed. teachers called attention to the differences between teachers’ languages and languages of the academy. I invoke Mauss and Hyde in a consideration of how conversations between teachers and the university participate in gifting rituals with a particular focus on the gifts of language. How might gifts of language be considered total prestations between these groups that “carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations” (Mauss, 1967, p. 3)? Or borrowing Hyde’s lens, how might we keep the gifts of language in motion, moving from person to person in an endless flow?

The chapter will be organized by considering the more challenging aspects of gift exchange introduced by Mauss, followed by its more expansive connotations framed by Hyde’s theory of gifts. I stipulate at the outset that this dualistic presentation compresses the complexity of gift exchange; as a practice it engages a range of effects and emotions. At the

same time, it is my hope that in this final chapter that share teachers' reflections on language, we leave uncomfortable but in the end optimistic, imagining ways we can continue to struggle together in thinking about education.

Total Prestations

[The professors I respected were those] who were speaking... they were able to speak with authority about classroom practices, rather than some professors who were trying to speak with authority about classroom practices that they really didn't have the authority to do. Sometimes the language used was totally ridiculous. It was almost like they knew they didn't have that authority and the way to try to fix that was to use higher language and use the more theoretical posturing... and it caused conflicts. It's just easier... the closer you are to the classroom, the more realistic [you are] – you understand the discussion, you understand there might need to be a little time for venting if we all just came from school. You understand the need for that.... (Molly, July 2005, personal communication)

The themes that are the focus of this section are introduced in Molly's statement above. Molly's primary criterion was that professors understand classroom practices; in addition, a certain *proximity to classrooms* authorized their teaching. Molly indicates that faculty would at times play the theory card and invoke *status* and she speculates that the impulse was borne of defensiveness for not knowing the classroom: "the way to try to fix that was to use higher language." As we will see, contextualizing instruction and making it relevant to teachers is the connection that diminishes the theoretical distance between university and public school classrooms and flattens the status differential between university faculty and classroom teachers. Neither divide can be eliminated completely but contextualization provides a bridge for communication. As this section shows, language becomes a proving ground of sorts, at times complicating the exchange of gifts between

teachers and university faculty. Issues of relevancy are discussed in the latter parts of the chapter.

Status

Status emerged as the organizing category for the women in this study when they described their response to languages of the academy. This section begins with Stella and Molly discussing a memory from early in the program:

Stella: I wish I could go back and remember the word that [our classmate] asked what the definition was and was told to “look it up.” Do you remember that?

Molly: I do remember that! I don’t remember what the word was, but I remember when it happened.... I can close my eyes and picture that one! ... That set the tone. That set the tone for any question the entire rest of the time. It set the tone that “you are here to listen, not to learn.” If you can’t ask questions openly in that kind of protected environment, you really can’t learn. A lot of people learn by talking out loud and interacting, and if the tone is set that you are here to listen only, it cuts down that learning.

Stella: I have to tell you what, I felt like the dumb kid on the back row in that class anyway, and then to have [our classmate] shot down. “I’m just going to sit back here and hope I’m under the radar.” That’s how I felt.

Molly: You stop learning and work to survive. I don’t care what I learn as long as I’m not told to “look it up.”

This vignette tells of a confrontation based in language. In the story, a teacher asked a professor the meaning of a word and in response was told to “look it up.” Five years later, Stella and Molly still flinch at the memory. So strong is the memory that Molly can “close her eyes” and return to that classroom. While there is no description of the tone of “look it up” – was it said to chastise? with humor? in anger? – Stella and Molly remember it as a rebuke that silenced and demeaned the students (especially the woman who asked the question) and compromised learning for the rest of the course. In this instance what the professor had to offer seemed a loaded gift. There were expectations that the student, and

students, do it differently next time. This seemed more like the present that comes with “some assembly required.”

The communicative context matters when considering other interpretations of a professor’s “look it up” response to a student, and I want to take a minute to imagine a similar situation from a professor’s point of view. Suppose that students were discussing a text assigned for a course, a reading prized by the professor and intended as a gift to help address a significant issue in the field. Paulo Freire’s (1990) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a text that comes to mind. For a student to be told to “look up” *conscientização*, for example, would be unconscionable. But what if the word were oppression? A professor might expect a student to spend some time parsing this concept before coming to class, or to bring a question about oppression to the class for discussion. Without justifying the response we can imagine conditions that might frustrate a professor’s intentions and provoke a defensive response to students’ seeming lack of preparation or even rejection of the proffered gift of the text. “Look it up” might speak to the professor’s anxiety. There may also be a certain melancholy to gift-giving, for when a gift is sent into the world, we often lose connection to its path. This poignancy is familiar for educators because students are always moving through from one grade to the next, from one degree to the next, and so on. As we will see at the end of the chapter, this movement is a condition of the gift. But thinking of students as gifts that pass through our lives can amplify the poignancy of their rejection of our gifts.

Molly and Stella’s example shows how instruction obligates teachers in an economy of gift exchange, placing them in debt to the university’s, or the professor’s knowledge. Mauss (1967) described examples of total prestations organized in the ceremonies of *potlatch*. Potlatch comes from the Chinook word “to nourish” or “to consume” (p. 4).

Potlatch are tribal gatherings, organized around sumptuous feasts and ceremonies. The events, for they could go on for days and weeks, were hosted by wealthy tribal leaders, and clans from all around came to participate in the feast. Although arranged around ceremonies and feasts, potlatch was actually used to arrange tribes hierarchically in the tribal nation: “Essentially usurious and extravagant, it is above all a struggle among nobles to determine their position in the hierarchy to the ultimate benefit... of their own clans” (pp. 4-5). The sorting out of clans led to antagonisms and competitions as clans “confront[ed] and opposed each other” (p. 3).

It may overplay the intentions of the university to invoke potlatch when considering confrontations between teachers and the academy, but there are ways we can consider a program of study a form of potlatch. Like potlatch, the university presents an array and abundance of resources to teachers through courses and professors. Graduate study is organized around, or organizes, hierarchical arrangements between professors and their students (in this case teachers), and between students according to various criteria, including district, length of service, grades earned in the program, and more. Professors themselves also negotiate hierarchies of rank and subject matter, among others. If we acknowledge that systems of education are hierarchically structured, the university is not directly incorporated into the teacher-principal-district-state-federal lineage, but exists alongside it, responsible for guiding most of those parties through some sort of preparation program. Institutionally, if there were no students, to there would be no professors, although for most professors that concern is not always immediate or explicit.¹¹ In relation to pre-service or in-service

¹¹ Policies that require minimum enrollment for a course to go forward make the connection more explicit leading professors to advertise their courses to students as the market creeps into university spaces.

teachers, however, the university is nevertheless positioned in some arrangement above those individuals. Professors are contractually bound to teach their students.

It is important to consider what it means to profess. In its original usage, to profess was to take a vow to a religious order, to profess allegiance to that order. A professor, then, is one who makes an open declaration of her allegiance to some principle. Professors take a vow to their discipline and are responsible for sharing that body of knowledge, or a segment of that knowledge, with students.¹² Embedded in the definition is a loyalty to the subject – science professors profess the wonders of science to their students. To access that knowledge, students are in debt to professors for those bodies of knowledge and for the grades that indicate their proficiency in relation to content.

Total prestation involves three dimensions: giving (e.g., professor's knowledge of a discipline), receiving (e.g., student's learning), and reciprocation. There cannot be an equivalent return from student to professor of theoretical knowledge for the learners do not yet have an equivalent store of knowledge. The return-gift becomes something else. A primary gift students return to any professor is attentiveness, but as Molly indicated above, listening is different from learning, and only paying attention is not enough for students: "if you can't ask questions openly in that kind of protected environment, you really can't learn. A lot of people learn by talking out loud and interacting, and if the tone is set that you are here to listen only, it cuts down that learning." Simply paying attention is not enough for most professors as well, for any variation of progressive education requires students' active participation. So how to account for the "look it up" exchange described above?

¹² I was introduced to this idea in my first semester of graduate (M.Ed.) study by Robert Nash (see Nash, 1996), and its significance is enriched for me now.

Another possible explanation is that just as the teacher is fiercely protective of the child as described in Chapter IV, so is the professor fiercely protective of the discipline, its theories and language, to which she is avowed. This does not justify the effects of “look it up,” but it is perhaps a testament to the significance that language comes to have in a professor’s life. Following this through, what I am calling gifts of language can be better understood as gifts of theory.

There are other ways to think about academics’ languages beyond the charge that they invoke status (although that is a real concern). Molly and Stella’s exchange suggests critiques of languages of the academy that claim it is too narrowly-focused and esoteric to be of use to plural publics (Lather, 1996, 2000). Some critics of Lather, for example, argued that her feminist message is lost under the weight of the complex language of poststructuralist theory suggesting that Lather uses language in ways that are separatist and esoteric. Lather (1996), responded by “troubling” the idea that “clarity” in language is a necessity, when working with teachers or other audiences. She argued that “such urgings [for clarity] are about the relationship of theory and practice, language and power, and the need for new languages to create spaces for resistance and the (re)construction of knowledge/power relations” (p. 527). While acknowledging the challenges presented by “academic language,” Lather also takes on calls for transparency: “Clear speech is part of a discursive system, a network of power that has material effects.... What is the violence of clarity, its non-innocence? (pp. 528-529). There is also the issue of symbolization as described by Britzman (2003), used in this work throughout Chapter V. Symbolization opens language up and brings its complexities to bear. It projects us into a world of possibilities and defends against the reduction of language and practice.

The words of “high theory” *do* have a particular meaning, and one word can, and often does, do the work of ten. Receiving that word puts the student in debt. However, using the word also places the speaker in debt to her audience, obligated in the hermeneutic circle to open the multiple connotations of that one word; meaning is lost if she fails to take time to explore those connotations. Looking words up can be very rewarding. You discover its origins, its usages through time, its multiple meanings. One word can do the work of ten, but only when we take time to elaborate the possibilities of the one word and explain our investments in its use. Molly shared an example of the hazards of failing to make adequate connections:

I’m trying to think.... There were some, because the concepts were so – I don’t even remember the words! Even when we were reading Zinn’s *People’s History*, I can’t even remember – there were times when some of the terms, I don’t even remember the term because I never really understood it. If you don’t... it never actually got in that file folder in my brain. I remember the terms I did understand, but I don’t even remember what some of the concepts were because I never got a clear grasp of them. I’m sure I could go back and I would recognize them, but I can’t even remember the words.

Molly was unable retain the language, to incorporate – or set aside – the theory, because she never understood the terms. Zinn’s *People’s History of the United States* was a text she liked, but there was not enough exploration of the terms to move them into her mental “file folder.”

Just as teachers are frustrated by the persistent demands of the curriculum and its accountability requirements in their practice when they know that teaching and learning can be so much more, so too are professors eager to share their discipline, and frustrated by limitations of time. Courses in the M.Ed., for example, were often compressed into a few short weeks to accommodate teachers’ and professors’ schedules such that there never seemed enough time to adequately cover important material. It is important to remember that

“we just don’t speak the same language” was not limited to the “theory” classroom. Other courses based on “methods” also showed differences between teachers and the academy.

Cass shares an example of another encounter between teachers and the academy:

Assessment and Accountability was one that, whew, I felt so stupid, I just felt stupid. And I didn’t feel stupid back there in Reinventing Teaching – it was definitely about the philosophical arguments – or heated discussions, I won’t say arguments – among the three leaders.... But I lapped it up! But when we got to Assessment and Accountability, for one thing we were still in school, we were doing EOGs, we were doing final grades....

For this cohort, the Assessment and Accountability course was compromised by scheduling that compressed a five-week course into two. Confounding that limitation, the teachers were still teaching, neck deep in End of Grade tests and final grading. The teachers as learners were thus subject to competing pressures, positioned at a deficit to both the school district and the university, circumstances that likely played into Cass feeling “so stupid.” But as Cass noted above, she “lapped up” the philosophical arguments, or “heated discussions” in the Reinventing Teaching course. Certain courses do engage us differently, their theories coming to us in a format or at a time when they are useful to us, or needed by us. Cass uses the language of consumption, “I lapped it up!” when she encountered theory that was nourishing to her. Hyde (1979) tells us that folk tales about gift giving almost always equate gifts with food to be consumed (potlatch too revolves around elaborate banquets). I will return to the idea of consumption below.

The next section does not leave the issue of status and hierarchy, but considers it in slightly different terms. In Molly’s original statement, she indicated that a primary criterion was that professors understand classroom practices in a way that comes from their *proximity to classrooms*. Degrees of proximity authorized professors’ teaching and made language more – or less – relevant to teachers. In the explorations of teachers’ criticisms, it is worth

remembering that this chapter is moving in the direction of considering the gifts from the academy that live on.

Proximity to Classrooms

“I just think that some of the professors have been living in the world of the academic which has different time schedules and different stresses.”
(Molly, July 2006, personal correspondence)

This section considers professors’ perceived distance from public school classrooms to their reception, and the reception of their ideas, by teachers. Maggie, for example, questions the degree to which university faculty are in tune with the experiences of classroom teachers in today’s accountability-driven schooling. She asked:

I’m wondering how much the university really understands the impact of what testing does? Do they? They do come from a very research/theory based... it sounds wonderful when you’re sitting there in class, but... do they really understand what this is amounting to?

Maggie questions professors’ orientation to the ‘real world’ of teachers and the pressures they encounter, speculating that their theoretical understanding of accountability is not sufficient for its on-the-ground consequences. Grounded in the life of the classroom, teachers in this study related best to faculty members who could demonstrate knowledge of the classroom and appreciate its complexity.

Professors’ proximity or distance from the classroom is confounded by several issues, for in addition to teaching students, professors are contractually obligated to the university for (at least) two other domains: service – to various communities, and research – contributions to the scholarly community. The importance of one domain relative to the others is determined by the university’s mission, and professors align their work to those expectations. University’s such as ours that are categorized as Research I prioritize research in the tri-partite division of responsibilities. A professors’ *raison d’etre* in this system

require her specialization in a discipline; it is where she professes her expertise. Teachers, as learners, are understandably caught up in the teaching responsibility for it is also their chosen profession. Professors' responsibility to conduct research and the realities of "publish or perish" appear to get in the way of teaching students.

Molly was especially concerned that a professor's level of specialization interfered with their connections to the 'real world' and their ability to relate to classroom practice. A PBS documentary became emblematic for the distance she saw between elementary school and university classrooms:

On this one particular show, *History Detectives*, the people ended up speaking with this professor, I don't even remember where she was from – it doesn't matter. But she was a professor, a specialist in women's – what was it exactly? Women's sexuality from 1700 to 1800. And my husband looked at me and said, "Are you kidding me? How can someone even have a job that's that specialized?" That's why professors just can't relate. They're specializing in things like that and that's so irrelevant! It's not irrelevant, it's just so minute in comparison to the wide range of historical topics. And I thought about this and thought, you know, there's something to be said for being too specialized. If you're specialized in language development of kindergartners, that's great, but that really doesn't relate to the mass of education that is happening around you.

Molly explicitly challenges the relevance of professor's specialization, indicating that the specialization interfered with relating – to students, to the larger world. Molly argued that a teacher's attention must be broader, to "the mass of education that is happening around you."

She continued:

I think that some faculty are there more for their own research than for their own students' learning. I think, don't teach classes at the university level if your interest is not in the students in your class learning. And that's true for teachers and that's true for university professors. And I think some professors are there to get the article and be published and they're there because they have to teach x number of classes per semester and they really don't have their students' best interests at heart.

Actually what Molly describes can be accurate. Depending on the requirements of the university in which they work, some faculty are there more for their own research than for teaching. They are there “to get the article published” and they do “have to teach x number of classes per semester.” These are the very real requirements of faculty appointments. It is also true that professors’ name their preference for which comes first: teaching, research, or service, based on the universities to which they apply. A position at a Research I institution bestows prestige and allows faculty to pursue their specialties in the form of resources and reduced course loads – that is, *less* time teaching. However, even though I am not a professor, I challenge Molly’s assertion that focusing on the specialty means faculty members are not interested in “the students in their class learning” or that they “don’t have their students’ best interests at heart.” I do not believe that attending to research precludes attending to students. I cannot, and will not, generalize across professors. There may be some who really do “care less.” Molly’s critiques, however, follow Noddings’ (1984), reminder that caring is an active and deliberate act.

It is worth imagining variables other than professors’ status and role obligations that confound communication between teachers and professors. Molly’s concerns about specialization invoke status and hierarchy in education. In what follows, Molly’s observations echo her concerns raised in Chapter IV about differences between teachers at various levels of schooling, arguing that elementary school teachers have the broadest knowledge base and most intimate knowledge of their students:

I think there’s a correlation between elementary teachers who are not subject-specialized, normally. [To Stella:] You and [your partner] sort of did that, but even then you were still doing science [one of Stella’s subjects on her 4th grade team]. It isn’t like you were [only] doing reading for your kids. And I think that carries on up through to professors. They’re so specialized that they feel like they have so much more authority and knowledge that no one could

even – that elementary teachers surely couldn't comprehend because we're not as specialized in their area, because we've been trained in all the areas.

For Molly, a professor's specialization takes him away from students, toward ideas. Molly values her knowledge as a generalist, especially because it allows her to have such an impact on children's lives: "I feel like for us it's the student comes first and *then* how can we [deliver content].... We're trying to develop character and good little human beings first and then also teach them all - simultaneously teach them all."

Molly's critique evokes notions of separate spheres that emerged in feminist theory. Following this framework, the university is the adult world, the public world, the male world, while the elementary school remains the child's world, the private world, the female world. Virginia Woolf (1966) gave us permission to ask if "the procession of educated men" (p. 57) is the path we want to follow. Molly spoke of teachers' choices to accept, the languages of the university, joining the club:

I think the more you speak their language, the more accepted you are. That goes back to the whole teacher's pet thing, even with university professors. Their pets might be the one's who talk the talk, and even mention the PhD and that they may want to go on, to become part of their club permanently.

This, again, echoes Woolf's questions about the risks and benefits of speaking the languages of the academy: "For we have to ask ourselves ...do we wish to join that procession, or don't we? On what terms shall we join the procession? Above all, where is it leading us, the procession of educated men?" (Woolf, 1966, p. 62). Molly's statement offers several possibilities for thinking about obligations in language. Greater acceptance is based on fluency in the language. As we saw in Chapter IV, this was true in teachers' communities as well. Molly also framed this as a choice, indicating greater and lesser degrees of participation. Finally, invoking the image of the teacher's pet reminds us that if language, or

instruction, is imagined as a gift from a professor to the teacher, or from a teacher to a student, acceptance of that gift is likely to endear the student to the teacher, creating or strengthening a relationship. As this chapter's final sections will show, teachers also find ways to accept the languages of the academy that do not obligate them to join the procession, but rather accept the languages as gifts to keep in circulation.

I have used Molly extensively in this section to articulate teachers' concerns about the interaction between teachers and the academy. For the women in this study, the languages of the academy that they confronted were often seen as status-seeking or out-of-touch with classroom life; languages of the academy did not always map onto the reality of teachers' lives. I want to use critical theory and feminist theory to consider here two other factors that may bear on the teacher-professor relationship that keep us in the world of potlatch – with its obligations and antagonisms. The first returns us to the issue of interpellation introduced in Chapter IV. The second returns us to the Symbolic Order.

Interpellation

Recalling Althusser (2001) from Chapter IV, interpellation is ideology confronting the individual. Teachers' reactions to the academy described thus far can be interpreted as accusation, their "hey you!" to the academy, confronting the university with accusations that question professors' priorities. Professors interpellate teachers with ideologies of their own, and teachers also respond. In this section, I want to suggest that interpellation in these instances can signal problems of betrayal, with teachers and professors disappointed by each others' choices. Teachers are betrayed by professors' repudiation of the public school classroom; professors by teachers' ingratitude to gifts of language. I want to argue that each

response is borne of the accuser’s passion: the professor’s presumed love of theory and the teacher’s putative love of the child. The comparison of their passions can be represented in the figure below as they correspond to Lacan’s imaginary and symbolic orders:

	Imaginary Order Realm of fantasy, of feelings, needs and wants	Symbolic Order The authority of symbols; entrance into the social, paternal world of Law, rules and conventions
For Teachers	Represented by Child	Represented by Theory
For Professors	Represented by Theory	Represented by Child

Figure 1: The Strict Binary

In Lacanian (1968) theory, the Symbolic Order represents assumption of adult Law; the best alternative to the Real (to which we have lost access based on our entrance into language); the Symbolic Order is the place we are all trying to get to, our “proper place in the world” as it were. Entrance into the Symbolic Order means severing ties to the “oceanic, illusory fusion with maternal life” (Atwell-Vasey, 1998, p. 49), the realm of fantasy, feelings, needs and wants characteristic of the Imaginary Order.¹³

When the teacher-professor relationship is framed as a binary, the teacher’s needs and wants are directed to the child; the child is the Imaginary. The academy then becomes the Symbolic Order, the thing she *should* want. From the professor’s perspective, again following the binary, the Imaginary is theory, while the Symbolic is represented by the child. As the Imaginary, theory represents the professor’s wants, the locus of her attention. In this scheme, the child symbolizes the Symbolic responsibility to the specifics of practice that

¹³ The arrangement I suggest reveals my bias against the patriarchal bias of Lacan’s orders for in this description I privilege the Imaginary as that which we want most and resist leaving.

denies a professor's access to the Imaginary. In this framework, each is left to resist the others' "adult" world because of what must be left behind. This oppositional construction is the inadequacy of this model, for in fact it creates artificial binaries, artificial distance, artificial choice. There *is* a politics of interaction in the university classroom that is organized by the binary (i.e., professors "bring" theory, teachers "bring" the child), but allowing the binary to be the only frame for our interpretation of this relationship masks the ambivalence of both professors and teachers for the choices they make. It is likely that the choices made by the other make each anxious about their own choice, so we need models that complicate the binary.

In *Redeeming Daughters*, Grumet (1988) describes traditional narratives of the child redeemer, a "vision of the child leading and healing a trouble world. We meet it regularly in our assumption that by educating our children we are preparing 'tomorrow's leaders,' an epithet that obligates the next generation to redeem us and the world" (pp. 153-154). In the traditional narrative, the child learns the lessons appropriate to equip him for the task. But "the great enemy of the child redeemer is time. By the time that the child... is sufficiently powerful to be an active, influential participant in society, he is an adult." As an adult, the redeeming child ends up preserving the world as he found it; he is unable to redeem the fathers' transgressions. Grumet suggest that we might "turn to the unsung sisters of these cherubic boys for redemption" (p. 157), listening to their counter-narratives to the traditional savior myth. This choice, however, is burdened by the "lies" of the unsung sisters, the lie that talks back to traditional narrative. Refusing to tell the truths we would hear, that we have already ingested in our entry into the adult world, these unsung sisters surrender to the imaginary, telling fanciful stories that belie requirements of adulthood, of the Symbolic

Order. The consequences of these transgressions are harsh, for these daughters are repudiated by their mothers and grandmothers:

The accusing mother and grandmother repudiate the world of talking birds because their songs are too familiar and threaten the defenses that these women have developed to tolerate loneliness and to live in a world that divides culture from nature, domesticity from mystery, private from public (p. 160).

For the mothers, who have already relinquished the imaginary and chosen to embrace the Symbolic Order, the daughter's lie – her refusal to make the same choice and tell the conventional story – represents “a chosen separation, a willful withdrawal from the adult world of the mother” (p. 158). Grumet's argument, however, is that we might be better served by following the daughters into worlds hidden from “the maternal legislation that declared them forbidden territories” (p. 160). Doing so might redeem us.

I share this text to consider how the accusations between teachers and professors may be responses to the betrayal each experiences when confronted by the others' ideology. Based on the analogy drawn between teachers' absorption with the child and professors' absorption with language, I have already suggested how this can be represented in a binary structure. In the binary, the teacher's “lie” is represented by her refusal to follow the professor into the life of theory, and she repudiates the professor's embrace of an academy that does not adequately attend to the child, the teacher's imaginary (see grid above). Professors respond to this call and become self-aware of their choice to leave or distance themselves from the classroom when they enter the academy. Professors have their own fanciful stories, their own lies that counter traditional narratives of the classroom. In the binary, professor's “lies” are their embrace of the theoretical that talks back to a teacher's invocation of the child. Their “lies” reject identification with the classrooms in which many

once taught, and perhaps to the classroom's association to domestic life. Teachers' respond to the call because of their own attraction to what the university has to offer, including escape from child. Each make choices, but the choices then limit the extent to which the other's choice can be an Imaginary, making any choice anxiety ridden. If we end the story here, with the binary, we are left with either/or choices. Finding that inadequate for the complexities of the exchange, I consider the relationships if we introduce Kristeva's semiotic.

Kristeva (1984) helps us reject the binary by arguing that signification is composed of two elements, the "symbolic" *and* the "semiotic." As discussed in Chapter V, Kristeva's symbolic order is associated with the grammars of signification; because we have the symbolic order, words have meaning in relation to other words. But Kristeva does not require us to reject the maternal relation and live only in the world of the symbolic. For Kristeva, the semiotic represents the release of bodily drives, their rhythms, tones and movements, in signification, "it runs under the symbols of conventional knowledge and discourse" (Grumet, 1988. p. 162). *Both* the symbolic and the semiotic are required in signification as the symbolic provides language with structure, the semiotic its meaningfulness.

Responses to interpellation are uncomfortable for professors and teachers because lodged in the Symbolic Order, they create loneliness and requires us to live in a world divided. However it also seems that teachers and professors can be redeeming daughters to the other: "In showing us the world as they would have it, [the redeeming daughters] reveal the world that we fled because we were not brave enough to pitch our tents and raise our

flags there. Their lies can become our knowledge” (Grumet, 1988, p. 162). This is the lesson of Kristeva’s model of signification, that both the symbolic and semiotic are required.

I give Molly the last word here as she reminds us that bridging this gap requires attention to the symbolic and semiotic, a willingness to listen and put aside prejudices:

I think there is resistance when you pick up on the fact that someone is trying to talk over your head, or someone is trying to use a language – not even that you’re not able to understand, but that you don’t currently – you’re not in that world. Even in relationship to some of the professors, it wasn’t that we weren’t able to understand what they were talking about, but with some it felt like it was a purposeful, “I’m going to speak words I know are not in your everyday vocabulary to prove a point - or to elevate myself.” And that leads to resistance.

Bridging the distance between the two classrooms, may require each listening to the others’ lies. Listening to the lies does not require acceding to them, although tolerance does open the hermeneutic circle. However the context of these exchanges, their communicative situation, positions both teachers and professors in defensive positions. Within the context of education alone they are implicated in sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting situations that affect interactions. The actual grid is actually much larger and more complex than the simple tables in this chapter. One task is to consider how we might change the communicative situation to more readily hear the lies. This will be taken up in Chapter VII.

For all that I would like to leave us here, hopeful that listening to each others’ lies might redeem us, there is yet another factor that further complicates the teacher-professor relationship, and once again we return to the Symbolic Order, this time in the guise of anti-intellectualism that operates through the languages of administration.

Anti-Intellectualism

Another factor that confounds relationships to the academy – teachers’ and others’ – is the anti-intellectualism characteristic of U.S. society (Hofstadter, 1963; Pinar, 2004). Hofstadter (1963) posited that society is inherently conservative, interested in maintaining rather than changing the status quo. As beneficiaries of this conservative bent, business and religious leaders work to marginalize intellectuals who advance new theories and advocate change. Pinar (2004) ties anti-intellectualism among teachers to this “coalition of business, religious, and cultural reactionaries [who] have focused on the schools, where they have forced teachers – through so-called “school reform” initiatives – to do their bidding” (p. 164). He goes on to describe the effects of “bottom line” education: “By tying the curriculum to student performance on test scores, teachers are forced to abandon the intellectual freedom to choose what they teach, how they teach, and how they assess student learning” (p. 164). Pinar does not let the academy off the hook for complicity with business interests, characterizing “mainstream teacher education” as “anti-intellectual vocationalism” (p. 165).

I want to argue here that these conditions intervene in the professor – teacher relationship, becoming the absent father that mediates both teachers’ and professors’ interactions with each other and with education. We have already seen the effects of this order for teachers’ relationships to students and each other in the preceding chapter. While the Symbolic Order has a long-standing presence in structures of the university, the growth of the audit culture (Green, 2005; Popkewitz, 2000; Strathern, 2000) increasingly insinuates itself into professors’ lives, especially when considering faculty in schools of education. The figure below suggests this new arrangement:

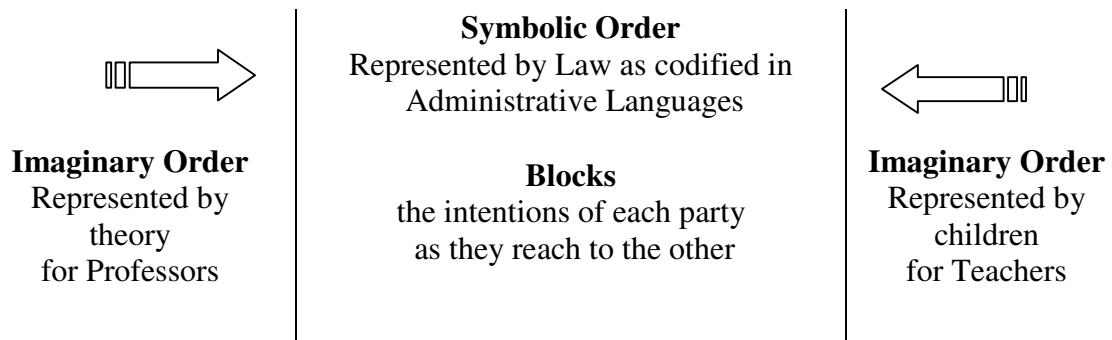


Figure 2: The Mediated Binary

As indicated earlier, the binary construction that ties teachers to children and professors to theory is too romantic and too simplistic when considering the complex ambitions each brings to education. In this representation, both teachers and professors retain their “primary” imaginary, but interests in one do not preclude the other as is required by the binary. This representation shows the presence of the Symbolic Order both professors and teachers may resist but must confront nonetheless, codified in administrative languages.

This model, too, is limited, for Lacan (1968) tells us that access to the Symbolic, to a unified and separate sense of wholeness, means repudiating the needs and wants of the Imaginary. But this sense of wholeness requires acceptance of the Law of the father (also known as the Phallus). So we move from a strictly binary relation where teachers and professors oppose each other, shielding their Imaginaries from the other, to a relation where both professors and teachers can retain the imaginary, but are prevented access to each other by the Symbolic Order. Just as teachers feel blocked by this Order, as described in Chapter V, so too can we see how university faculty may be blocked by the Symbolic Order in their efforts to embrace the child. We might even imagine that this order is what sent faculty fleeing public schools to join the “procession of enlightened men” in search of the imaginary,

of academic freedom. The phallus thus governs the whole structure and determines the rules of interaction.

Teachers in this study recognized the effects of anti-intellectualism on public school culture. In Chapter IV, Cass, Rebecca and Maggie tell the story of colleagues who accused them, interpellated them perhaps, for “gettin’ above their raising” (Cass, June 2005, personal correspondence) by pursuing graduate study. Cass and Maggie signal the anxiety that emerges in response to confrontation between languages:

Cass: Which is a word I hear used – wanna talk about language? When a new idea comes up that really works, that helps kids – is good for them, teachers say: “Oh, I just don’t feel comfortable doing that.” And I wanna say, “Dammit, it’s not about your comfort, it’s about your kids’ learning!” So I have heard that so many times from teachers – “Well, I’m just not comfortable.” And so that’s – “I’m not going to do that, I’m not comfortable!”

Maggie: What they’re saying is “I don’t know that.”

Stella and Molly also lament teachers’ resistance to research:

Stella: The medical field pays attention to research, you’ve got to say up in your field. Education people lag behind in that. They don’t spend as much time reading and thinking and dialoguing about what is new.

Amy: When you say education people, who are you talking about?

Stella: Well, classroom teachers, they don’t particularly delve into research and they get that glazed look in their eyes when you even mention it because of previous bad experiences.

Molly: Of all the people in the education field to be lagging behind because there’s not enough time to be throwing around and learning new ideas, it’s educators! You don’t want them to be the ones lagging behind! It’s thrilling if the university professors are up on it - it’s their job to impart it to pre-service and in-service teachers. But the pre-service teacher is so overwhelmed by the reality of the classroom that even if they learn it as a pre-service teacher, when they get in the classroom and they’re dealing with parents at their door at 8:00 in the morning, a lot of that just goes out the window.

Stella references “previous bad experiences” and all of the teachers describe pointless professional development sessions they have attended that patronized them and seemed to waste their time. Guttman (1987) argued that “most teachers who begin with a sense of intellectual mission lose it after several years of teaching” (p.77). She attributes this to the “intellectual stultification and emotional despair” of contemporary schools. Examples shared in this chapter also constitute bad experiences for some teachers. This is distinguished, however, from what Stella and Molly discuss above. They lament the idea of “throwing the baby out with the bathwater,” allowing previous bad experiences to prejudice you against future good ones. Cass reminds us of Vygotsky’s (1986) zone of proximal development, a theory she took with her from the M.Ed. program:

[A professor] talked about how [discomfort is] how you learn. You get all this info and you get in a big mess, then you start sorting and sifting all the mess out and that’s where the learning is actually taking place, is when you’re getting the meaning out of the mess instead of just sitting there with this big mess. And that just made so much sense to me and it helped me understand my students – the ones who get so turned off and just go, “this is stupid!” It just means I don’t understand. “This is stupid!” Cause they’re in that big mess and don’t know how to pull the meaning out.

There are actions we can take to facilitate sorting out the mess. As I have tried to show in this work, attending to language is one of them.

I return to Mauss here for it is interesting to consider the relevance of Mauss’s context to our contemporary setting. As a sociologist in France, Mauss was writing in the period between World Wars I and II; *The Gift* was first published in France in 1924. France’s economic situation had suffered as a result of World War I, and relations with the nascent Fascism in Germany also created tension (*Mein Kampf* was published in 1925). One of Mauss’s stated intentions was his hope to use past practices of gift exchange to inform the present. In Mauss’s exposition, gift exchange positions people in relation to each other and

also in relation to power and prestige. Gift-giving risks provoking antagonism and resentment given the inherent incommensurability of participant. Gift giving culls prestige, and elevates the individual. Understood in this way, gifts of theory can be understood as invoking status, especially when the presumptive subjects, teaching and learning, are not adequately contextualized.

Writing as a social democrat, Mauss was calling on the rich to “come once more, freely or by obligation, to consider themselves as the treasurers, as it were, of their fellow citizens” (p. 66). What follows is his ideological purpose in writing about gifts:

[W]e need better care of the individual’s life, health, and education, his family and its future. We need more good faith, sympathy and generosity.... And we have to find the means of limiting the fruits of speculation and usury. Meanwhile, the individual must work and be made to rely more upon himself than upon others.... The life of the monk and the life of Shylock are both to be avoided” (pp. 66-67).

Mauss was using systems of gift exchange to call attention to social conditions harmful to society and the individual. He was arguing that there must be reciprocal obligations; the rich must not hoard their wealth at the expense of those suffering in the post-war period, but individuals must also take responsibility in Mauss’s version of the Horatio Alger story.

I’ve given this contextual piece significant space here because I think some of Mauss’s warnings merit our attention today. Similar forms of social, political, and economic polarity exist in contemporary U.S. culture. Calls for generosity in the face of others’ suffering as well as calls for individual responsibility are familiar to anyone attending to the news. Mauss’s analogies have traveled well through time and the same morality and economy of exchange are at work today, including movement in the direction of individuation and individualism. These are the impulses that justify corporate influence in education, the influence that suppresses intellectualism. Teachers and faculty alike are called

on to justify their practice through systems of accountability. As Hyde (1979) indicated regarding this model gift exchange, “market exchange has equilibrium or stasis... you pay to balance the scale” (p. 9). These corporate interests attempt to reduce classroom *and* university teaching to map onto vocational interests, for the collapse of democracy into capitalism contributes to education driven by the bottom line. Ironically, the demands of contemporary audit culture may be what propels the university and public school classroom toward each other as faculty and teachers alike look for ways to talk back to the culture of accountability.

This section has focused on encounters between teachers and the university in which “we just don’t speak the same language” called attention to problems of communication, when different language constitutes betrayal. I now turn to examples of how the gift of theory lives on for alumnae of the M.Ed.

The River

“A gift that cannot be given away ceases to be a gift” (Hyde, 1979, p. xiv)

Hyde (1979) describes his theory of gifts as a river: “If we think of the gift as a constantly flowing river, we may say that the girl ... who treats it correctly does so by allowing herself to become a channel for its current” (p. 8). Following this theory, the defining characteristic of a gift is that it keeps going.

This theory of gifts allows me to share the teachers’ encounters with the academy that allowed both professors and teachers to be channels for its gifts. I begin with Stella’s follow-up to the “look it up” incident:

Even though I didn’t like being told to “look it up” or whatever, [the professor] did make the point that you are graduate students and you’re

expected to be able to use this kind of language, and pursue your resources to understand this language, because this is the language of graduate school. And so sometimes it was pushing me where I didn't want to go, but I was still getting that. There was resistance in taking that on, but the goal required it. So yeah it changed my language. I don't run around spouting all the terms all the time, obviously. But I don't feel as uncomfortable with some of those abstract ideas as I did before graduate school. Because I have a little prior knowledge, a little background now, so I don't scream off in the night when I see meta-cognition – I know what that one is!

I love the image that Stella invokes, of “screaming off in the night” when encountering unfamiliar or uncomfortable ideas. I suspect it is an experience most of us have had, I know I have. Thresholds for what merits a scream differ, but we all have them. While still rejecting the “look it up” response, Stella acknowledges her responsibilities that come with pursuit of the goal: “there was resistance in taking that on, but the goal required it.” Maggie, who was in a separate section of the “look it up” course, indicated that it prompted her to have a dictionary at her side to complete the readings. Rebecca too, indicated that the going was tough: “We had to read a lot, and sometimes several times to keep up with the language. Like the readings, sometimes I had to look at them multiple times.” As Mauss (1967) indicated, gifts are not disinterested, but require something from the recipient. In potlatch, it required reciprocity to the gift giver, but Hyde's (1979) theory of gifts points us in a different direction, requiring that we pass gifts out into the world.

After a period of two years, teachers were able to reflect back on their experiences in the M.Ed. and talk about the languages they received that were gifts from the university. Languages of the academy were most salient when they were made relevant to teachers' everyday commitments. At times, exposure to certain languages helped teachers understand their practice, as this story from Cass demonstrates:

I had heard the term [constructivism], but didn't know what it really meant. I realized once we studied it, “Oh, damn, I do this!” And I thought that it was

kind of sloppy teaching, something to hide – like not having listed every single thing, like “here’s the objective for the day, and this what you’re going to do, and the 15th minute we’re going to be on this, and on the 45th minute on this”... the 7 point lesson plan, right? ... But I didn’t realize [constructivism] was a bona fide, valid, good practice, teaching strategy. So for me it was validating, big time. Now I can put a name to it and say, “we are doing constructivist learning in math and this is how we’re doing it,” and in science, “this is how we’re doing it.”

In a similar vein, Rebecca indicated that “...it felt pretty powerful to be able to explain the whys when I talk to a parent about a reading problem or a strategy. To be able to say why.” After exploring reading in her course of study, she had more language to talk about why a child might be struggling and why a strategy might help. Molly recalls a host of concepts that she took from the M.Ed.:

Meta-cognition - to me, that was a big one. And the whole idea of assessment. My whole understanding of what assessment means and how to give the kids a target to hit. All of that – in the assessment class – became such a dear concept to me and that word grew to mean so much more than it had earlier. Even though the language was the same. And even differentiation... that word differentiation came to mean a lot to me. And then the word fair – that fairness doesn’t necessarily mean the same for everybody. My whole understanding of the word fair grew.

Hyde (1979) tells us that “the motion of the gift is... that a gift must always be used up, consumed, eaten. *The gift is property that perishes*” (p.8, emphasis in original). Mauss (1967/1925) translated potlatch as “to nourish.” Molly responded to the intentionality of the university’s gifts by consuming them. Hyde elaborates how we understand consumption:

To say that the gift is used up, consumed and eaten sometimes means that is truly destroyed..., but more simply and accurately it means that the gift perishes *for the person who gives it away*. In gift exchange, the transaction itself consumes the object. Now, it is true that something often comes back when a gift is given, but if this were made an explicit condition of the exchange, it wouldn’t be a gift (p. 9, emphasis in original)

As a gift from the university to the student, the gift of language perishes for the professor that gives it away. Expectation of a return, either an exact return or a return in-kind, means that it

wasn't a gift. This distinction is important for it distinguishes this theory of gifts from a market economy of gift-giving. In the market economy, gifts are commodities and their exchange obligates the recipient to the gift-giver. The size of the return gift matters to how the recipient is positioned in the hierarchical market economy. If we think of languages of the academy in this vein, professors expect a certain return on their investment. We might think of papers that return the professor's language an expectation of this sort, but that expectation means that what was shared cannot be understood as a gift according to Hyde. A gift is given away and keeps moving, an anathema in the market economy.

Rebecca also singled out constructivism as a concept that took on significance for her during her course of study:

I realized when we were reading about constructivism that I do like to have centers and opportunities for exploration and, you know, activities set up for students for creating their own learning... especially in language arts where they're kind of building their own knowledge. So when I started reading the articles, I realized that that's often how I like to teach, not always, but often. *So I keep using that word – at least in my head – not with everybody, but...*(emphasis added).

For Rebecca, exposure to constructivism strengthened her understanding of concepts; Hyde's description of reactions to artist's gifts helps us think about Rebecca's reception of languages of the academy:

The spirit of an artist's gift can wake our own. The work appeals, as Joseph Conrad says, to a part of our being which is itself gift and not an acquisition. Our sense of harmony can hear the harmonies that Mozart heard. We may not have the power to profess our gifts as the artist does, and yet we come to recognize, and in a sense to receive, the endowments of our being through the agency of his creation.... The daily commerce of our lives – 'sugar for sugar and salt for salt,' as the blues singers say – proceeds at its own constant level, but a gift revives the soul (Hyde, 1979, p. xii)

The academy did not give Rebecca the gift of constructivism, for it was already a part of her personal philosophy. The gift of the academy was giving her language to have a name for

her own gifts as a teacher. The gift passes from the university to the teacher who incorporates it into what she already knows; she then passes the gift along to the children in her classroom in the form of stimulating instruction.

Cass shared a similar story in this example of how coursework helped her rethink her responsibilities vis-à-vis accountability. She speaks here at length:

Going back to that first summer course where we had the [three professors], we were encouraged to consider not being test-driven. Do you remember that part? Not being driven by end-of-grade tests, and to maybe just say, “No, I’m not doing that” I just found that really validating because I’ve never been a big, big, you know – I just still believe way deep in my heart that if you teach, if you do an outstanding job teaching, your kids are going to do great. That you don’t need to do this drill and practice, drill and practice, drill and practice, and go through all these books – commercially prepared books, the what, “Buckle Up! Buckle Up!” “Sharpen Up” and “Buckle Down!”... For me it meant that, okay, there are ways to get around the test monster – the big testing machine where we put all the kids in through one little door – all the different, wonderful kids with their ideas and their dreams and their freedom and their different cutenesses and they come out the other end as a little box wrapped up all the same with brown string. The bows and the ribbons and colorful paper are all gone, they’re wrapped in brown butcher paper with twine and that’s it. They’ve gone through the education machine, they’ve gone through the testing machine. [And in the other assessment course], that one part where [the professor] explained to us about how EOG was meant to level the standard of education across a county or school system. That explanation helped me so much because then you could see how it had been twisted and distorted. But that made sense, it made absolute sense...

In the face of the testing monster that put children in one end and stripped them of “their dreams and their freedom and their different cutenesses,” reducing them to identical boxes in brown string, Cass was given gifts of language that helped her question existing practices. She already had deep-seated beliefs about good instruction: “I just still believe way deep in my heart that if you teach, if you do an outstanding job teaching, your kids are going to do great,” but the gift that flowed to her gave her new ways to talk back, to just say “I’m not doing that.” Does that mean she can deny the testing monster any access? Not if she hopes

to keep her current job. But she can continue to pass along her concerns to anyone who will listen – to colleagues, to students, to parents, to the administration, to the public – trying to change the momentum of assessment and witness the pendulum swing she anticipated in Chapter V.

Rebecca and Cass describe how the term “marginalization” took on new significance after their multicultural education course:

Rebecca: I remember – maybe this just stuck with me because of the students I had at the time, but when we took [the multicultural education] course about the marginalized students – it wasn’t something that I hadn’t thought about before, but just the idea that really, to look at someone to think about if they’ve been marginalized and what effect that would have on the way that they experience school. I think it added a new level to how I view my students and their families

Cass: And to me it was a revelation that even the term marginalized literally is talking about in the margins, along the edges, not part of the body of the... comparing it to a book – we’re really talking about the ones that don’t get to be on the page but just get to cling to the edges. I had just never realized the full meaning of the word, of the term.

Again, this gift of language spoke to Cass and Rebecca’s gifts, passing through them to affect “how I view my students and their families.”

An exchange between Maggie, Rebecca, and Cass indicates how discussions in “the Democracy course” live on in how Maggie and Rebecca analyze issues in their school:

Maggie: Here’s another word that we use a lot after the M.Ed. course, after the Democracy course. When things are going rocky at school we talk a lot about whether it’s been democratic or not. And I don’t know that we really analyzed it that way before. When some snap decisions are made or votes aren’t taken or opinions aren’t consulted...

Rebecca: Yeah, we’ll make reference to the course

Maggie: Rebecca and I talk about it because we see each other every other week.

Cass: But you don't talk about it in faculty meetings, raise your hand and say, "um, excuse me Ms. So-and-so, this really isn't democratic."

Maggie: Oh, no. And I think you agree with me Rebecca, that with [a new program they tried to bring to the school], we did it wrong.... It should have been voted upon by the staff members...

Rebecca: Right, and it wasn't so nobody bought into it.

Maggie: I kind of look at things a little bit – I'm trying to think, like – things like decision-making policies. That whole idea of the democracy class really kind of resonated a lot with me and stays with me a lot. And as decisions are being made, "are we doing this the best possible way? Who are we benefiting?" That whole process, it's more up in the front of my brain than the back of the brain. And that's not... that's the unfortunate thing that has not played out at our school – I'm still searching for a place to work where that will be the model. It's really important to me in my teaching, really very important to have that sense of, not a dictatorship but a democracy in the people I work with.

When considering colleagues' reactions to new initiatives, Maggie and Rebecca see things differently now, filtering processes through questions that ask about benefits and fairness.

For Stone (1994), teacher education needs to move in the direction of such moments, based in what she called a transformational ethic, a position "located in the realm of possibility rather than actuality in order to dream about life as it might be. It aims for a world without inequality, without hierarchy, without power differentials – it aims for transformation" (p. 225).

Both groups of teachers (Molly and Stella, and Rebecca, Cass and Maggie) indicated that a culture of intellectualism is missing from schools that are locked into 'the way that it is,' hence Cass's challenge to Maggie and Rebecca about the challenges of talking back.

However they also had dreams of "life as it might be." Molly indicated that the way time is structured in schools often frustrates thoughtful conversations among teachers. But during the

M.Ed. program, she traveled 60 miles to and from classes with Stella and found the car rides a time to elevate the level of conversation:

But if I can get a couple hours outside of school, it's nice sometimes just to be able to say, "Gosh, is this really what is best? Is this really what we're going to be doing?" And that's what we did in our car rides. We talked some about specific kids, but I enjoyed it because we actually got to talk about issues that we just didn't have time to talk about during the day-to-day of teaching. Day-to-day conversations on the playground are more about "Well, this happened today. What do you think I should do? And how about this?" You don't have the luxury of actually sitting and talking about some deeper issues during the school day.

Cass, Maggie and Rebecca admired a neighboring school district's efforts to develop more of an intellectual climate in the district. Maggie's husband works in the district, so she has some familiarity with the program:

Rebecca: You said, Maggie, that in the [neighboring school district] in whatever school your [husband] is or was in, that, as a faculty, they would get books about education or articles to read, like theories. The kind of stuff you would maybe see in graduate school. They would read it and then they would discuss it. That would be a great way to bring that – to keep everybody's toes in that language.

Cass: I think it's a great idea, yeah, a common language

Rebecca: That's important I think

Cass: And even if you're all commonly disagreeing, or if everyone disagrees...

Rebecca: Everybody's thinking

Maggie: They have to read one at the beginning of the year and then they talk about it, like "have such and such chapters ready by this faculty meeting so we can briefly discuss it," or "get together with your grade level team and discuss it." But they also go to great expense to build in time during the school day so that teachers have an opportunity – so it's not always after school.

The neighboring district's position is not represented here, so we do not know how teachers responded to this initiative, but for Rebecca, Cass, and Maggie it provided an opportunity to

honor teachers' intellectualism and share a language. Not the dangerous "shared language" that homogenizes and standardizes discourse, but a language that keeps "everybody thinking," even if "everyone disagrees."

Maggie reminds us of conditions that provoke teachers' resistance, drawing parallels between teachers and professors:

I think that in any setting, from teachers in graduate school and professors, or even teachers in classrooms... if you're up there in front of your kids and you're using things where you are not taking the time to make sure they're really following you, and you're not making sure that they understand what you're saying, then the kids rebel.... Teachers can get really vehemently opposed to even sitting in a room if the person presenting doesn't come across as wanting to be helpful.... It's in how they come across in how they use that language.

The stories shared by teachers in this chapter call attention to the obligations and rewards of gift giving. It has been framed as the confrontation between teachers and the academy in a way that maps onto debates about practice and theory. The issues raised in this chapter speak to the limitations of naming this the theory-practice divide, augmenting the space between them. The presence of the gap means we cannot abandon theory to practice or practice to theory. As these stories have indicated, teachers respond to the "something more" theory can hold. They yearn for better more complex understanding of schools and for ways to talk back. We must hear their questions of "how does this apply in my classroom?" not as a rejection of theory but a question that redirects our focus to children that animate teachers' and professors' practice. In my mind, the persistence of the 'debate' supports theorizing language in teacher education programs so that we might equip teachers, and ourselves, to understand and respond to the complexity of teaching. As Molly's statement at the very beginning of this chapter indicated, the university must make instruction relevant to teachers' lives and as Stella reminded us, teacher's must respond. Languages of the academy

connected with teachers when they diminished distance between teachers and professors, when the languages were received as gifts kept in motion.

Re-Gifting

Hyde (1979) recovers the term “Indian giver” from its negative connotation (asking someone to ‘return’ a gift), by returning us to its roots in pre-colonial America. He explains that contrary to the Western custom of receiving the gift as a personal possession, even exoticizing and concretizing its significance with its display— in a museum, say, or on the mantel – that often followed “native” gift-giving in the colonial period, Native American Indian customs saw gifts as living, moving tokens. Hyde names this the “cardinal property of the gift:”

Whatever we have given is supposed to be given away again, not kept. Or if it is kept, something of similar value should move on in its stead... its momentum transferred.... As it is passed along, the gift may be given back to the original donor, but this is not essential. In fact, it is better if the gift is not returned but is given instead to some new, third party. The only essential is this: *the gift must always move* (p. 4, emphasis in the original).

What Hyde describes here is sometimes known in contemporary U.S. culture as re-gifting, a practice that still carries more taboo than acceptance in our market economy. Hyde asks us to think of gifts as Native Americans did, as something to be passed along, shared with others we hope will enjoy the qualities of the gift. Molly closes this chapter talking about the gifts of language she received from the university that she was working to keep in circulation, gifts so significant that she wanted others to know them:

I don’t know – I don’t feel like... it did certainly increase my vocabulary per se, but I felt like the more meaningful change it made for me was changing or deepening my understanding of terms I already knew. Like assessment – I keep going back to that – but it was a pivotal thing for me in graduate school. Just my understanding of that, and what it means to assess, and the ways and the value of it.... I learned a lot of new terms – I’m not saying I already knew

them all, but the more valuable thing to me was I felt like it deepened and changed my understanding of terms I already knew. In a positive way. And in a way that I felt like it would have been meaningful for my colleagues to understand. I wish everybody could have read the Stiggins book. It created such a difference that I felt like, this is important enough for everybody.

This chapter returned “we just don’t speak the same language” to its original context, describing differences between teachers and the university. With this chapter I have tried to show instances of the breakdown, their potential causes, and other ways to think about the differences. The chapter concludes with stories of gifts of language that pass from the university to teachers and on into the world through teachers’ interactions with each other and with students. In the final chapter, I revisit the central themes of this work when considering how thinking about language might help us think about teaching and education.

CHAPTER VII

CONTRADICTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

In this work, I set out to discover how thinking about language might help us think about, and perhaps think differently about, teaching and education. Davies (2000) argues that by making visible the ways that languages position people, we can “begin to imagine how to reposition [our]selves, realign [our]selves, and use the power of discourse [we] have to disrupt those of its effects [we] wish to resist” (pp. 179-180). Davies asserts that language can position us in the social order, but that it also provides us the opportunity to position, or re-position, ourselves, to talk back to languages that would over-determine practice. This is how bell hooks (1989) describes talking back: “In the world of the southern black community I grew up in, ‘back talk’ and ‘talking back’ meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure. It meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion” (p. 5). Talking back, then, contradicts one’s positioning by others. In hooks’ case, this meant talking back to the elders of her African-American childhood, contradicting the idea that children should listen when spoken to. In this work, teachers speak *as* authority figures if they do not always *speak back* to authority figures in education administration and academia. As this work has shown, teachers also dare to disagree and have opinions. How can thinking about language help us imagine ways teachers might talk back to the strong narratives that position them as central but passive participants in education, focused only on

practice to the exclusion of theory? How might thinking about language help us imagine possibilities for thinking differently about teaching and education?

This chapter takes up the challenge of thinking differently about teaching and language by thinking about language. The first section of the chapter revisits the importance of thinking about language. I then move to thinking about teaching and education, and finally, thinking *differently* about teaching and education. This quest reveals both the contradictions *and* possibilities that emerge when we think about language and education.

Thinking about Language

As suggested by Davies above, I believe that thinking about language is fruitful for the work we do in education. In this study, I espouse particular ways of thinking about language, and a number of theorists proved critical to this work. As is indicated in this study, my orientation to language is aligned with those theories that confront modernist perspectives on language; I value language for the something more it contains and in this study I work to disrupt transparency and get beyond or talk back to taken-for-granted assumptions that might become calcified in language (Bakhtin, 1984). Mikhail Bakhtin, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Deborah Britzman frame an orientation to language that supports this work and values intersubjectivity and abundance in language and lament its reduction, and I revisit their insights here. First, Bakhtin (1984). He said:

Language... lies at the borderline between oneself and the others. The word in language is half someone else's.... Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions. It is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others (pp. 293-294).

Bakhtin marks the relational aspects of language. In this conception, language requires engagement with others in our quest to make meaning and share understanding. What's

more, language is “overpopulated with the intentions of others,” and because of this, words cannot mean just one thing. Languages and language situations have many possible profiles and reveal our necessarily perspectival orientations to language and so to language situations, including education. In this study, thinking about language in this way is modeled in the findings chapters (IV, V, and VI) that work to trouble clarity (Lather, 1996) in language.

Merleau-Ponty (1964) amplifies the abundance in language:

Coming back to the spoken or living language, we discover that its expressive value is not the sum of the expressive values belonging to each element of the “verbal chain.” ...If eventually the language means or says something it is not because each sign carries a signification belonging to it, but because they all allude to a signification forever in suspense... (p. 8)

Merleau-Ponty marks the complexity of language, for signification is “forever in suspense;” no matter our efforts to contain and limit each sign to a particular signification, arbitrariness persists. In this work, this arbitrariness speaks to both contradictions and possibilities in language; concepts such as reduction can both direct our attention (as in heuristic reduction), and also bind meaning, as when “symbolization cannot be thought” (Britzman, 2003, p. 214).

According to Britzman,

When symbolization cannot be thought, the symbol no longer *represents* the object; instead, it *becomes* the object. When this occurs, perceptions of the world become more and more literal and aggressive, and the capacity for thinkers to think is attacked (p. 214).

Britzman speaks of the dangers of reduction – that the world is perceived more literally and aggressively. This reduction admits no play in the line; it maintains control by persistently pulling on the lead, reining in our intentionality. Yet in positing the reduction, Britzman also suggests the alternative – that through symbolization we can follow our impulses and think more creatively and expansively.

Each of these theorists and the directions they suggest inform the ways I have thought about language in this study. For example, in Chapter IV, I deconstruct “we just don’t speak the same language” to consider its various interpretations. The deconstructive process this chapter performs highlights the potential in the dynamism of language, showing how it can resist stasis and fixity. By showing that there are many possible interpretations to “we just don’t speak the same language,” I bracket and consider alternatives to my initial “natural attitude” (i.e., the statement as complaint).

One of my original research questions stated that much is claimed for language, including its potential as a source (or effect) of personal and professional identity, agency, and authority. I went on to speculate about the extent to which teachers understand and use language in these ways, as claims to identity, agency, and authority. Because I was interested in interpretations of language through time, and given my interests in feminist and poststructuralist theories, the concepts of identity, agency and authority seemed especially significant signifiers that might present themselves for study in this work. As I immersed myself in processes of data interpretation, however, I lost interest in these concepts as claims, per se. This shift signals an uncomfortable moment for me in the trajectory of this work, for the interpretive move – performing hermeneutic interpretation – in some ways broke the conversational compact that tied and ties me to these women. Nevertheless, moving beyond the text of our conversations and bringing other texts to bear allowed me to participate more fully in this process. The more interesting questions redirected attention from the *instances* of identity, agency and authority to the interpretive and performative possibilities of language. This kind of interpretive work can help us consider alternatives to received languages of education. What’s more, the introduction of the semiotic as a lens for analysis

allows the salience of these concepts to come not only from descriptions of *how* we are positioned in relation to other symbolic bullies – as with or without identity, agency or authority, for example. Attending to the semiotic complicates and enriches our understanding the communicative situation and the politics it entails.

In addition, following Davies’ assertions, thinking about and theorizing language allows us to see how teachers are positioned by language and how they use language to position themselves by their own choices. We can begin to see the proliferation of meanings that are trapped in the web of relationships that surround teachers. In Chapter V, I describe the encounter between teachers’ languages and the administrative languages so influential to their practice, focusing on how administrative languages attempt to over-determine teachers’ work. In this case, thinking about language pointed to the ways languages can reveal a worldview (Bakhtin, 1984). For example, I argue that the languages of administration cling to a worldview embedded in modernity and a psychology embedded in the Symbolic Order (Lacan, 1968). This vision of the Symbolic Order produces subjectivities that rely on rules and the authority of symbols; entrance into this Order requires our repudiation of the Imaginary, our fantasies, wants and needs. Yet thinking about language as Lacan does also makes the introduction of the semiotic (Kristeva, 1975, 1984) – as that which talks back to the rigidity of Lacan’s structure – more salient.

Chapter VI: The Gifts of Language, returns the study to the original context of “we just don’t speak the same language” by considering how exchanges of language between the university and classroom teachers can be considered acts of gift-giving. Thinking about language in this chapter allows me to consider how the languages of education can be understood as part relations that are material, concrete and political as well as linguistic.

Systems of gift-giving join givers and receivers in relations of obligation as well as generosity. Subjectivities produced in these systems of exchange at times participate in and at times resist a competitive model that deploys language as a structure we cannot escape, offering alternative possibilities that support collaboration and generativity.

As the next section demonstrates, thinking about language in these ways provides interesting perspectives for thinking about teaching and education. Barthes (1975) says “I am interested in language because it wounds or seduces me” (p. 38) and this contradiction contains the limitations and possibilities suggested in this work. Within language is the possibility to punish *and* enthrall, to limit *and* expand, to obligate *and* release. I believe we ignore the contradictions and foreclose the possibilities at our peril, for thinking about education in these ways has great possibilities for thinking about education.

Thinking about Teaching and Education

In this work, I argue that thinking about language – especially with a post-structuralist orientation as named above – is vital for thinking about teaching and education. My critique of many extant literatures on teachers and language, for example, is that they fail to theorize language and instead receive it; too often, language is taken-for-granted as a neutral medium of communication. The interpretive work of this research theorizes language and helps articulate some underlying contradictions in languages of education. In this section I focus first on how thinking about language directs us to certain insights about teachers’ positioning in education. I then move to talk about how thinking about language helps us think about education more broadly. Ultimately, the direction of this work is to consider how thinking

about language might help us think about teaching and education *differently*, the focus of the final section of this chapter.

When thinking about teachers' positioning in structures of education, I argue that the structures (most notably hierarchy and patriarchy) maintain language as an instrument that controls teachers' work. Teachers are required to master the languages that support the structures of schooling, and yet the importance of this strong administrative language to teachers' practice is contradicted by the failure of districts to properly orient teachers to these languages. The assumption seems to be that teachers will master the language by immersion, as though exposure will suffice; this assumption, however, frustrates teachers' ability to feel adequately prepared for their work. Somaly Ourm (2005) tells a story on *Youth Radio* that echoes the dangers of immersing newcomers into language without adequate support. Ourm is a young woman who immigrated to the United States as a child from her native Cambodia. She mastered English easily as a child, but in high school struggles with the Spanish class that is a gatekeeper to her graduation:

When I walked into Spanish class on the first day, there was a "no English" sign posted near the blackboard. My teacher introduced herself in Spanish, and even though people told her they didn't understand her, she just kept talking.... I know she's trying her hardest to make us understand the language. And if I knew how to say, "Can you explain the difference between preterite and imperfect?" in Spanish, I'd just ask. But that's the point – I can't. This Spanish class makes me feel like I'm in kindergarten again.... My Spanish teacher thinks we'll learn and absorb the language just by listening. But I need personal help and some understanding.

Ourm returns us to the frustration teachers shared in Chapters IV and V as they encountered administrative languages that presumed their fluency and familiarity. As a strategy for foreign language education, *successful* immersion programs are characterized by administrative support, community support, appropriate materials in the foreign language,

and ongoing staff development (Met, 1993). As a strategy for teacher induction, however, these teachers indicate that the only criterion met is the support from the community, from other teachers. Otherwise the standard approach seems to proceed as if teachers will “learn and absorb the language just by listening.”

Once “inside” the language, teachers understand and participate, but getting inside frustrates teachers’ sense of self-efficacy at a time when they are called on to know the language. This idea of the inside of language thus creates an outside, and it is not only teachers who can be outsiders: students, parents, others significant in teachers’ lives can also be outside that language. Returning to language as shibboleth helps explore this paradox. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes the history of *shibboleth*: it is “the Hebrew word that was used by Jephthah as a test-word by which to distinguish the fleeing Ephraimites (who could not pronounce the *sh*) from his own men the Gileadites (Judges xii, 4-6).” Failure to pronounce the *sh* condemned the Ephraimites to death. As we learned in Chapter IV, education’s acronyms, the alphabet soup, are one example of teachers’ shibboleth; they perform a similar function, if failure to pronounce the *sh* has less dire consequences. Acronyms and abbreviations perform a function more similar to contemporary definitions of shibboleth as catchwords that are adopted by a community allowing adherents to be recognized and imposters, or outsiders, excluded. So education language as shibboleth lets the ‘right’ people in – eventually – but distinguishes and bars foreigners from accessing insider knowledge that may be equally critical to their success.

Another side of the contradiction for teachers is that once inside this language, they are punished for venturing outside the boundaries of sanctioned discourse. As M.Ed. students, these women avoided returning to their schools with the languages of the academy

so as to avoid the appearance of “getting above their raising.” Their perception was that administration supported their pursuit of graduate work, but only to a point. Rebecca tells us that “everything is getting so dictated by the state that it’s almost like, it’s good for us to know our theories but the state doesn’t trust us to know them and do our jobs.” Among colleagues, teachers were reluctant to share their theories; Cass tells us that “Your colleagues would get turned off... And they would say stuff too, stuff behind your back.” Publicly, teachers were applauded for pursuing graduate study, but privately, the message seemed quite different. This was less the story for Molly and Stella, but in their school district their experience was less public; there was less publicity about the county’s beneficence in supporting the teachers’ M.Ed. study than was the case in the district where Audrey, Cass, Rebecca and Maggie work. Stella, however, describes another inside-outside relation to language. Once inside, Stella finds that “it’s increasingly hard for me to speak the non-teacher language.” She continued: “It’s gotten to the point that my friends – my best friends – are teachers. And the friends that I have that aren’t teachers, I have trouble relating to them, I have trouble thinking of things to talk about.” Thinking about language reveals that language is a critical factor in teachers’ work. They must master languages of education that permit their insider status and allow them to respond to the requirements of the Symbolic Order. Theorizing language also allows us to see that it is “overpopulated with the intentions of others” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 294). Abundance, however, is tempered by efforts to reduce language *and* practice to administratively sanctioned norms.

Yet another contradiction this chapter reveals when thinking about language is that teachers are expected to immerse themselves in the lives of children, but are also jeopardized by that same association. In this study, teachers are most expressive when describing

relationships with children in their classrooms. It is clear that this is where they choose to focus their energies, and they welcome the chance to talk with colleagues about the joys and frustrations of the classroom. This focus, however, is challenged on at least two fronts. When teachers take that energy home or out into the community, they are cautioned that it more properly belongs at school and may in fact interfere with teachers' relations with others. In addition, this focus on the child may represent a romanticized and sentimental image projected onto teachers, elementary teachers in particular, suggesting that teachers' interests in education apart from children betray the predicted order. Focus on the child is expected, but it also jeopardizes a teacher's relationships to significant others *and* complicates her interests outside that relation. Teachers' efforts to talk back to the expectations of schooling (in regards to mastery of school language) and reach out the larger world are compromised by the ways languages *of* schooling or *about* schooling position them in particular boxes marked "know your alphabet soup," "focus only on the child," "practice anti-intellectualism," and "leave it at school: 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 pm."

When thinking about education, the encounter between teachers and the languages of education as described in Chapter V represents the least optimistic perspective in this work. That teachers are able to close their classroom doors and continue to (mostly) do what they believe is best in the service of teaching and learning is a testament to their commitments and interests in education. Retreating to this final frontier, however, contradicts their commitments to each other. It isolates teachers from colleagues and limits the strength they find in each other; this has alarming consequences for new teachers in particular (Rogers & Babinski, 2002). Yet this classroom space is also increasingly affected by the culture of accountability such that Maggie laments that she can no longer afford to give over eight

weeks of instruction to her project-based unit on community. Languages of administration contradict what she believes teaching should entail as she indicates that:

I'm not a happy public school teacher because I'm teaching in a way I don't want to and don't believe in. But I've got kids who are going to go take a test the next year so I have to do things – I have to cut out a lot of stuff to get them ready.

It may be that these are unintended consequences of well-meaning programs – certainly no teacher wants to leave children behind. And assessment per se is not the problem. Teachers recognize and value the place of assessment as one perspective to gauge student learning. It is the strategies of high-stakes accountability and the languages they deploy that are an anathema to teachers' intentionality. Thus thinking about language points to the hazards of going further down the path of standardization and homogenization in education, as if that path reflects and contains the commitments and interests of all instead of the interests of a few.

In "The Crisis of the Educated Subject: Insight from Kristeva for American Education," Stone (2004) paints a picture of the forces that shape the communicative situation in which the languages of education described in this work are embedded. Stone draws from Kristeva's distinction between the *subject in process* and the *educated subject* to provide a context that is useful for thinking about education in this work. The educated subject is the creation of a particular deployment of language. According to Stone (2004), *A Nation at Risk* ushered in a crisis in American education that culminated in the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (NCLB). Following Berliner and Biddle (1995), this is a "manufactured crisis... [that] appeared within a specific historical context, and was led by identifiable critics whose political goals could be furthered by scapegoating educators" (p. 4, in Stone, p. 106). Although "manufactured," within this framework of crisis, the culture of accountability

places the blame for students' failure on teachers and on students themselves thereby masking the intentions and strategies of the audit culture (Green, 2005; Popkewitz, 2000; Strathern, 2000). Stone's (2004) argument is that the discursive maneuvers of both *A Nation at Risk* and NCLB reify notions of an educated subject that we cling to in American education. This educated subject is recognized by the following characteristics:

The subject is first and foremost an individuated person, one measured by testing achievement through normed scores.... Second, this 'individual' must not only read and compute but must also show yearly measured improvement. All of this, third, is based in a particular conception of curriculum as "effective, researched based programs and practices" (NCLB, 2001, p. 3) and by the assumption that this curriculum is equally right for every child. Underlying (and threatening) is a system of rewards and sanctions: These include pay incentives for teachers at exemplary schools along with the labeling of "poor performing" for low scoring schools (Stone, 2004, p. 107).

In addition, "subjects conform to a predetermined social order within which are similar schools and families" (pp. 107-108). As Stone says, this educated subject has been "constituted out of a crisis and accountability discourse" (p. 107). As such, the educated subject is one part straw man for our putative aspirations, one part whipping boy for our perceived failures. In the preceding chapters we see evidence of this subject-formation at work in the languages of schooling – through the proliferation of accountability languages in schools, through the reduction of language to the paperwork that supports accountability, through incursions of standardization into teachers' practices, and by pitting teachers against each other in the audit culture. All of these combine to reduce students, teachers, curriculum and instruction to dots on a graph, measurable and measured.

In addition, when thinking about language in relation to teaching and education, I argued that thinking about language reveals just how implicated education is in the Symbolic Order. In Chapter VI, I offer two models for thinking about the relationships of teachers and

professors to each other as well as to strong administrative languages. Each model presents an image of educators' lives as governed by the Symbolic Order. They are re-presented here:

	Imaginary Order Realm of fantasy, of feelings, needs and wants	Symbolic Order The authority of symbols; entrance into the social, paternal world of Law, rules and conventions
For Teachers	Represented by Child	Represented by Theory
For Professors	Represented by Theory	Represented by Child

Figure 1: The Strict Binary

In both cases, the options available to both teachers and professors are limited by a binary construction that either pits them against each other, as in Figure 3: The Strict Binary. The alternative pits each against the Symbolic Order as codified in Administrative Languages as depicted in Figure 4: The Mediated Binary.

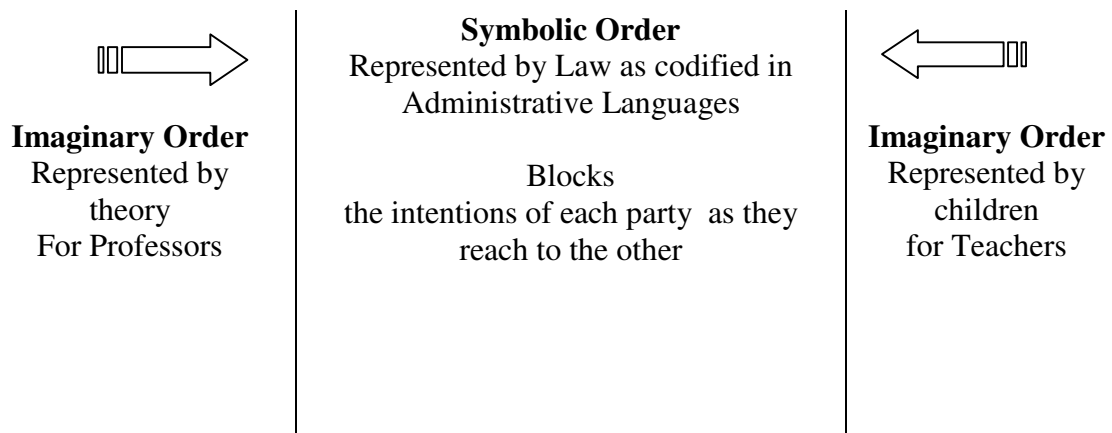


Figure 2: The Mediated Binary

For Kristeva, the crisis is magnified when elites whose interests are served by the existing social order recognize the fissures created by “a cut in the fabric of history” (1996, p.

36, in Stone, 2004, p. 105). Kristeva argues that we live in a time of reversal: in the past, the fabric of history, the status quo, was the constant, experiencing periodic rips in its surface. In these times, however, Kristeva argues that crisis has become the constant with period moments of status quo. Applied to education, because the status quo seems imperiled (e.g., by calls for differentiated instruction, by the significance of multicultural education, by challenges to NCLB), the “provisional moments of status quo” are all the more dear to those whose interests are served in that social order. Elites thus invoke crisis (*A Nation at Risk*), allowing them to sell NCLB as a reform initiative that protects the educated subject, an image that preserves beliefs in the knowable, the measurable, and the generalizable.

There are ways that Kristeva’s positing of the fabric of history torn by provisional moments of status quo contradicts my previous assertions that education is radically embedded in the modern project. Following Kristeva’s argument, it may be that these “cuts in the fabric” are the very ruptures and interstices that Foucault (1990, 1995) indicates signal possibility and spaces for action in what otherwise seems an over-determining social order. If Kristeva’s analysis holds, then there is no stable Symbolic Order in which to embed practice. Yet it may also be the case that elites who seem so entrenched in the status quo offered by the Symbolic Order are fully cognizant of these ruptures and so manufacture the crisis in an effort to keep others of us in line. If these narratives of the educated subject and the subordinates she requires and of the entrenched Symbolic Order read more like tragedy or farce than inspirational tales, how do we account for teachers’ persistence in the face of these limitations? If we accept that a reasonable facsimile of the current situation is portrayed in these narratives, how might a focus on languages in education help us think about education

differently? For that, I return to Kristeva's (1984) lifting up of the semiotic as a possible space for difference.

Thinking Differently about Teaching and Education

This chapter thus far has restated the benefits of thinking about language and using language to think about teaching and education. Throughout this work I have followed Davies' proposition that in theorizing language we might begin to reposition ourselves in relation to other powerful discourses. Using an interpretive hermeneutics I have taken various perspectives on what we might learn about teaching and education by studying teachers' languages and perspectives on language. While this may reveal different ways of interpreting the significance of languages in education, in this final section I turn to how thinking about language in these ways may help us *think differently* about teaching and education. To do so requires returning to phenomenology and to heuristic reduction (van Manen, 2002) to bracket taken-for-granted assertions about teaching and education in order to awaken a sense of wonder. My claim has been that we must be seduced and led astray in language, and in this section I begin to imagine possibilities for education in this endeavor.

I begin with Kristeva's explication of the semiotic to think about the semiotic as another register for thinking about education. I first describe the semiotic in Kristeva's words, then work to unpack them in my own. Kristeva (1984) links the semiotic to a "precise modality in the signifying process" in which "discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such." (p. 25). The semiotic, then, is one component or modality of signification, the part of language that gives it meaning via the presence, or intrusion, of *affect*, or "quantities of energy." Similar to Lacan

(1968), Kristeva recognizes the symbolic as the *structures* of language such that words have meaning in relation to each other. Kristeva (1984), however, lifts up the significance of the semiotic: “these two modalities are inseparable within the *signifying proces*s that constitutes language... [there is] an indebtedness to both” (p. 24, emphasis in original). Lacan would have us repudiate the Imaginary Order, his closest description of the wants and needs that language expresses, arguing that they interfere with our entrance into the adult world of language and the social order. Kristeva redeems the semiotic.

For Kristeva (1984), the semiotic is understood as pre-linguistic, consisting of energies that move through the body (affect) before the child’s constitution as a speaking subject. The semiotic “articulate[s] a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases and motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated” (p. 25). While this concept is difficult to grasp, Stone (2004) gives us a way to think about the chora by naming it “an openness, incompleteness, emptiness” (p. 108). We can see how this ties to Kristeva’s (1984) understanding of semiotic that she takes from the Greek: it is a “distinctive mark, ... precursory sign, ...imprint, trace” (p. 25). This is a “nonexpressive” entity but it describes that which wants to get out, the *affect* that desires expression. In its very openness, its incompleteness, the semiotic constitutes a type of negative space that defines the object, the symbolic. In art, for example, drawing the negative space of a chair means filling in everything *but* the chair on the sketchpad or the canvas. The negative space thus defines the chair. We could simply draw the chair, but doing so might allow us to ignore all the elements that surround the chair, elements that define its function as a seat at a dining room table or a perch in a garden surrounded by flowers. Ignoring the negative space means ignoring the affect, robbing the chair of its significance.

I dwell on this so long to join Kristeva (1984) in calling attention to all that we may forsake when language is reduced to the functions of the Symbolic Order. Bringing this to education, Grumet (1988) reminds us that failing to attend to the semiotic means that we lose the relational and intersubjectivity: “we bury our memories of [the maternal] relation we knew as children and again as mothers under language, under law, under politics, and under curriculum” (p. 20). Repudiating the semiotic means “we are forever complicit in patriarchal projects [that] deny [the] adequacy, influence, and existence” of the connection between the semiotic and the maternal relation that first organized our relations to the symbolic. To enrich our language, to enrich the world, requires that we follow Kristeva’s course and recognize an indebtedness to both the symbolic (paternal) *and* semiotic (maternal) orders as they mutually constitute signification.

The importance of the dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic cannot be overstated when considering contemporary cultures of education. As Stone (2004) reminds us, “for Kristeva, recognition of the semiotic means fundamental heterogeneity” (p. 110). Attending to the semiotic, to affect, and to potential space may allow us to talk back to the over-determining effects of the Symbolic Order that would overwhelm our commitments and interests in children, and in theory. Attending to the semiotic allows us to reach for the imaginary and repopulate languages of education with relation, inviting subjects in process rather than educated subjects. For Kristeva (1984), thinking of the subject as *in process* rather than as some transcendental or Cartesian notion of the subject allows us to disturb the “deep structure... the rules” (p. 37) of signification and so interpret differently, and more heterogeneously.

Kristeva thus creates the theoretical space for thinking about teaching and education differently when thinking about language, but what might amplifying the semiotic entail operationally? Perspective-taking is a worthwhile endeavor when considering relations that exist through language between teachers and significant interlocutors, including administration and academia. Perspective-taking may serve to open the horizons of the communicative situation and open the horizons of teaching and education. As conceived in this work, teachers' imaginary domain is represented by the figure of the child, while professors' imaginary is represented by theory. Yet such a construction performs its own reduction, for it limits teachers' and professors' interests and intentions to a singular imaginary, always in opposition to some Symbolic Order that over-determines. What might this construction look like with the addition of the semiotic?

	Semiotic	↔	Symbolic
For Teachers	Represented by Child	↔	Represented by Theory
For Professors	Represented by Theory	↔	Represented by Child

Figure 3: Semiotic Relations

In the first instance, when considering relations between teachers and professors, when the binary construction is removed each exists *in relation to* the other. Kristeva does not set up a competitive process, nor one that requires the repudiation of the semiotic in favor of the symbolic. For Kristeva, the semiotic and symbolic are mutually constitutive. In this model, when considering teachers, there are times when theory gives education its structure and children its meaning; at other times the reverse may be true. The same reciprocal relations are true for professors. Such a representation begins to disrupt the overly sentimental constructions that reduce teachers' interests to children and professors' to theory. However, we can also see how this two-dimensional theoretical model is inadequate for representing the depth of interests and commitments that animate teachers' and professors' work; it also fails to imagine this model in practice.

I argue that too often, languages, and encounters with language, remain un(der)theorized in classrooms. Immediate possibilities for amplifying the semiotic include exercises that recognize and explore the complexities of language, making the study of language explicit in our studies in education. Several options can work to disrupt the transparency assumed for language, and can begin with classroom experiences of "looking it up." Hermeneutic exercises that put texts in conversation and unpack interpretations allow perspective-taking and the bracketing of natural attitudes such that the familiar can become strange and the strange familiar. Such work is both exegesis – drawing the meaning *from*, and eisegesis – reading one's own interpretations *into*. Such processes honor texts as both object and subject, receiving their insights but also talking back and articulating our own investments. These exercises can disrupt the binary of self and other, of professor versus teacher/student, of theory versus practice, and recognize intersubjectivity.

In this study teachers indicated they wanted *more* time to talk together about education. As is, they rely on stolen moments with other teachers to talk about their teaching lives and the complexities of the classroom. Given the commitments and possibilities teachers revealed over the course of this work, it is too simplistic to posit the explanatory power of a theory-practice divide when discussing teachers' orientations to language and theory. As indicated in Chapter VI, we must not abandon theory to practice or practice to theory. These teachers celebrate the intellectualism of the public school classroom and indicate that they are interested gifts of language, gifts of theory, that help them think about the complexities of classroom life and bring those insights to practice. Concepts such as meta-cognition, constructivism, and democracy, as well as theories of assessment, for example, were useful for helping teachers think about, and in some cases think differently about, education. Reciprocally, teachers indicated that professors sometimes explained theory at too great a remove from the complexities of the classroom. Interactions between professors and experienced teachers in particular can be exemplary opportunities to bring theory to practice and practice to theory. Remember that Kristeva (1984) puts the symbolic and semiotic into relation with each other. In this relation, the symbolic provides the structure such that words make meaning in relation to each other, while the semiotic gives language meaning by the influence of affect. In pre- and in-service instructional settings as currently conceived, there are greater opportunities to imagine the symbolic of theory made meaningful by the semiotic presence of the child. To envision the child as the symbolic structure made meaningful by the semiotic affect of theory requires us to imagine other instructional opportunities that keep theory and the child in relation, for they are "inseparable" and "indebted" to each other in Kristeva's schema.

To this point, I have yet to imagine possibilities for administrative language and consequent policy situations that rescue administration from complicity with the over-determining Symbolic Order. As conceived in Figure 4 above, the competitive binary relationship between professors and administrators is relieved only by inserting the Symbolic Order as a block with which both teachers and professors do battle. But within this schema, in their deployment of administrative languages, administrators are reified as symbolic bullies. In the binary world of the Symbolic Order so conceived, choices are limited for administrators. Either they have no imaginary, or they have completely severed any connections to needs and wants that might animate practice, or they have conflated the symbolic and the imaginary such that administrative discourses represent rules and conventions *as well as* needs and wants. None of these explanations seems adequate for describing the complex interests of administrators.

What might it look like to rescue administrative discourse from unrelieved negation? What might this model look like when the semiotic is amplified in these discursive relationships? In the representation below, we can imagine how teachers', administrators', and professors' interests overlap. They are not necessarily, or even functionally, identical, but there are spaces where each relates to the other, and space where their interests intersect. Beyond the representation, however, what might the amplification of the semiotic look like in practice when considering these significant interlocutors?

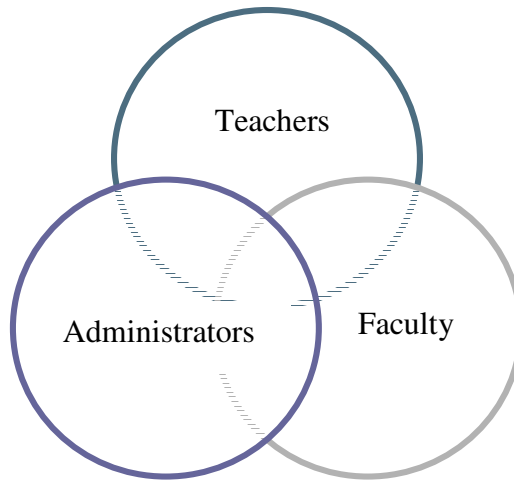


Figure 4: Overlapping Interests

The most basic requirement is to facilitate conversations that do not currently take place. The goal is to put these discourses – teacher, administrative, and academic – into deliberate conversation with each other. In practice, each of these discourses is largely self-referential; conversations exist *among* teachers, *among* administrators, and *among* faculty, but not often *between* these parties. When they do take place, parties talk to each other, or about each other, but not always *with* each other. In addition, the semiotic register seems sorely missing in the conversations that do happen between these communities.

The poignancy is that there is much to learn and each party has much to contribute. Weis and Fine (2003) argued that teachers must participate in controversies and

conversations about education because policy makers “know little of the life of a classroom, the curiosity of a child” (p. 2). Turning this assertion, we might also say that administrators – be they at the school, district, or state level – and faculty as well must participate in controversies and conversations about education because there is much to learn from each other. Faculty and teachers know little of the life of the policy maker; and the life of the professor is equally misunderstood. Presently conceived and enacted, the politics of the communicative situation follow binary constructions so that discourses are distanced and compete. And yet teachers and administrators and faculty share significant concerns even without consensus on how to effect change. Although risky and challenging, these types of conversations undermine the discursive isolation of these groups and invite each to infuse conversations with the semiotic register that makes practice meaningful for each.

We might imagine education forums or summits that enact these kinds of conversations, for example. The possibilities of these conversations are borne of the possibilities that exist in language. In either case, the process performed is hermeneutic, putting texts and discourses in conversation with each other in the search for understanding. To the extent that the semiotic register is amplified in these conversations, not only will texts describe a situation, they might also suggest alternative interpretations and reveal the interests and commitments that animate practice.

I conclude this chapter by considering next steps and future research, and my interests in language maintain in this agenda. This work focused on teachers’ relationships to language. Given the gifts of language these teachers shared with me, my first interest is in returning this work to them. While these women were active and responsive throughout the phases of the study member-checking transcripts and discussing initial interpretations of the

research, this completed work has taken their words and not only presented them, but also narrated them in particular ways. I also put their words in conversation with other texts in ways that might surprise the teachers. An important final step to this process will be to return this research to their giving hands and invite their response to the work.

The teachers in this study were all white women, all experienced teachers at the elementary school level. How might perspectives change based on interviews with teachers of color? With male educators? With middle school and high school teachers? With novice teachers? With veterans about to retire? In addition, this process could be repeated with various other educational communities, including administrators, students, and professors, asking them to reveal their interests and commitments in language, as well as to explore their positioning through language. I suggest above that there is much to be gained if we can find ways to put these discourses in deliberate conversation with each other. Although differences of rank and power in existing structures of education may make these types of conversation between teachers and administrators, for example, too risky for either party, because I imagine that administrators may also feel victimized by others' languages, this kind of perspective-taking is essential and valuable. Finally, I am eager to design coursework in pre- and in-service teacher education programs around an intense appreciation and focus on language, applying the kind of "postmodern hermeneutic" (Nash, 1997) this work performs in education classrooms.

Conclusions

The problem of reduction is the concern that animates this study. I argue that reducing language to the lowest common denominator robs it of its significance and robs

signification or its poetics. Language overflows and escapes its bounds, rendering reduction heavy-handed and futile. The same applies to education reduced to its most simplistic, a one-size-fits-all paradigm that educators have worked to escape since its implementation. Efforts to contain teaching and learning seem equally heavy-handed and futile. The presumptive effects of such efforts are to reduce the static that interferes with reception, thereby simplifying communication, but I believe reduction actually works to strip language of the excess characterized by the imaginary, the embodied, and the poetic. Excess is not presumed to belong in schools in the binary of the Symbolic Order; this Order would rather expunge life's messiness, *as if* abstinence-only education could deny the body and deny sexuality, for example. Yet excess is the realm of the imaginary, it is the affect that brings sentiment and rhythm and depth to language.

As I have argued throughout this work, I believe that the usefulness, the requirement, of thinking about language is that it allows us to think differently about our theories and practices of teaching and education. Languages of education do not merely overlap with each other; they also intrude and complement and contradict and more. At this moment, when the languages of education are so implicated with the languages of schooling, when the Symbolic Order holds such sway, as educators we must search for ways to disrupt its influences. To the extent that we can grant the semiotic and the imaginary space, we might begin to imagine education differently, yielding to temptation and going astray. Language matters.

APPENDIX A

M.Ed. Program of Studies

Spring 2001

EDUC 118: Cultural Diversity in Teaching Social Studies

Summer 2001

EDUC 115G: Explorations in Literacy

EDUC 116: Reinventing Teaching

Fall 2001

EDUC 194a: Differentiation/Multicultural Education

EDUC 114: Children's Literature

Spring 2001

EDUC 193: Action Research

EDUC 194b: Teaching & Differentiation

Summer 2002

EDUC 126: Teaching Reading and Writing in the Content Areas

EDUC 196: Assessment & Accountability

Fall 2002

EDUC 292: Action Research II

Spring 2003

EDUC 293b: Ways of Knowing

Summer 2003

EDUC 295: Restructuring Schools and Teaching for a Democratic Society

EDUC 294c: Integrated Learning

APPENDIX B

Introductory Letter

Dear [Name]:

Greetings from UNC! I hope this finds you in the midst of an exciting and successful year. As promised during the course of our time together in the M.Ed. program, the time has come for me to invite your participation in a research project that will become my dissertation. I learned so much from you while in the program and I hope you will continue to allow me to learn from you.

I want to invite you to a meeting for a conversation about the research and your participation (I'll bring pizza!). By way of introduction, however, I'll share some preliminary details. The primary focus of my dissertation is understanding the languages and language situations in which teachers claim authority and understanding of their work. In order to investigate issues of teachers and language, I'm proposing an interview study to discuss your experiences of language as a teacher, as an M.Ed. student, and your thoughts on language now that nearly two years have passed since graduation. In addition to our introductory meeting, you will be asked to participate in four small group interviews (groups of 2-3 folks, depending on interest) over the next few months.

The study will be explored more fully at our introductory meeting. I'd like to suggest some dates and times for the meeting, and hope you'll reply as soon as possible to let me know of your interest and availability.

[dates and times to be listed here]

If possible, email me back to let me know your preferences. I can also do the intro meeting more than once if necessary. And if you don't regularly check the email address I've used today, you might suggest a better way of getting in touch with you (another email address, US mail, phone). A hard copy of this letter is also being sent to your home address via US mail.

This study has received approval from UNC-Chapel Hill's Institutional Review Board. I hope you'll come to hear more about the project (and give us a chance to catch up!), even if you're not sure you want to participate. If you have any questions in the meantime, please call (960-5933 at home; 358-4730 cell) or email (aanderso@email.unc.edu). I look forward to seeing you soon.

Take care,

Amy

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

**University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB Study # EDUC 05-069

Consent Form Version Date: February 22, 2006

Title of Study: Language Matters: A Study of Teachers' Uses of Language for Understanding Their Work

Principal Investigator: Amy L. Anderson

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Education

UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: (919) 358-4730

Email Address: aanderso@email.unc.edu

Co Investigators:

Faculty Advisor: Lynda Stone

Funding Source: n/a

Study Contact telephone number: (919) 960-5933

Study Contact email: aanderso@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.

You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above, Amy Anderson, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn about how teachers use language and discourse as a way of understanding their practice. Three central questions frame this qualitative

research study: (1) What are the languages and language situations in which teachers claim understanding of their work?; (2) What do teachers say about how they are positioned within educational discourses and how do they use language to position themselves?; and (3) To what extent do teachers understand and use language as a source of personal and professional identity and agency? Small group interviews will be used to explore these research questions.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are an alumna of the 2003 Language Arts/Social Studies cohort of the UNC-Chapel Hill Masters in Education (M.Ed.) program and have insight into different language communities in education (e.g., languages of public school, languages of graduate study).

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately ten people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

Participation in this study will occur over a period of three to four months. Specifically, your participation will involve one meeting to introduce the study and four small group interviews of two to three people. Each small group interview will last approximately one and one-half hours.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

You are being asked to participate in a qualitative interview study. If you choose to participate, you will be interviewed in small groups with one or two teacher colleagues, also alumnae of the M.Ed. program (known to you and pending your approval of group composition).

Each small group will be interviewed four times. The first three interviews will each be based on the dissertation research questions and will be scheduled approximately every two weeks (based on group convenience and schedules).

Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You will be provided hard copies of transcriptions (either in-person at subsequent interviews or mailed to your home address) for your review and approval. You are invited to share any thoughts and insights that are generated by your reading of the transcripts.

Following the first three interviews, preliminary data analysis will take place based on transcripts of the small group interviews. You will be mailed a copy of the preliminary analysis for review prior to the fourth and final small group interview, and your feedback and input will be sought regarding the preliminary analysis.

All digital and hard copies of transcripts will use pseudonyms you select; your school and county will also be given pseudonyms, and your identity will be camouflaged (e.g., from 3rd to 4th grade teacher) to protect your privacy.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There are no anticipated psychosocial, economic or legal risks to participants in this study. Any publications of this material (e.g., dissertation, articles) will use pseudonyms that you choose to mask your location and schools. All identifying documents will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet and all digital and printed transcripts will use pseudonyms.

Even though I will emphasize to all small group participants that comments made during the group interview should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. Therefore, I encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of our limits in protecting confidentiality.

There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to Amy Anderson.

How will your privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be maintained by the use of pseudonyms in any electronic or hard copy forms of transcripts. Any contact information (e.g., home addresses, phone numbers) will be maintained with M.Ed. alumni information, apart from research materials. There are no research collaborators who will have access to the data. You will be interviewed in a small group. Interview settings will be chosen to maintain your privacy – including home settings (e.g., PI's home, participant's home). Any public settings (e.g., coffee shop) will be chosen by you. Any written correspondence will be sent to your home address or personal email address.

Interviews will be audio recorded and interviews will be transcribed. Digital recordings will be stored on the researcher's home computer with password protection. Audio recordings will be analyzed for dissertation preparation or potential subsequent publications. Recordings will be destroyed after two years.

Participants *will not* be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

Your costs will include transportation to and from interview sites.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact Amy Anderson.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX D

Protocol #1

Focus: What are the languages and language situations in which teachers claim understanding of their work?

“We just don’t speak the same language” is a quote that came up during one of our classroom debriefs in the Teacher as Researcher class, talking about the differences in language use between classroom teachers and university faculty. The suggestion is that there is something called “teacher language” and something different that is “university faculty” language. I want to focus today on teachers’ languages...

1. Describe teacher languages. What are their characteristics?
2. What is unique about teacher languages?
3. When were you first aware of speaking *as a teacher*? “Aha!” moments?
4. Differences among languages? Where do teacher-teacher languages come into conflict? First-year teacher to 20-year teacher?
5. Are there times languages change? When? With whom? e.g., Teacher-teacher, teacher-student, teacher-specialist, teacher-administrator, teacher-parent, teacher-neighbor
6. What are the settings in which teachers talk together? Can you characterize that talk?
7. What effect does school culture have on teachers’ languages? How are languages different from school to school (perceived or experienced)?
8. Do/how do teacher languages express teacher identity?
9. When does language fail?
10. Characteristics of the “good” teacher’s language? The “bad” teacher’s?

APPENDIX D

Protocol #2

Focus: What do teachers say about how they are positioned within educational discourses and how do they use language to position themselves? (For example, what does teacher language share with neighboring discourses in education: the languages of education policy, of parents, and of graduate study?)

“We just don’t speak the same language” vis-à-vis classroom teachers and university faculty suggests that there is something called “teacher language” and something different that is “university faculty” language.

- Administrator’s language
 - District-level language
 - Parent language
 - Student language
 - Teacher language
1. Identify/describe/define other education language communities. What are their characteristics?
 2. Define/describe faculty languages. What are their characteristics?
 3. How do they compare to teachers’ languages? How are the languages alike? Not alike?
 4. Looking at list of course titles from your MEd experience, I want to do some free association about languages of these courses.
 5. What would you tell faculty about *language* when working with in-service, experienced teachers?
 6. After a period of two years now, what are your thoughts about the language of “the academy?”
 7. Are there languages/concepts that you keep with you? Use regularly?
 8. What is the relationship between language and resistance? Do you resist other languages and/or others’ languages? How do you resist?

APPENDIX D

Protocol #3

Possible Questions

Much is claimed for language, including its potential as a source (or effect) of personal and professional identity, agency, and authority. To what extent do teachers understand and use language in these ways?

1. Thinking about schools as cultural sites – as spaces where we introduce young people to customs and traditions-

- Say I'm a new teacher – what will I learn about teacher culture by being an initiate in those situations? The good and the bad...
- How does school culture effect/affect teachers' talk? Vice versa?

So my title, my premise, is that “Language Matters.” The words we choose, the ways we say things, matter. The language coming out of Katrina, for example: are these folks “refugees” or “citizens?” Are they “looting” or “feeding their families?” The words we choose matter for how we see a situation. In schools, it's perhaps where “exceptional” comes from. And I want to be careful that it's more than just euphemisms... it's not just PC, for words carry such power. This is how Bronwyn Davies, for example, talks about language:

“Language is understood as the most powerful constitutive force shaping what we understand as possible and what we desire within those possibilities” (Davies, 2000, p. 181).

She continues:

By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist (Davies, 2000, p. 179-180).

So playing with language theory... I have a few questions:

1. Idea of positioning by and within multiple and competing discourses: How are teachers positioned in/by language by others and how do you position yourselves? Consider Davies quotes... what are your thoughts?
2. Davies talks about thinking of language as a strategy – as a way of thinking and perhaps thinking differently. I wonder if it this seems possible? How so, not so?

Finally, in language theory, there are claims about what language does and does not do. (BRIEF modern – postmodern – poststructural précis)

- Language creates/is an effect of identity:
 - Often talked about in terms of a battle – like the Davies quote: multiple and competing discourses.
 - In what ways/spaces do you experience this battle for your soul? Going along vs. challenging. Where do you challenge?

- Language creates/is an effect of agency: as a unique human capacity for meaningful, goal-directed action in the world.
 - Whence confidence, efficacy for teachers?
 - When you imagine change in education, what does it look like? How do you work in that direction?

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