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RE-VISIONING THE PEER CONFERENCE:  
CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS AND WRITING  
WITH EIGHTH GRADERS

A Dissertation Presented

by

NANCY A. CHEEVERS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1999

School of Education

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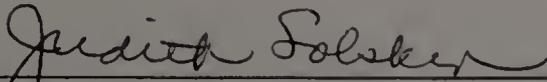
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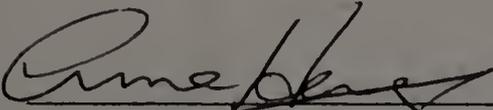
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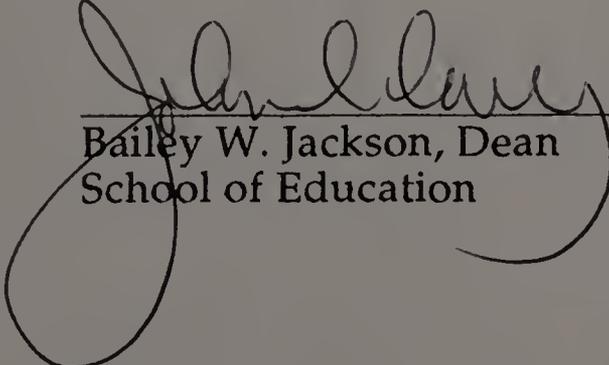
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# DEDICATION

For my students

and

Especially for my partner

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many colleagues, friends, and family members have contributed in myriad ways to this project. First and foremost, I extend gratitude to the chairperson of my committee, Judy Solsken, who has been and continues to be a guiding light, an exceptional teacher and mentor. I am grateful to committee member David Bloome, who has provided me with much intellectual inspiration over the years, and who inspired me to read and explore Fairclough's work in the first place. I also extend my gratitude to Anne Herrington, whose guidance helped me to write about something of importance to teachers and to myself.

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Finally, I extend the greatest gratitude to my partner for living with me through this process and for making all the sacrifices this kind of project entails.

ABSTRACT

RE-VISIONING THE PEER CONFERENCE: CRITICAL LANGUAGE  
AWARENESS AND WRITING WITH EIGHTH GRADERS

AUGUST 1999

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This dissertation reports findings from a sociolinguistic ethnographic study that examined relationships between a critical language awareness, peer conferencing, and student writing. The purpose of the study was to use critical language study to develop student understanding of the social, cultural and political aspects of language, thereby promoting democratic classrooms.

The study involved the revision of the traditional peer conferencing format to include consideration of the social, cultural, and political aspects of language and power. This pedagogical change was embedded in a critical language awareness curriculum within a Native American unit of study, and involved eighth graders at a suburban middle school. They wrote response papers and stories focused on Native American topics and conferred with their partners regarding the social, cultural, and political aspects of language and power in the representation of Native Americans in their stories and

response papers. Students recorded their conference responses on the peer conference sheets, and wrote final drafts of their stories and response papers.

Analysis of 20 peer conferences involved thematic and critical discourse microanalysis of student talk and critical discourse microanalysis of student final drafts and revisions of their writing. The critical discourse microanalysis was based on Fairclough's (1992) approach to discourse analysis.

This study demonstrates that critical language awareness included in a traditional peer conference model has the potential to offer students opportunities to be empowered and/or to empower those who may be oppressed. This study also demonstrates that student investment in CLA discourse may be related to the following: whether and how social justice issues drive the focus of the writing; the variety of genre choices; the availability and variety of intertextual references; the availability and variety of discourses that may support CLA, such as discrimination discourse about race, gender, and/or culture; as well as a safe environment for students to take up a critical stance. Finally, the study demonstrates that teachers, too, may benefit from a critical language awareness of their own classroom literacy practices, including how to negotiate CLA with the power and authority invested in traditional genres, standardized tests, and traditional curricula.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

This dissertation study is about critical language awareness and the writing process: how a student awareness of social, cultural, and political issues related to language may be evident in peer conferencing and student writing. This study focused on a critical language study curriculum that emerged from a language study project at a suburban middle school, and on how students may have demonstrated these critical language study practices in peer conferences and, hence, student writing.

In part, this study emerged out of my experiences as an eighth grade English teacher in an ethnically diverse middle school. These experiences suggested to me that the traditional language curriculum (i.e. the study of the English language structure) does not adequately prepare students for citizenship in a democratic society. My experimentation with a critical language study curriculum, focusing on social, cultural and political issues in language, provided me with experiences which suggested that a different set of language learning goals in school might expose social beliefs and social positions available in students' lives as speakers and writers. These experiences provided a basis for my theorizing about relationships between critical language awareness, peer conferencing, and student writing. These influenced the design and interpretation of the data.

Critical language study (CLS), as developed by Fairclough (1992) and others, supports a critical view of education and a critical awareness of the world. The main goal of CLS is to identify and question the order of the world with special attention to the language used to describe it and to the possibilities for social action: a critical language awareness (CLA). CLS is an orientation towards language and not a separate branch of study because it exposes the relationship between power relations, ideologies, and language practices and conventions that can be examined throughout the curriculum. For example, a student may examine the language in his writing partner's essay on Columbus's arrival in America and decide that the language defines Native people as "other," which marginalizes their contributions to the success of colonial America and negates their status as American citizens today. As shown in this example, this orientation towards language is not solely for the English classroom, but English teachers can lay a meaningful, helpful foundation through thoughtfully prepared curriculum and practices that may lead towards an awareness of social inequities (CLA) and towards the possibilities of social change. In the example above, the students have an opportunity to express their views about the language in the essay and how it frames a particular orientation towards Native people and the writer. Additionally, the student writer may choose to rewrite or to challenge his peer conference partner's views. Conscious decision making is one of the main goals of critical language study. Challenging a peer conference partner's views or writing a letter to the textbook source that contributed to the writer's choice of language are two possibilities for social

action. The final goal of a curriculum framed by CLS is a critical language awareness (CLA) and a social action resulting from this new awareness.

In the academic year 1997-1998, I implemented a critical language study curriculum in my eighth grade English classroom. This curriculum included a variety of readings and lessons focused on social, cultural, and political issues in language. Overlapping this curriculum, in a second phase of the study, students employed writing process methods to respond to a variety of writing tasks. Part of the writing process involved peer conferencing, as suggested by Peter Elbow; and therefore when students began to draft papers, students engaged in the practice of peer conferencing as one of the necessary steps in the writing process. I collected data on the conversations that took place during the language study lessons and during the peer conferencing, on what the students wrote in response to readings and activities during the language study lessons, on what the students wrote in response to their peer conferences, and during interviews conducted during this study. Using various techniques from sociolinguistic ethnography and critical discourse analysis, I analyzed key segments of the data to identify evidence of critical language study on student understandings of self and others through written and oral language.

### Background to the Problem

The research problem is based on two assumptions: that peer conferencing can have a variety of effects on student writing, and that language is a not a neutral entity because it sustains and reproduces power relations between peers and within discourse construction. Research claims that peer

conferencing improves writing (Bellas, 1970; Bright, 1885; Bruffee, 1973; Cady, 1914; Carpenter, 1905; Cook, 1895; Leonard, 1917; Macrorie, 1968; Noyes, 1905; Nystrand, 1986; Schelling, 1895; Wolf, 1969); however, current research points to the limitations and socially detrimental effects that peer conferencing can have on the writer and his/her text (Lensmire, 1994; Lee, 1995). Specifically, students may be rejected by their peers, avoid genres and topics that involve too much self exposure, and reinforce already privileged writers, leaving some writers unempowered. Unempowered writers are likely to be silenced by their peers and by/through the dominant discourse. A writing theory and practice that doesn't offer students the opportunity to learn to identify and weigh their cultural, gender and social class perspectives, political possibilities and alternatives does not create an equitable and socially just learning environment. Nor does it adequately prepare students for active citizenship in a socially just democratic society.

As citizens of the twenty-first century will exist in media-, text-, and symbol-saturated environments, every arena of life including health care, education, religious affiliation, political affiliation, employment, and consumption of goods and services will depend on the ability to construct, control, and manipulate texts and symbols. Throughout their lives as participants in their communities and as consumers, students will be bombarded with conflicts in messages regarding representation and subjectivity. Luke explains the numerous ways messages are involved in our every day lives:

In terms of representation they involve the production and consumption of texts, access to and legal control over texts, and the rights to name, to

construe, to depict, and to describe. In terms of subjectivity, they involve how one is being named, positioned, desired, and described and in which languages, texts, and terms of reference. These are battles over contracts and billboards, "infotainment" and cable TV rights, pornographic software and racist slurs, rap lyrics and textbooks, battles over what we call each other and how we present ourselves in face-to-face and electronic encounters, whether in courts of law and legislatures, classrooms and staff rooms, on the internet or on the streets. Fighting words indeed: texts and identities, work and cultures (Luke, 1996, p.6).

Preparation for such a world must begin in the classroom with literacy activities that promote an understanding of social, cultural, and political differences that enable students to understand themselves and others. Additionally, educators must offer students the tools needed not only to gain understanding, but to question and consciously choose discursal alternatives. As in the above example, students need the tools to make a conscious decision about the representation of a culture other than their own. The discursal alternatives made available to them through their discussion with each other and with their teachers may lead them to understand Native Americans more clearly from both a cultural and a political perspective and the role that language may play in challenging conventional understandings. According to Luke, a "heteroglossic democracy is one in which all voices and texts of difference have a right to be heard and constructed, critiqued and contested in the public forums of governments and schools, workplaces and community meetings, churches and corporations" (Luke, 1996, p.6). This should be one of the goals of writing instruction in schools: to understand social, cultural, and political differences in written discourse; to be heard or read regardless of these differences; and to weigh epistemological and political possibilities and alternatives.

This understanding of language requires more than the traditional knowledge of language--grammar study and genre study. In order to be a full participant in a democratic society, citizens must be able to detangle the language that may oppress and privilege themselves and others. Social change cannot take place without this knowledge and "democracy" would include only a small segment of people, as only a select few might control the social, cultural, and political aspects of society. All citizens must be offered the tools in order to be full participants in a democratic society. These tools can stem from critical language study as an orientation towards language learning in schools.

### Theoretical Framework

In the following sections I first discuss critical language awareness theory, its limitations and its possibilities for a peer conference pedagogy that might more adequately prepare students to participate in a democratic society. Following this discussion of theory, I will discuss critical language pedagogy and its possible contributions to an understanding of the sociolinguistic and political barriers that inhibit effective exchanges in peer conferencing.

Recent research has suggested that a critical discussion of discursal choices and attention to the way in which language positions language users, raises writers' consciousness regarding the dimension of writer identity and helps writers to gain some control over it. While the number of these studies has been small and mostly undertaken by a group from Lancaster University (Clarke and Smith, 1992; Fairclough, 1992; Ivanic and Simpson, 1992; Lancaster and Taylor, 1988; Martin-Jones, 1992), the findings suggest that altering the

underlying assumptions regarding language study and the writing process can significantly enhance the language learning opportunities and possibilities for some students.

The theoretical framework for this study is deeply rooted in the work of Norman Fairclough (1992, 1989) whose critical language theory and discourse analysis originate in a critical approach to linguistics (Kress & Hodge, 1979). I build off the work of sociolinguistic ethnographers and critical educators such as Lensmire (1994), Lee (1995), Fox, (1990), and Ivanic (1994). I also base my understandings of writer identity on the work of Ludlam (1992). I do not discuss theory from sociolinguistic ethnography in this section as it is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation. This study will broadly adapt Fairclough's framework in order to understand how introducing critical language study into the teaching of writing plays out in an eighth grade language arts classroom.

### Critical Language Awareness

Critical language awareness, CLA, is a term which was coined by a group of educators at Lancaster University (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, 1990). It originates in a critical approach to linguistics (Kress & Hodge, 1979) as developed by Fairclough (1989, 1992). Critical linguistics was first applied to the teaching of writing by Kress (1982) and has more recently been developed in, for example, Clark & Ivanic (1991). Important influences on CLA include Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas, whose works explore ideology and the social subject. The critical linguistics group has also shaped CLA theory (Fowler et al., 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979).

The term "language awareness" has been used by a group of British educators and linguists who have been advocates for the language awareness element in the British school curriculum in the early years of secondary schooling since the 1980's (Hawkins, 1984). The term also refers to "knowledge about language" to underscore in a more general way conscious attention to the properties of language and language use as an element of language education. Norman Fairclough, a key figure in the language awareness movement in British schools, is concerned with a "critical language awareness" which builds upon "critical linguistics" or "critical discourse analysis" (Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 1989; Mey, 1985). CLA also assumes a critical conception of education and schooling. Fairclough argues for the importance of CLA and language education in citizenship training as students need to be prepared to meet with professionals and others who use written and conversational language as strategies for exercising power in subtle and implicit ways. In the classroom, teachers need to train students to meet with each other and, specifically in reference to the peer conference, to be aware of how language sustains and reproduces power relations between peers and within discourse construction. This kind of awareness and action requires complex communicative skills well beyond the present standards of language arts education.

### Peer Conference Practices

Peer conferencing typically refers to specific revising practices wherein students offer each other content-related feedback. Elbow stresses the need to separate content-related feedback -- revision, from grammatical and surface

structure feedback -- editing. In Elbow's model the revision grows out of the peer conference and is referred to as "giving feedback." Elbow's conferencing strategies include "reader-based feedback which tells you what your writing does to particular readers" (Elbow, 1981, p. 240) and "criterion-based feedback which helps you figure out how writing measures up to certain criteria used in judging expository or non-fiction writing" (Elbow, 1981, p. 240). Throughout schools there is a broad range of peer conferencing formats, including but not limited to conference partner choices, critical vs. listening feedback, oral vs. written responses for writers, and variations of teacher conference modeling. The conferencing format for this study is based on a adaptation of Elbow's model. The peer conference format for this study includes: organizing students into groups of four that stay together for an entire semester; partially shaping the conference depending on the assignment and students' preferences; beginning the year with writers reading their pieces and peers listening while growing towards a more critical feedback as the year progresses; writing responses for writers (peer conference sheets); and lots of teacher modeling to include a variety of conference strategies. While this is the peer conference format that occurs in this study, it is not the only format operating within schools.

As part of the writing process, peer conferencing always involves power relationships, including the ability to act and react within society in relation to cultural notions about class, gender, ethnicity, and race (Solsken, 1993). Student talk is defined by people through their interactions within encounters and events

that are themselves embedded within sociohistorical contexts: individual, institutional, and societal.

Peer conferences are a primary way that subject positions are constituted in writing process classrooms. As teachers and students interact during peer conferencing they formulate and reformulate aspects of social positioning, all of which are part of systems of cultural meanings (Egan-Robertson, 1994, p.12). A peer conferencing format that includes tools for students to disclose subject positions taken up during these conversations may lead to a critical language awareness.

CLA theory assists in disclosing how language sustains and reproduces power relations between peers and within discourse construction. Although CLA is a theory pertaining to broader language and societal issues, I see it as a useful theory for language education, specifically applicable to instances where peer conferencing is embedded in writing process theory. I suggest that awareness may be an essential component of the writing process, specifically the peer conference as it is in the conference itself where students, through their talk, directly confront power relations which contribute to the written product.

### The Research Problem

In general, the research problem is to develop understandings about critical language study, peer conferencing and student writing. The research problem focuses on student talk during peer conferencing in order to better understand the relationships between critical language study and the writing process.

Student text, both oral and written, is shaped by relations of power and invested with ideologies which affect writing and learning to write (Fairclough, 1992; Ivanic, 1994). Ivanic insists that developing a critical awareness of discourse and of the way it positions writers should be an essential component both of research on students' writing and of the language/writing curriculum. In response to Ivanic's call for studies on the effects of introducing critical awareness of power, ideology and language into the teaching of writing, I examined, in a specific setting, questions she has raised about specific strategies for creating a critical awareness of language. I investigated how student writers responded to this sort of awareness.

The research questions in this study are not hypotheses to be proven but guides to the study. The research questions listed below examine peer conferencing in a critical language framework from the standpoints of power relationships and ideologies. The major question is stated in broad terms. Subsidiary research questions are refinements. The research questions are:

How do a diverse group of eighth grade students respond to the critical language components of peer conferencing in which they are asked to consider the social, cultural, and political aspects of language?

How do students address the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in peer conference talk about their writing?

What subject positions, ideologies, and discourses surface during the peer conference talk?

What ideologies and discourses surface in their final drafts?

How do students revise their writing after having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts?

## The Approach to the Problem

In order to conduct the study, I chose one of my eighth grade English classes at the suburban middle school in which I teach. I chose a class that represented a rich diversity of students, including different class, ethnic, gender, family, and religious backgrounds. I invited eighth-grade students to participate who were interested in sharing their writing and thinking throughout the semester. I met with these students every school day for approximately forty minutes between September, 1997 and January, 1998. During this time I implemented a critical language awareness curriculum, and later applied it to individual units of study throughout the semester. Overlapping this curriculum, students participated in various writing projects, of which peer conferencing was an essential element, that also involved critical language study. In this way critical language study was both a unit and an approach to language study throughout the semester. Although this was a relatively short period of time to expect to see evidence of students taking up a critical language awareness, especially around matters of ethnicity, gender, and class, it was sufficient to see how the students responded to this approach and what it was that students actually did in peer conferences, as there are so few studies that document this event from an ethnographic perspective.

Overall, the design of the study is a sociolinguistic ethnography. This approach allows me to understand the literacy events in a specific classroom based on actively participating with and observing participants. Although the ethnographic study began with the teaching of a CLA curriculum, the primary

focus of the ethnographic study involves the peer conferences embedded in a critical language awareness curriculum and in the Native American Unit of study.

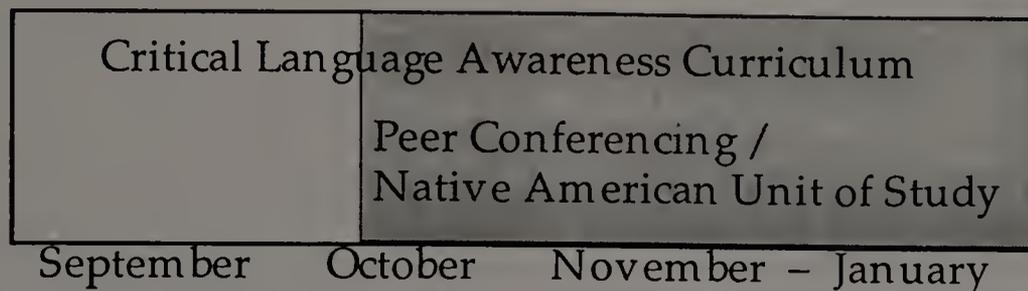


Figure 1.1: Timeline

The diagram in Figure 1 shows the timeline of the study. The gray area represents the overlapping of critical language awareness curriculum, peer conferencing, and the Native American Unit. From the peer conferencing data, a series of themes and understandings about critical language awareness and peer conferencing was extracted.

Data collection for this study involved participant observation, field notes, interviews, and student writing. The corpus of data included: demographic data on the school and community; audio- and videotapes of peer conferences and interviews; select audio- and videotapes of whole class lessons; and written artifacts, especially student writing.

Data analysis involved multiple steps and multiple layers. Using procedures designed by Ely (1991) and Spradley (1980), among others, the corpus of data was read for broad themes as well as for key events and data to analyze. Then, focusing further on those key events, analysis was conducted

using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) and other microethnographic techniques.

### Significance of the Study

Much of the research on critical language awareness involves young adults and primary school children as outlined in *Critical Language Awareness* edited by Norman Fairclough (1992). The same is true for peer conference studies; young adolescent voices are left out of the research and what is understood to be “good practice” or “probable theory” for primary school children, high school students, or adults is often assumed to be the same for young adolescents. I propose that this study offers a view of young adolescents as language learners separate from other learners in different developmental stages.

This study also contributes to what is known about critical language study and peer conferencing as separate practices and theories and also attempts to create new theories and practices based on the combining of the two practices. For example, Ivanic’s study indicates that writers are positioned by the act of writing and may be repositioned throughout the writing process, but her study is not designed to explicitly study critical language study and student talk during the peer conference. This study attempts to bring these two theories and practices together.

Finally, the Massachusetts English/Language Arts Frameworks outlines the knowledge and understandings students should have about the structure and social functions of language. This study may contribute to the discourse

about language learning and the key questions and social actions that may be necessary to challenge and/or support the theory and recommended practices of these frameworks.

### Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the peer conferencing practices established among a small group of eighth-graders as they engaged in a CLA curriculum and throughout various units of study. The findings were particular to this setting; however, the findings generated understandings about the relationship of these particular peer conferencing practices and the social issues in this situation, providing a descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory account of the educational possibilities available when a particular approach to language learning is made part of the educational context of writing activities in school. This information may inform future studies designed to reconceptualize language arts teaching and learning.

As already stated above, the limited time did not ensure that I would see evidence of students taking up a CLA. As this study was not an input/output study, the goal here was not to measure student change. Rather, the intent was to begin to understand what students do in peer conferencing and to determine how students demonstrated a critical language awareness in this process.

A major limitation to this study is that I took on multiple roles. In addition to being a university researcher, I was also the English teacher. Therefore, the students primarily viewed me as their teacher as the institution positioned me as the grade keeper, the rule maker, and the disciplinarian. I had

an insider and an outsider role in this research project. While this aspect of the study may have some limitations, as is true of all designs, it also had certain opportunities. One advantage of the multiple roles was that the study took place in conjunction with current curriculum development in language study in our school, which coincides with the interpretation and implementation of the new standards for English and language arts in the state of Massachusetts. Therefore, in addition to broadening the knowledge base of the field, the research and curriculum development benefits the students, the school, and the school district itself. Additionally, the study contributes to the ongoing debate about language education within the state.

This research occurred over a five-month period. A question might be raised about the quality of an ethnography conducted within such a short time frame. It is important to distinguish between an ethnographic study and an ethnography. The term "ethnographic" is often used to connote the use of techniques and methods from ethnography. The term "ethnography" is reserved for those studies that exhaustively describe a people's way of life. This study is best understood as an ethnographic study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON PEER CONFERENCING AND CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS

#### Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, I provide a review of recent research on peer conferencing and critical language awareness, respectively. I begin by discussing a brief history of peer conferencing in order to provide a framework for its contemporary development. Second, I discuss the limitations of the research on student talk during peer conferencing. I discuss how a narrow socio-cultural view of participants, a limited view of social positioning, and a neutral understanding of language contribute to a limited understanding of peer conferencing. Third, I discuss critical analyses of peer conferencing that focus more on actual student talk, social positioning, and the concepts of power, authority and ideology. Finally, I discuss CLA theory and pedagogy as one approach that may show possibilities for transforming peer conferencing practices in school.

#### Peer Conferencing

In this section I will briefly review the history of peer conferencing and the research on student talk during peer conferencing, which include quantitative/qualitative studies, qualitative studies, and critical studies of peer conferencing.

## Brief History of Peer Conferencing

Although it seems like a contemporary strategy in writing process, peer conferencing, “writing groups, the partner method, helping circles, collaborative writing, response groups, team writing, writing laboratories, teacherless writing classes, group inquiry technique, the round table, class criticism, editing sessions, writing teams, workshops, peer tutoring, the socialized method, mutual improvement sessions, intensive peer review” (Gere, 1987, p.1) have been around since 1753 when Linonia, a literary society founded at Yale began experimenting with critical responses, and further in 1769 when literary criticism of the evening’s readings was added to the formal program (Gere, 1987). According to the writing program director, the critic’s observations “enhance writers’ audience awareness, helping them to see their work from the perspective of others. At the same time intellectual growth results from enhanced self-critical abilities fostered by recognizing one’s one defects and errors” (Gere, 1987, p.13). This practice continued and developed at the college and university level well into the early 1900’s. In 1926, the stated purpose of the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference at Middlebury College, was to provide writers with a place “to show their work-in-progress to a responsive group who could comment on it with authority” (Gere, 1987, p.15). History clearly shows a progression from literary society to classroom workshop.

Writing groups were introduced into the secondary classroom by 1880 (Gere, 1987). Teachers recognized increased motivation and attention to revising writing (Cooper, 1914; Lord, 1880), developing greater audience awareness,

(Buck, 1901; Thurber, 1887; Watt, 1918) and a more positive classroom atmosphere (Walker, 1917; Ziegler, 1919). Teachers were also faced with large numbers of students and writing groups were instrumental in lightening the paper load of English teachers. In the 1930's Johnson led a research project on the "experimental method" of teaching writing. This method used writing groups almost exclusively. "Students read their own writing aloud, listening to the criticism of fellow students, and a summing up by the instructor...the reading of eight in a day would care for all in a week" (Gere, 1987, p.18). According to Johnson, the method proved successful for both content and the elimination of mechanical and grammatical errors. Additionally, the method was successful for all types of writers, even the "backward ones." Even though Johnson's research was statistical and did not include a multicultural perspective, it is curious that contemporary research done on writing groups seldom mentions this research. Nonetheless, writing groups have been around for a long time and contemporary researchers are still churning out research data that writing groups have a positive effect on writers as they increase motivation, foster critical thinking, enhance positive attitudes, and develop audience awareness. It is interesting that contemporary theorists and researchers have had to re-introduce writing groups to modern education.

In 1968, three books advocating writing groups were published -- Ken Macrorie's *Writing to be Read*, James Moffett's *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, and Donald Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing*. All three employed the British model of writing which favored student response, audience

awareness, and process over product. Furthermore, the climate of the 1960's was extremely hospitable to writing groups and less teacher-centered classrooms.

Ken Macrorie asserts in *Writing to be Read*, that "a program for improving writing such as the one presented in this book will not succeed unless the beginning writer becomes experienced through engaging in critical sessions with his[/her] peers" (Gere, 1987, p. 21-2). "Helping circles" are central to the writer's success throughout all of his books. James Moffett, basing his writing theory on Piaget's stages of intellectual development, claims that "feedback" helps writers to move beyond egocentrism to take the perspectives of others, or to move "from the center of the self outward" (Gere, 1987, p.23). Donald Murray also claims that students can learn skills of writing if teachers create a proper instructional climate. In his view, writing groups contribute to this climate. In editing groups students can discover and practice the "writer's basic skills" (Murray, 1968).

Another advocate of writing groups, Donald Graves, advocates informal classes and permits students greater freedom to function without teacher direction and to determine their own learning activities. He is a contemporary advocate of writing groups for elementary children (Graves, 1983). Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* (1973) added to the practice and discussion of writing groups as he further refined "feedback" and separated feedback based on the content of the writing from the editing process which focuses on the grammatical and mechanical functions of writing as already discussed above. Additionally, *Sharing and Responding* (Elbow and Belanoff, 1989) provided specific suggestions for guided peer feedback.

Finally, the establishment of the National Writing Project also contributed to the writing group's prominence (Gere, 1987). The NWP originated in 1974 and is currently located in over 160 sites in 44 states and Puerto Rico. Membership requires participation in inservice training where, among other things, that teachers write and participate in groups. The present day writing groups are a blend of old traditions and new adaptations. As discussed above, they are "in-process" themselves. One of the major goals of this study was to examine and theorize about new ways to refine and reshape peer conferences in order to meet the needs of students preparing to participate in a democratic society of the 90's and beyond.

#### Research on Student Talk During Peer Conferencing

In order to design a study that examines and theorizes new ways of envisioning the peer conference, an analysis of the research on student talk in peer conferencing is essential. In this section I will discuss the limitations of the research on student talk during peer conferencing. I discuss how a narrow socio-cultural view of participants, a limited view of social positioning, and a neutral understanding of language contribute to a limited understanding of peer conferencing.

For the purposes of this review peer conferencing is defined as an opportunity for peers to give content-related feedback as opposed to surface structure feedback (grammar, punctuation) as part of drafting in a process writing pedagogy. Peer conferencing is a student-centered activity facilitated by the teacher; that is, the teacher does not directly participate in the activity,

although the teacher may partially shape the conference with specific questioning agendas or response techniques. Peer conferencing may be done in pairs or in small groups of three or four students and may or may not include written responses.

Most of the literature on peer conferencing is concerned with quantitative improvements (such as statistical analysis of student writing improvement), is located in the cognitive domain, and leaves student voice out of the data and analysis, thereby offering no understanding of social positioning. Peer conferencing is claimed to improve writing (Bellas, 1970; Bright, 1885; Bruffee, 1973; Cady, 1914; Carpenter, 1905; Cook, 1895; Leonard, 1917; Macrorie, 1968; Noyes, 1905; Nystrand, 1986; Schelling, 1895; Wolf, 1969); to encourage discussion and revision (Beach, 1976; Benson, 1979; Clifford, 1981; Harris, 1986; Herrmann, 1989; Kaufman, 1971; Kirby and Liner, 1980; LaBrant, 1946; Peckham, 1980); and to reduce apprehension (Fox, 1980). Emig (1982) recognizes students talking in groups only prior to their writing and acknowledges that more research needs to be done in this area. While there are several studies that show peer conferencing as a helpful technique during the writing process, there are few studies that examine the actual talk that goes on during the peer conference itself. Even fewer studies examine peer conference talk from a socio-cultural perspective. There are no studies, which include an examination of the assumptions about language and language learning, ideologies, and subject positions in connection to the writing conference. Therefore, as I conducted my literature search I found only a handful of studies that were relevant to my

questions regarding peer conferencing and students' understandings of the social, cultural and political aspects of language. Consequently, I had to deflate my expectations of locating ideal ethnographic, adolescent focused, socio-cultural studies.

These stipulations -- that research be limited to classrooms engaged in a writing process pedagogy, that it be focused on some aspect of oral discourse related to peer conferencing, and particularly that it have a primary or secondary focus on what students actually do in peer conferences -- necessitated a further narrowing of the studies included in the review. As I found only three ethnographic studies that focus on oral discourse, social positioning and peer conferencing as a part of larger studies, albeit quite helpful, I found it necessary to also include a few quantitative studies on the language of writing groups that help me to understand how this topic has been understood historically, and to better inform my future research methodology and analysis. As the most helpful studies were not solely focused on middle school students, my principal interest, I did not limit my search by grade. Rather I was interested in the assumptions about language and participant social positioning posited in these studies.

The studies in the first section are quantitative and qualitative studies that concentrate on aspects of talk and language in writing groups. These studies provide me with informative theories and understanding concerning the value of student talk in the writing process. The second section, grounded in critical education theory, includes parts of larger ethnographic studies which, by analyzing the social positioning of participants during the peer conference,

recognize the necessity of “re-visioning” the peer conference as part of a larger re-vision of the writing process. The second set of studies provides me with theory and models that ground my research design and peer conference pedagogy.

### Quantitative/Qualitative Studies of Student Talk in Writing Groups

In order to understand how and if student talk in conference groups is helpful in the writing process, teachers must know what students talk about. To rethink and rewrite a draft, students must engage in meaningful dialogue during the writing conference. Process theory states that meaningful dialogue will help to reshape the piece of writing so as to improve its clarity and meaning (Murray, 1968). Many studies have shown that speech is a valuable prelude to writing, but few studies go beyond this view in claiming the value of speech to the writing process itself. These studies extend this view of student talk and help to frame my understanding of how talk is connected to the drafting process and the final written product, as I include a variety of drafts and written products in my data and analysis.

In their studies of fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade writing groups, Gere and Stevens (1985) and Gere and Abbott (1985) examined the effects of talk on writing group activities. Gere and Stevens focused their study on how oral response in writing groups shapes the revision of the writing by comparing peer oral-response methods with methods which employed teacher written response. Their data included observations from writings and oral and written responses to students’ writings. By analyzing the actual language of writing groups, albeit

not a microanalysis with a socio-cultural framework, during the writing process, they found that even when teachers used highly structured oral or written response methods, writing groups inform the author in two ways: offering an evaluative response which provided reinforcement for the writer; and providing a collaborative response in which group members share intellectual resources to assist one writer with an idea or find a better way to approach a question.

Using the same data from the above study, Gere and Abbott (1985) extended their research by evaluating nine writing classes taught by six teachers across grade levels. The teachers employed a student-centered writing process method with peer conferencing as a part of the process as recommended by Elbow (1981). Gere and Abbott's analysis includes a coding system using idea units which are based on Halliday's (1967) information units. The categories for which they coded each idea unit are: procedures, processes, content, form, context, and reference. In this study, the most common idea units were focused on content of writing and on directives about the process. The study concludes that student responses were focused and specific as students frequently gave one another explicit or implicit directions for rewriting. In contrast, teacher comments were much more general and gave ambiguous and evaluative comments which were focused on a set of abstract criteria for good writing. The researchers suggest that writing groups help writers to clarify meaning with specific talk that assists in that process. This talk informs the writer of the text's actual and potential meaning for each listener and guides the writer into subsequent drafts. In contrast, teacher comments affect students' writing by

conforming it, that is, by trying to realize its potential similarity to a model text by offering the writer ways to conform to certain abstract characteristics of good writing. Another major advantage of writing groups is the more immediate response to the writing which usually invites collaboration within the drafting process. However, this study makes it clear that students are still highly aware of the teacher as audience and as the one who limits peer response with teacher guidelines and response sheets for writing group agendas.

Gere and Stevens' (1985) and Gere and Abbott's (1985) research provides valuable understandings about talk in writing groups, but their research methods and analysis reflect a narrow socio-cultural view of the participants, a limited view of the effects of social positioning on the peer writing conference, and a neutral understanding of language and communication. The participants in these studies are briefly described as, for example, fifth, eighth, and eleventh/twelfth graders. There are only brief mentions of class, race, ethnic heritage or gender. These factors are either omitted completely or narrowly integrated with the data and the analysis which, therefore, offers a view of participants as having equal/similar experiences with peer conferencing regardless of their social positions. The coding analysis focused on content of writing and directives about the process provides no analysis of social positioning among participants. I can only postulate that the participants are actually engaged in repositioning throughout the writing process.

My study was designed to examine the teacher agenda, (a critical language study curriculum), student talk in peer conferences, and the written

product as Gere and Stevens (1985) and Gere and Abbott (1985) do in their studies. However, I also designed my study to include a broader socio-cultural view of participants, the social positioning of participants engaged in peer conferences, and a socio-political understanding of language.

Nystrand's (1986) study of reciprocity between readers and writers suggests that peer writing groups participate in extensive collaborative problem solving; as a result of student participation in these groups, students can anticipate potential trouble sources as they write, and students develop a sensitivity to the possibilities of text. Writing groups differ significantly in how they deal with writing problems, but when peer groups work well and writers confront their readers regularly to revise their papers, the group talk "tends to gravitate (emphasis mine) to those parts of the texts that are unclear" (Nystrand, 1986, p. 211). While Nystrand describes this process as a "natural thing" for a successful writing group, this study does not deconstruct what it means to "gravitate" to those parts of the text. Nystrand's research provides me with similar questions that help to frame my research questions: What subject positions do students take-on in order to "gravitate" to particular sections of student writing? What ideologies inform these conversations between peers?

Other research that focuses on peer response, group dynamics, and student talk points out that response groups are most effective when guided by written directions, that is, when student talk is indirectly controlled by the teacher. Students in peer response groups spend less time off-task, tend to search for deeper meanings in the writing and discuss the particulars of a paper's

form in more detail than students who are not guided by written teacher directions (Freedman, 1985). Successful peer conferencing rests in the teacher's ability to model feedback procedures and clarify the rules of behavior, as in Freedman's study the teacher with the loosest rules and oral as opposed to written directions and guidelines for peer conferencing had the least success with peer conferencing. As in the above studies, Freedman does not examine the socio-cultural factors, social positioning, and the socio-political aspects of language embedded in peer conferencing. A study that examines the social positioning of students given a teacher directed peer conferencing model may offer a more accurate understanding of students' talk in peer conferences.

#### Summary of Quantitative/Qualitative Studies on Student Talk in Writing Groups

Although the above studies offer valuable information about the possible outcomes of peer conferencing and its relation to the written product, these studies do not broadly examine the socio-cultural differences between/among writers, including class, race, ethnic heritage or gender; do not include the social positioning and repositioning of participants; and do not analyze the language in peer conferences from a socio-cultural perspective. These studies do, however, offer me a basis from which to build a study that includes these aspects for a more satisfying, inclusive understanding of student talk in peer conferences.

A study that includes detailed information about the class, race, ethnic heritage, and gender of the participants may offer a more meaningful understanding of the conversations that take place in peer conferencing. Any

one of these factors alone or in combinations may have profound effects on how a participant writes or responds in a peer conference. As detailed below in Jennings' study, gender alone is a substantial factor in student talk in peer conferences. Also, more inclusive information about participants may help to inform me about the relationship between verbal confrontations and student text, how they change the nature of the groups and of the individuals who specifically participate, and finally how these oral responses shape revisions. As meaning is embedded in multiple socio-cultural systems, the absence of this analysis glosses over multiple issues of class, gender, race, and ethnic differences embodied in the oral discourse of peer conferences.

The social positioning and repositioning of participants during the writing conference is not a factor in any of these studies. The functions used to categorize discourse types, as in Gere and Stevens' (1985) and Gere and Abbott's (1985) "idea units," include no social positioning in the analysis. However, the directive function of language in peer groups is a valuable piece of analysis in these studies. I propose that additional data on who uses the directive language and when and how this language affects the social positions of the participants and the writing itself would offer a more complete understanding of such directive language and the social positioning of participants.

As part of the process for participant selection in these studies, "individual groups were selected by the observer in consultation with the teacher; the criteria included representativeness of student ability levels, gender balance, and general good functioning within the group" (Gere and Abbott, 1985,

p. 365, emphasis mine.) This last feature of selection was indicated by the balance of talk among participants, absence of overt hostility, and teacher perceptions that the group worked productively. According to these studies, transcripts do include a number of verbal confrontations, insulting remarks, and other verbal abuse, but the researchers merely call this to our attention only to argue that the presence of the researcher and recording equipment did not serve to keep students “on task.” These oral exchanges are not regarded as important pieces of data. Recognizing the “overt hostility” sometimes present during peer conferencing is a critical piece of oral text to examine. What happens when writing groups are hostile? Who and what causes the hostility? How does the presence of “overt hostility” manifest itself in the social positioning of the group and in the written text? Does the presence of hostility mean that the writing group has failed? These studies categorize “overt hostility” as a symptom of failure in a writing group. Merely examining groups that are “generally good functioning” does not offer a complete picture of what happens when students conference. This leads to a further misunderstanding of language as a neutral medium through which communication about writing takes place.

### Qualitative Studies of Student Talk in Writing Groups

The qualitative studies reviewed in this section include an analysis of the social positioning and repositioning of participants during writing conferences, and are grounded in a more socio-cultural understanding of literacy and language. In combination with the above quantitative/qualitative studies, this research helps to connect my understanding of speech in peer conferences with a

framework for understanding social positioning as a critical factor in unpacking student talk.

Unlike other peer conference studies reviewed above, Jennings' interview study, *Evocations of Selves in 'Disappeared' Eighth Grade Girls: An Interview Study of their Responses of Peer Conferences in Writing* (1994), specifically sets out to examine social positioning and how it affects peer conference agendas. Her study offers a clearer understanding of student talk and peer conferencing than in the majority of studies on this topic and provides me with a research model with a broader socio-cultural view of participants and a framework for thinking about social positioning.

Jennings examined the affective domain of subjective feelings and thoughts regarding the peer conference as students participate in the writing process. Although Jennings' interest lies in how peer conferencing affects the psychological development of the adolescent self, I find the data related to the affects of groups during the peer conference relevant to the social positioning question posited above. Jennings recognizes the possibilities of different social experiences for girls during the peer conference. She also identifies social, cultural, and economic issues as related to gender role behavior, particularly for those adolescent girls defined as "disappeared." She identifies specific behaviors and social issues embedded in peer conferences. Jennings found that girls were concerned about being careful of the other person's feelings while they gave suggestions. They also expressed a strong commitment to the peer conference process. These girls worked through to a balanced response that honored the

other person's feelings as well as the peer conference process. Girls did not immediately and automatically make the suggested changes in their writing. Instead, every girl claimed and believed in her own knowledge and authority over her writing. Jennings found that each girl was the final authority over her own writing. Jennings suggests that they held onto their "essential selves" in their writing and did not transfer their power to any writing group member. There were only limited influences from group interactions. Jennings concludes that peer conferences can provide girls with opportunities to discover the knowledge inside of themselves, to trust what they know, to practice weighing alternatives to contents of their writing, and to practice holding their subject positions.

Jennings' research and analysis focuses on issues of self, power and group dynamics which are key to understanding the social positioning in peer conferencing as I have asserted above. She offers some important insights about how girls hold their subject positions and the effects of social positioning on adolescent girls participating in response groups. Although she does not examine the language of these groups in great detail, nor does she examine the assumptions about language and language learning which may offer more insight into the social positioning in her study, the conclusions about girls and their sense of subject positions in peer response groups is a significant piece of data when considering how and why to facilitate peer conferencing in eighth grade classrooms. Her research, however, doesn't include a critical analysis of the language in peer conferences, which, I suggest, may offer a deeper

understanding of sharing experiences and help to uncover and transform oppressive social practices embedded in the writing conference.

David Ludlam's ethnographic study, *A Sociolinguistic Investigation of Talk and the Construction of Social Identities in Peer Instructional Writing Groups* (1992), is concerned with the relationship of talk and various writing process activities in the construction of community within the group, and with the definition of social identity by the members of the peer group. He identifies and examines the norms of language use and their purposes in the talk of peer writing groups. His study also provides me with a research model for thinking about social positioning of participants engaged in peer conferencing and a sociolinguistic method of conversational coding and analysis. Ludlam conducted his research in English classes at a regional vocational high school over two and one-half years. He collected data from the same peer writing group of four adolescent males from tenth through twelfth grade. Ludlam employed a sociolinguistic method of conversational coding and analysis. The purpose of the analysis was to identify norms of language use established by members of the peer writing group and to evaluate the purpose for which the norms were used.

Ludlam's microanalysis focused on two areas of talk: task talk and storytelling. Eighteen norms of language use connected to writing process activities and storytelling were identified. His findings suggest that talk within process writing groups is being used for more than the accomplishment of the assigned task; the talk connected to the writing process activities is also being

used to accomplish the construction of a language community within the group and to define the individual subject positions of the peer group members. These findings indicate that the established norms of language use based upon aspects of the writing process and storytelling are important and are the means through which writing and social identity are connected. These norms provide a frame for regulating the social interaction of the group members. The results of the data analysis offer a means to help understand the various roles the members are assuming in the groups, such as leader or writing expert, but more importantly the data help to uncover the social positioning by the members in relationship to one another as they work to establish their subject positions within the group. The data analysis suggests that the process of negotiating and reconstructing one's social identity as it was practiced in this particular peer group can be classified into five areas: (1) raising one's own status; (2) raising another's status; (3) lowering one's own status; (4) lowering another's status; (5) gaining admission to the writing group (Ludlam, 1992).

Ludlam's data analysis provides me with a model for understanding and analyzing social positioning in peer conferences within a sociolinguistic framework of language. One major limitation of this study, which Ludlam himself acknowledges, is that the study of one peer group of four males with similar social backgrounds does not contribute to an understanding about how gender, social, and cultural differences may affect the development of language norms, which is one of the goals of my proposed study. Furthermore, this study does not attempt to uncover and transform oppressive social practices by

critically examining the concepts of power and authority in writing groups, as I suggest is a possible outcome of research embedded in a critical linguistic theory. However, this study does offer valuable insight regarding how talk in peer writing groups socializes students to ways of writing, thinking, and interacting as well as to talk itself. Additionally, Ludlam assumes a non-neutral understanding of language which contributes to a social view of language, writing, and talk about writing.

### Summary of Qualitative Studies of Student Talk in Writing Groups

Social positioning and repositioning of participants during the writing conference is a key factor in both of these studies. Jennings study is based on the psychological theory of development of girls during the peer conference, which strongly suggests that they have different experiences than boys. This study provides me with a model from which to examine and think about the social positioning of both girls and boys in an ethnically diverse eighth grade classroom. Likewise, Ludlam's study, although representing a narrow range of participants, provides me with a model and framework for analysis in order to understand the social positioning that may take place in the eighth grade peer conference groups in this study. Both studies contribute to the design and theory of my proposed study, in addition to studies embedded in a more critical understanding of language and learning as described in the following section.

## Critical Studies of Peer Conferencing

Students bring with them to the writing classroom individual, familial, and school related experiences that contribute to their evaluation of their peers and their peers' writing. Although teachers may employ a variety of strategies to assist students in their work with peers, ultimately, teachers have limited control over peer relationships. I am not suggesting that we cannot alter these relationships in any way, rather that teachers spend only a short time every day with students and beyond that time our students are constantly working out their relationships with one another in cooperation and in conflict. I suggest that examining peer conflict in writing groups may give teachers more insight as to how conflict affects the writing process. Unlike the studies in the first section, the studies in this section value conflict in their research as a means to understand social positioning and the writing process. Many studies have shown peer conferencing to increase the writer's awareness of audience (Bright, 1926; Buck, 1906; Cooper with Atwell, David, Giglia, Grabe and Locke, 1976; Moffett, 1968, Nystrand and Brandt, 1989; Sears, 1981; Shuman, 1975; Thurber, 1897; Watt, 1918; Zoellner, 1969), but none of these studies examines student talk, social positioning, and their effect on the final text. This is why I turned to studies that employed a critical educational theory; they more closely examined actual student talk, social positioning, concepts of power and authority, and their connections to peer conferencing, all of which may lead to greater insight about the final written product as a synthesis of these elements.

Lensmire's study of third graders in a writing workshop, as chronicled in *When Children Write: Critical Re-Visions of the Writing Workshop* (1994), focuses on his experiences as a teacher-researcher wanting to understand what happens during the writing process and to understand how to act effectively and responsibly in response to writers' writing and sharing. This study provides me with a research model that focuses on actual student talk, the social positioning and repositioning of participants, the concepts of power and authority of participants, and the ideological understandings of participants in peer conferences.

Lensmire's students' experiences in the writing workshop are the focus of his analysis and discussion. His analysis is based on examining the workshop approaches, assumptions, goals, and practices using Bakhtin's theories of language and literature as well as Friere's critical pedagogy. Both theorists underline the importance of cultural, social and political influences of ideology and language.

Lensmire draws heavily on student interviews as well as children's texts and vignettes in order to specify the risks that children, especially unpopular children, associated with writing for peer audiences. Lensmire focuses on children's responses to those risks, which included rejecting certain peers as audiences and avoiding genres and topics that involved too much self exposure. He also focuses on the ideologies embedded in peer conferences which may help to explain how/why children respond to each other, especially in high risk situations.

Lensmire's ethnographic study of what children actually do when they write, with peer conferencing as one aspect of this process, offers much insight into the social and individual risks of the peer conference. However, Lensmire's "socioanalysis" of the children in this study offers limited insight into the language that children engage in during peer conferencing. Although language is not assumed to be a neutral means by which children communicate with each other, a microanalysis of language that children employ in social positioning is not part of the analysis. Rather, Lensmire focuses his analysis more on the broader implications of social issues and writing. I suggest that a deeper critical discourse analysis of the language that children use in writing groups in order to position themselves socially might lead us to a more informative understanding of student talk, social positioning, power and authority, and ideology.

Like Lensmire, power, authority, and the social positioning of subjects are Lee's concerns in her study of teaching writing as a critical process in college writing courses. She concludes that peer conferencing may not necessarily leave the writer empowered (Lee, 1995). Her study recognizes the cultural constructions students bring to the writing conference which sometimes work inadvertently to reinforce privilege rather than to level it, thereby leaving some writers unempowered. Her research provides me with a framework for understanding the connections between a more critical understanding of peer conferencing, the social positioning and repositioning of participants, and power and authority. She reviews writing process pedagogy in her dissertation, *Visions and Revisions of Teaching Writing as a Critical Process* (1995), and,

consequently, focuses part of her study on the peer conference. Her study is a reflective piece on her practice and students' experiences drawn from two Basic Writing courses and three College Writing courses she taught. In her study she explores both the possibilities and problems she encountered in attempting to translate process writing theories into practice. The most significant fault she finds in process and critical pedagogy is the lack of attention to specific sites and to the diversity of real, complex individuals in the classroom. Lee believes that revision is the most important part of teaching--helping students see themselves, authority, meaning and texts as ongoing processes of construction and writing as a means of understanding and intervening in these processes. She asserts the importance of continually interrogating theories and practices in order to avoid falling into re-creating a new version of the repressive, authoritative, formulaic method of writing in which most of us were taught.

Although Lee's dissertation does not include a microanalysis of peer talk, it does offer some helpful insights into the peer review process and socio-political issues that may help us to understand social positioning in peer conference groups. The value of her research is from field notes with explicit examples of how gender and race operate in peer response. Unlike Gere's previous studies citing teacher-directed conferences as most successful, Lee's research suggests that teacher-directed conferences may inhibit students from saying what they need to say about a writer's piece.

Lee's study concludes that a process approach to writing "suppresses because it ignores and glosses over the existence of differences among texts,

writers, and classroom dynamics. The process model does not explicitly call attention to how issues of difference affect the process of writing, inform the textual product and its reception, or are played out in the classroom" (Lee, 1995, p. 50).

Lee's research points to the necessity of accounting for the heteroglossic nature of texts as determined by the multiple social positions of conferees when studying and theorizing about peer conferencing. Furthermore, any theory deriving from such research must adequately theorize the relationship between language and power as language is more complex than a personal, transparent medium through which texts are created. Although Lee's study focuses on student talk, social positioning, concepts of power and authority, and provides a critical model for the peer conference, her study still does not engage in the microanalysis of language necessary to understand the specific relationships between subject positions, power, and oral discourse patterns in the peer conference which, I suggest, leads to a deeper understanding of the oppressive social practices and texts embedded in student talk and in the written product.

### Summary of Critical Studies of Peer Conferencing

Unlike the quantitative and qualitative studies in previous sections, critical studies of peer conferencing value conflict in their research as a means to understand social positioning and student talk. Lensmire and Lee both include peer conflict and teacher/student interventions in their data. As critical researchers, they underline the importance of recognizing the cultural constructions students bring to the writing conference as they may work to

reinforce privilege. The analysis of social positioning may expose these cultural constructions, the oppressive forces that support power and authority, and corresponding ideologies. Consequently, critical research points to a re-visioning of the peer conference as one aspect of re-visioning the writing process and the research that informs the theory driving the writing process. These critical studies contribute to the design, theory and microanalysis of my study, in addition to aspects of the qualitative studies in the previous sections, as they more closely examine actual student voices, concepts of power and authority, and ideology, all of which provide valuable insight about the final written product as a synthesis of these elements.

### Critical Language Study

As CLS is the basis for the pedagogical intervention that provides the context of my study and my politicized view of language, in this section I will discuss and describe critical language study and its relation to discourse, power and authority, ideology, and social positioning.

The most basic premise of critical language study is understanding that language use is socially determined. Fairclough defines discourse as a type of social practice in speech or writing having the following properties: (1) Discourse shapes and is shaped by society; (2) Discourse helps to constitute (and change) knowledge and its objects, social relations and social identity; (3) Discourse is shaped by relations of power, invested with ideologies; (4) The shaping of discourse is a stake in power struggles (Fairclough, 1992). Discourse conventions are not homogenous and static, rather they are characterized by diversity and by

power struggle. Furthermore, discursal conventions are imposed by those who have power (Fairclough, 1989). Deriving from cultural anthropology and sociolinguistics, discourse in this study means that writing and communication are used to maintain and establish social relationships not only through the messages communicated, but also through and within the interaction itself (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). This definition of language includes other nonverbal signals such as gestures, eye gaze, and posture. Within a cultural group or society these shared ways of writing and communicating work to reproduce dominant communicative ideologies. Schools as political and cultural institutions are set up to do just that. Writing and communication practices may vary in order to maintain or change those relationships and are always open to contestation and change (Fairclough 1989).

Discourse involves two kinds of social conditions which can be identified: social conditions of production, and social conditions of interpretation. "These social conditions relate to three different 'levels' of social organization: the level of the social situation, or the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs; the level of the social institution which constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse; and the level of the society as a whole" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 25). The social conditions shape the members' resources people bring to production and interpretation and create the texts produced and interpreted. This study is framed by an understanding of discourse as social practice, which assists in disclosing the relationship between language and power.

This study, however, is also framed by Fairclough's definition of discourse as an "element of order of discourse," which means that discourse refers specifically to topic, content or subject matter (Fairclough, 1992, p. 128). This definition drives much of the microanalysis, especially the analysis of intertextual references, which are thematic connections students make during peer conferences.

The main goal of critical language study is to increase consciousness of how language contributes to the privileging of some people by others as consciousness is the first step towards social action. This approach to language study focuses on the complex interrelationships of language and power. Unlike other language study theories, description of sociolinguistic conventions in terms of how power is distributed unequally is only a partial goal of critical language study. The explanation of the conventions of language as the product of relations of power and struggles of power is a major goal of CLS. In order to explain the sociolinguistic conventions as the outcome of power, the "common-sense" (Fairclough, 1989) assumptions of language conventions, of which people are not consciously aware, are the focus of language study. For example, it is a "common-sense" assumption that students write essays in the following discursive format: introduction, three body paragraphs, and conclusion. A teacher employing a critical language study approach might focus on how and why educational institutions write essays in this format and question the "common-sense" notion of its appropriateness and/or logic based on a pluralistic understanding of writing in a pluralistic America.

Fairclough points out that these assumptions or “ideologies” are closely linked to power and authority as they are understood to be “naturalized” within a specific culture or institution (Fairclough, 1989). Ideologies support the existing power and social relations by their often subtle, underlying familiarity. Familiar ways of using language and of socializing in the world support the individuals or systems who wield power and authority. Considering the essay format in the previous example, one of the assumptions or ideologies inherent in the teaching of the five-paragraph essay might be that the discursive form is what is expected on standardized tests which are required of all eighth graders. Teachers often make the assumption that no other discursive form is acceptable on the test, and that the five paragraph essay is the single best way for students to demonstrate their abilities to write well. These ideological notions of writing place the power and authority for what constitutes “good writing” with the writers of the tests. Teachers and English departments subconsciously support the power wielded by the writers of the test and the entire system that mandates it. The five paragraph essay is “naturally” taught throughout the school system as it is a common-sense discursive format that is linked to student success in secondary and post-secondary institutions. Fairclough points to the recognition and explanation of ideologies as crucial to critical language study as he understands power in modern society as increasingly achieved through ideology and more particularly through the ideological workings of language (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough does not suggest that power is only tied to language as there are many other forms of power, including the use of physical force, but CLS

points out the unique interpellation of language with other ways of exercising power which may be coercive and/or consensual. Fairclough clearly states that power and authority rely on both ways, coercive and/or consensual, but that ideology is the principal tool for constructing consensual power relations (Fairclough, 1989).

A major goal of critical language study is to identify and explain subtle or unconscious relationships among language, power, and ideology. Social interactions are analyzed focusing on aspects of language which identify hidden factors in social relationship systems, and the hidden effects these factors have on the systems. For example, the teacher in the above example may explore with her students how the five-paragraph essay supports the relationship between the institutions of schools, standardized testing facilities, and the government departments that fund the tests. Uncovering the hidden relationships between language, power, and ideology may lead to a critical language awareness and, possibly, social action.

Another aspect of critical language study is what Fairclough refers to as "subject positions" which are the social roles taken up in a particular social situation. "Subject" refers to someone who is under some authority to operate within the positions set up in discourse conventions. However, Fairclough asserts that when social subjects are constrained they are still able to act as social agents. Discourses are conventional resources for subjects, but creating alternative genres for real social situations is also a possibility. In this way subjects can either reproduce the status quo or challenge the status quo with new

discoursal forms. This concept is important to my study as I am interested in which subject positions students take up in light of the possibilities that are available to them. This piece of data helps me to understand how subjects choose subject positions and how discourses operate to limit subject positions in peer conferences. The identification of subject positions will also provide me with information necessary to understand the conventional kinds of 'voice' which students use to address each other in peer conferences. Writers and speakers address each other from a range of subject positions which correspond with one another (Fairclough, 1992).

### Critical Language Awareness

Norman Fairclough underlines the necessity of preparing students for a democracy in which people will need access to prestigious discourse types, access to prestigious and powerful subject positions in these discourses, and access to prestigious institutions and to positions within them. Access to prestigious discourse types is only part of this. He understands the need to recognize power asymmetry in communicative interactions as it is becoming more subtle rather than disappearing. The "apparent elimination of overt power markers and asymmetries may be only cosmetic and power holders or gatekeepers of sort are merely substituting covert mechanisms of control for overt ones" (Fairclough, 1992, p.9). Students need to recognize covert mechanisms of control in order to discern, interpret, and participate in written communication as informed citizens. The prepared citizen will have the tools to

understand oral and written communication as something other than a generic, monocultural, ungendered, apolitical process and product.

Fairclough states that language itself is a target for change as it is perceived as a significant element in the implementation of change throughout societies. His theory implies that if the language changes so too will the attitudes and understandings of the ideologies behind the language. These changes are reciprocal; there is a two-way dialectical relationship between language and ideology. Language is shaped by and shapes society. If students begin to question communicative "standards," then they will contribute to a reshaping of society which, after all, is the goal of a democratic society, and hence a more democratic classroom. Questioning the language and language practices of any communicative exchange also may affect the social positioning of the language user, or more specifically in the case of peer conferencing, the writer and the listener. This is the goal of critical language analyst as implemented in the classroom. "Discourse helps to constitute and change knowledge and its objects, social relations, and social identity" (Fairclough, 1992, p.8) by unmasking the cultural, social, and political constituents embedded in language and communication. (Here I include communication and extend Fairclough's definition of discourse to include not only written and oral language, but gestures and body language as well.)

The assumption of critical language analyst is that the development of a critical awareness of the world, and of the possibilities for changing it, ought to be the main objective of all education, including language education (Fairclough,

1992). Recognizing power in relation to language and social circumstances is a valuable tool for anyone participating in a democratic society. It is a necessary skill for all members, and one that needs to be developed in language study curricula. Critical language analyst assumes more than an awareness and an understanding; it assumes the possibility, and in many cases inevitability, of linguistic change. Mainstream language study and, consequently, present writing process approaches fall short in that they take conventions and practices at face value, as a description of what should be, which obscures their social, cultural, political and ideological investments.

Fairclough insists that “the shaping of discourse is a stake in power struggles” (Fairclough, 1992, p.9). Discourse control is a powerful covert mechanism of domination. A particular set of discourse practices and conventions may achieve a high degree of naturalization- they may come to be seen as simply common sense, rather than as socially constructed. The personal narrative, for example, may be understood to “naturally” be excluded from a scholarly paper such as the formal essay. The common sense notions of the discoursal components that constitute a formal essay may never be discussed. This is a measure of the extent to which powerful social forces and groups dominate students’ discoursal choices in school. But “dominant practices and conventions may be confronted with alternative or oppositional ones with different valuations of languages and varieties, or different ideological investments” (Fairclough, 1992, p.9). This is referred to as “emancipatory discourse” in Fairclough’s later work.

The rationale for critical language analyst is that it attempts to use language education as a resource for tackling social problems which center around language. Hawkins (1984) refers to social aspects of educational failure as a lack of understanding of language which impedes the language development of children and reproduces the prejudices affecting minority languages and non-standard varieties. Although Britain is largely concerned with the varieties of English associated with socio-economic class, U. S. teachers may be more concerned with African-American English and other varieties of language more distinctly associated with race as well as socio-economic class and the reproduction of institutional racism and sexism resulting from a lack of social, cultural, and political awareness and understanding of how language can support oppression.

Surprisingly, critical language analyst questions treating the diversity of language in the classroom as a potential resource of great richness by recognizing that all language and varieties of language have their rightful and proper place in student's repertoires and each serves good purposes. According to Fairclough, this view of language diversity misses important points that can have detrimental effects:

1. An over exaggeration of the school's capacity for creating a equal opportunity institution is the danger here. Racism, sexism, classism are reproduced in many realms other than education.
2. A continuation of teaching prestigious language practices without developing a critical awareness of them reinforces their powerful position in society and reproduces the unequal distribution of cultural goods.
3. A portrayal of language varieties with rules of appropriateness is dressing up inequality as diversity (Fairclough, 1992, p.15).

Giving some language varieties a high degree of social clout means that other varieties are demoted, which perpetuates social prejudice. According to Fairclough, dominant language and language practices (oral and written standards) should be taught for pragmatic reasons, but learners should be exposed to critical views of dominant language and language practices. Teachers should expose students to the rules of "appropriateness" and encourage them to question and challenge these naturalized elements of language. Critical language analyst posits that "awareness" affects "competence." A central theme in a critical approach is that language awareness should be fully integrated with the development of practice and capabilities.

#### Critical Language Awareness Pedagogy, Peer Conferencing and Writing

As already discussed above, critical language study may assist students in understanding how language sustains and reproduces power relations among peers and within their writing. This theoretical framework is a helpful conceptual model for language education, but is difficult to bring into the classroom as it has the overall goal of making social change, which is very difficult to achieve with one hundred middle school students in one hundred eighty days of classroom instruction. Nonetheless, Fairclough's "producers and consumers" framework is a useful model considering that students will be in the world interacting with the internet, TV and magazine advertisements, MTV, political figures, medical professionals, insurance agencies, and food labels. Almost every activity in the world necessitates some critical understanding of how text manipulates and may be manipulated. Fairclough uses examples of

encounters in the medical field and police interviews with victims. The question here is: How does this relate to what teachers do in their classrooms?

In order for students to participate as informed consumers, they need to know what foods will maintain the health and well-being of themselves and their families, for example. Students also need to know how to keep their ways of life, their economic well-being, and their communities safe. In order to accomplish this, they need to understand the subtleties of language; how language manipulates their thoughts and actions, and perhaps most importantly, how they can in turn manipulate language in order to bring about social change if they deem it necessary. This requires more than the traditional knowledge of language: grammatical study, genre study, and filling out forms. Rather, in order to be a full participant in a democratic society, citizens must be able to detangle the language that may oppress or privilege themselves and others. Social change cannot take place without this knowledge, and democracy would be without the power of all the people, as only a select few might control the political, social and cultural aspects of society. In order for social change to take place, students need to understand the social, cultural, and political differences in written and spoken texts and have the tools to weigh alternative texts. This is the goal of critical language study: a critical language awareness.

Although critical language analyst is a theory pertaining to broader language and societal issues, I see it as a useful theory for language education which may help to prepare students to be active participants in a democratic society. I suggest that CLA may be an essential component of writing process,

specifically the peer conference as it is in the conference itself where student talk directly confronts writer identities and social positioning resulting in the written product. In the following sections I will review literature in which critical language analyst theory, or theory with similar frames, drives the writing curriculum and classroom methodology. Although pedagogies I examine are focused on critical language analyst and writing and not specifically peer conferencing, I draw my approach to peer conferencing pedagogy from this literature.

As critical language analyst is rooted in the British educational system, much of the literature concerns itself with the teaching of minority languages as associated with social class. However, Roz Ivanic's work is focused on CLA, the teaching of writing, and social positioning. Like Ivanic, Lensmire and Lee also focus on authority and social positioning embedded in writing pedagogy and include an examination of peer conferencing pedagogy. Although Lensmire and Lee do not specifically set out to employ critical language analyst theory and pedagogy, their implementation of writing instruction and re-visions of the writing process are consistent with critical language analyst and, consequently, offer substantial guidance as I attempt to reconstruct peer conferencing pedagogy to reflect a more democratic and socially just process. Finally, I will examine Fox, whose pedagogical recommendations also value conflict as an opportunity to examine the relationship between language and social and political struggles within the writing process.

As discussed above, critical language analyst focuses on the discursive construction of writer identities and social positioning by developing a critical awareness of language use and offering the possibility of change through the use of emancipatory discourse. Ivanic (1994) suggests that other approaches to writing either disregard writer identity or focus on the self as author, which negates the inevitability of writing as a social practice. She contends that critical language analyst can be helpful in uncovering the discursive construction of writer identities and, hence, social positioning (Ivanic, 1994). Although she draws on interviews of adult students for her scholarship, her examples and pedagogy are applicable to the teaching of writing at any level.

As critical language analyst focuses on the discursive construction of writer identities, Ivanic insists that developing a critical awareness of discourse and of the way it positions writers should be an essential component both of research on students writing and of the language/writing curriculum. Writers are positioned by the act of writing and may be repositioned during the peer conference. In both cases a multiple identity is constructed for them, not only through what they have written but also through the discourses they have drawn on in their writing. This is not a matter of free choice among a freely available set of alternative identity-creating discourses. Any changes within the writer's draft may be the result of approval, disapproval, or any response which challenges the writer's identities or social positioning. Ivanic suggests other possibilities of CLA as a component of peer conferencing:

1. understanding that not all discourses are available to all writers. For example, those who grew up surrounded by academic discourses may have easier access to academic discourses than those who didn't (Ivanic, 1994).

2. an understanding of why some discourses are preferred over others, how to employ the less preferred ones if desired, and the inevitable consequences resulting from this social action (Ivanic, 1994). All writers have a range of options available. Some of these selections are conscious and some are not.

A conference pedagogy embedded in a critical language analyst approach would involve a critical discussion during conferences of discursal choices and the way they position the writer. Students would understand that employing specific language and communicative elements portrays a specific identity, although this identity can be and usually is multiple. This understanding of identities helps the writer to gain control over what to reveal in any piece of writing. Ivanic suggests that this awareness can lead to action, or "emancipatory discourse" as referred to by Fairclough in later work. Ivanic bases her pedagogy on a view of language in which discourses do not "naturally" determine what people say and write but are open to contestation and change. She insists that critical language analyst can liberate writers from socially privileged discourses, helping them to recognize that they do not have to accommodate to them. In this way already privileged writers have the opportunity to participate in social change that may benefit others and, therefore, contribute to a more democratic

society. Writers are encouraged to make discorsal choices based on their alignment with social values and beliefs to which they are committed, which may even be in opposition to the dominant genre, and therefore contribute to discorsal and social change. Using critical language analyst as part of my conference pedagogy, students may discuss conventions and may make decisions based on this new awareness: language is not a neutral set of conventions. Rather language is filled with social, cultural, and political meanings that serve to reproduce ideologies that may be in opposition to our own beliefs and values.

Tim Lensmire's study of peer culture, the writing workshop (in which peer conferencing is a key component of the writing process), and the shaping of text helps to construct my pedagogical framework for peer conferencing and helps me to frame my questions about social positioning. He suggests that the opportunity for children to peer conference with each other may have positive and negative results (Lensmire, 1994). Lensmire describes one of the children in his study, Jesse, as the "female pariah," who was ostracized by nearly all the other children because she was overweight and came from a trailer park. Other children refused to conference with her. He found several instances of "ostracized" children and, consequently, concluded that "children evaluated and excluded each other by gender, by social class, by personality -- in ways that echoed some of the worst sorts of divisions and denigrations in our society" (Lensmire, 1994, p.141). Drawing heavily on Graves (1983) and Calkins (1996) for guidance on shaping peer conferences in the writing workshop, he found that

process pedagogy overestimates the extent to which teachers can resolve peer conflicts with teacher modeling of response and behavioral rules (Lensmire, 1994).

Lensmire suggests several recommendations for “re-visioning” aspects of the writing workshop. Here I focus on recommendations that have implications for the peer conference:

- “. . .teachers must recognize the connectedness of response to the social life of children in the classroom, and actively strive to create a classroom community in which children accept and learn from each other’s differences” (Lensmire, 1994, p.143). With this re-vision, Lensmire posits a critical stance which might be more responsible to a pluralistic classroom.
- “Reading student texts as artifacts of a classist, racist, sexist society. . .helps our children avoid modes of thought and action that perpetuate these aspects of our society...but we must also concern ourselves with local meanings, values, and relations, the micro politics of particular classrooms and children’s texts” (Lensmire, 1994, p.144).

A more adequate peer response model would address two aspects of writing that have been largely ignored by writing process approaches to peer conferencing:

- “It would pay more attention to the immediate peer culture, to social relations among children and the meanings and values they assign to each other, texts, and teachers” (Lensmire, 1994, p.145). Conferees must not be blind to the ways they are connected to each other, blind to shared meanings and values

they bring to their talk and texts. Furthermore, teachers must find value in guiding them through this process.

- “It would include a vision of the type of classroom community in which we want our children to write and learn. We affirm the negative aspects of children’s divisions when we commit ourselves to uncritically supporting student intentions” (Lensmire, 1994, p.145).

Lensmire suggests that teachers must help students understand and execute their own powers of textualization. Teachers must help them see that text is a text related to others (intertextuality), and that every oral and written response has several levels of meaning.

Although Lensmire’s re-visions include more teacher influence over peer conferences, he stresses the dangers of reasserting overbearing teacher control over the talk and texts of children. The results of his study show that a balance of teacher and student control over aspects of the peer conference lead to serious consideration of students’ intentions in oral and written texts. Teachers can not assume that all children’s peer conferences have positive intentions; therefore, it is the teacher’s responsibility to create successful pluralistic communities in which children have opportunities to engage in peer conferences regarding the knowledge, beliefs, and values students draw upon in their texts. In this way, Lensmire’s re-visions are similar to critical language analyst with the exception of the emancipatory discourse, that is, providing students with tools and instruction for alternatives to dominant discursal choices, which is one of the pedagogical goals in the peer conferencing model of my study.

Lee also points to the necessity of re-visioning present models of process writing which may be directly applied to more “critical” peer conferences suggested in the critical language analyst framework. According to Lee, peer conference pedagogy should:

- “ask writers to examine their authoritative positions and the unspoken assumptions upon which their claims to truth and universal interpretation rest”
- “include strategies to help students recognize how privilege is constructed through discursal choices”
- “include recognizing the connections between individual/social and ideological/material”
- and “provide the revisionist tools for initiating social transformation” (Lee, 1995, pp. 200-01).

Although she doesn't ground her pedagogy in CLA, the revisions she suggests above are consistent with the guiding principals of CLA, including the provision of revisionist tools, or emancipatory discursal choices as referred to by Fairclough, in order to guide the social transformation of written discourse and to promote the possibility of social change. Lee's re-visioning strategies also inform the pedagogical model of peer conferencing in this study.

I also find useful Tom Fox's suggestion that writing pedagogy include studying gender, class, and race, so that students can explore the ways in which education and culture silence or transform resistance and inhibit students from disclosing the selves they wish to expose in their writing. With social theories of

knowledge informing his pedagogy (Bartholomae, 1985, and Bizzell, 1982), Fox suggests a pedagogy that offers students new ways to recognize the role that language plays in signaling and creating boundaries of privilege. The effects this role has on discursal choices can lead to a more democratic classroom.

Teaching students how to interpret their own and each other's language in terms of gender, social class, and race is an important focus of this pedagogy.

Fox points to the political advantages of such an interpretation: an understanding of how society and privilege shape literacy, and how interpreting acts of literacy can be critical and liberating for students (Fox, 1990). This is consistent with critical language analyst in that he is asking students to concentrate on the sources of conflict in our culture that may be present in many peer conferences. He suggests that by examining these conflicts students will come to an awareness of the relationship between language and social and political struggle, which, Lee suggests, are buried in teacher controlled peer conference agendas. Fox underscores the importance of releasing students and teachers from the preoccupation with writing evaluation, and moving toward a preoccupation with understanding and meaning of texts. Perhaps a gradeless writing class would be more consistent with this pedagogical stance as it might foster more preoccupation with discursal choices and how discursal choices and social positioning affect the final written text. This approach to teaching writing accomplishes two goals: 1) promotes a tolerant understanding of a pluralistic society; 2) works to alter the world of those groups to whom our social structure has denied privilege, opportunity, and status (Fox, 1990).

Fox's pedagogical visions are nearly consistent with the goals of CLA; however, as the social action goal is not clearly defined in his pedagogical frame, Fox is more closely aligned with CLA's earlier goals of awareness with limited social action or "emancipatory events." Fairclough's most compelling and challenging goal is in empowering students to take an action, either to align themselves with the dominant discourse or to oppose such discursual restraints. The power results not only in the understanding and awareness of discursual conventions that oppress particular language users, but also in the action that students take in order to oppose the language that sustains the oppressive ideologies. Like Fox, I attempt to unite my teaching practices with my own confrontation with my educational history and classroom language, which may add substance to my pedagogical model. I also attempt to place greater emphasis on the opposition to teaching practices and classroom language that oppress particular members of a class, which may be a helpful model that assists students to fully comprehend how action can lead to social change and a more democratic classroom.

#### Summary of Critical Language Awareness, Pedagogy, Peer Conferencing and Writing

Critical language awareness is a useful theory for language education which may help to prepare students to be active participants in a democratic society. As a component of peer conferencing, critical language analyst offers student writers opportunities to confront writer identities and subject positions which may lead to discursual alternatives and, in some cases, social action.

Ivanic, Lensmire, Lee, and Fox offer critical re-visions that inform the pedagogical intervention strategies in this study. Ivanic suggests that developing a critical awareness of discourse and of the way it positions writers should be an essential component of the language/writing curriculum. Understanding the availability of discourses, how and why some discourses are preferred over others, and the risks involved in employing alternative genres are some of Lee's strategies that informed my revised peer conference model. Lensmire points to the connectedness of peer response to students' social lives in the classroom. He underlines student awareness of how social positioning may oppress and/or privilege students, and student awareness of texts as perpetuating classist, racist, and/or sexist ideologies that support the micro-politics in a particular classroom. (Fairclough would also point to the importance of relating oppressive texts to the macro-politics of the school, the state, and the country.) This goal necessitates the study of class, race, and gender so that students can explore the ways that discursal choices can oppress or privilege, as suggested by Fox, which also informed my pedagogical interventions. Finally, Lee's suggestions to provide students with tools and instruction for choosing alternatives to dominant discursal choices were also part of my pedagogical intervention for peer conferencing. All of these interventions are consistent with critical language analyst and with my more personal attempt to examine my own teaching practices for language and practices that oppress and/or privilege conferees within my classroom.

## Summary of the Literature on Peer Conferencing and Critical Language Awareness

Historically, peer conferencing has been practiced and developed since the mid-1700's and continues to be a central method used in process writing classrooms today. As peer conferencing strategies are refined and reshaped to meet the needs of students preparing to participate in a democratic society of the 90's and beyond, research is needed to understand the complex social, cultural and political issues inherent in student talk and the corresponding writing resulting from this procedure.

The quantitative/qualitative studies in the first section of this review offer helpful information about the outcomes of peer conferencing and their relation to the written product. However, Gere and Steven's, Gere and Abbott's, Nystrand's, and Freedman's research on student talk during peer conferencing is mostly limited to quantitative improvements, is located in the cognitive domain, leaves student voice out of the data and analysis, and ignores conflict as an important part of the analysis. I suggest that research including a broad socio-cultural view of participants across cultures, genders, and socio-economic classes, a thorough understanding of social positioning, and a non-neutral understanding of language may contribute to more useful knowledge of peer conferencing. Also, more inclusive information about participants may help to inform me about the relationship between verbal confrontations and student text, how they may change the nature of the groups and of the individuals, and how these oral responses may shape revisions.

The qualitative studies reviewed in the second section focus on the subject positioning and repositioning of participants during the writing conference as key factors in understanding student talk in peer conferencing. Both Jennings and Ludlam provide me with models from which to examine the subject positioning of students in an ethnically diverse classroom. Although these studies do not include a critical microanalysis of language, both studies contribute to the design and theory of my study on critical language analyst and peer conferencing.

Unlike the quantitative and qualitative studies reviewed above, critical studies of peer conferencing value conflict as a means to understand social positioning and student talk in their research. Both Lensmire and Lee recognize the differences among texts, writers, and classroom dynamics as key elements to analyze and understand peer conflict and the effects of student/teacher interventions. They understand the analysis of subject positioning as critical to exposing the oppressive forces that support power and authority, and the corresponding ideologies. These critical studies contribute to the design and theory of my study as they more closely examine actual student voices, concepts of power and authority, and ideology, all of which provide valuable insight about the final written product as a synthesis of these elements.

Critical language study is the basis for the pedagogical intervention that provides the context of my study, my politicized view of language, and my data analysis. The goal of critical language study is a critical language awareness which Fairclough insists is a useful theory for language education and may be a

useful component of peer conferencing. Critical language analyst offers student writers opportunities to confront writer identities and subject positions which may lead to discursal alternatives and, possibly, social action as suggested by Ivanic. Students may determine they are oppressed by the discursal norms of the five-paragraph essay, for example; others who can participate within this genre with great skill, may determine they are privileged by this particular discourse. Additionally, student awareness of texts as perpetuating classist, racist, and/or sexist ideologies is central to these pedagogical re-visions of the peer conference. These strategies support the critical language analyst theory, and, hence inform the pedagogical interventions of my study and are the basis of data analysis.

A broader understanding of the transformative opportunities in these critical studies offers me an effective lens with which to focus my study. Examination of students identifying and perhaps altering the extent to which powerful social forces and groups dominate both written and oral discourse may be helpful in understanding peer conference exchanges. These studies point toward language as a site of social problems but also as a powerful tool for writers and listeners to contest dominant ideologies and practices. As suggested by Ivanic, an analysis of writer identity may help me to understand the effects of disclosing and possibly altering subject positions through talk in writing groups. Additionally, the disclosure of authoritative positions of writers and peer responders may assist me in understanding students' common sense notions (ideologies) of discursal choices.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Overview of the Chapter

This dissertation reports a study about one aspect of critical language awareness and the writing process: evidence of students demonstrating the practices of in peer conferencing and student writing among a group of eighth graders in a suburban middle school. The goal of this study was to generate understandings about critical language study, peer conferencing, and social positioning. The research questions are:

How do a diverse group of eighth grade students respond to the critical language components of peer conferencing in which they are asked to consider the social, cultural, and political aspects of language?

How do students address the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in peer conference talk about their writing?

What subject positions, ideologies, and discourses surface during the peer conference talk?

What ideologies and discourses surface in their final drafts?

How do students revise their writing after having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts?

In the first section of this chapter I present the context of the study including the community, the school, and the participants. Second, I provide an overview of the curriculum including the revised peer conferencing model. Third, I discuss the research design by describing the kind of ethnographic study this is and by describing the research design in detail. Next, I discuss the details concerning access and consent. The last two sections describe data collection and

analysis. I provide definitions of the analytical categories used in the microanalysis, a description of how message units are identified, and a sample of how I coded ideologies, subject positions, and discourses.

### The Context of the Study

In the following section I describe the context of the study including the community, the school, the English classes, the English department, and the participants.

#### The Community

Northland is a suburban New England community with a population of approximately 30,000. This community in which this study took place included a wide range of political and social views about learning and schooling. The school committee, for example, includes both liberal and conservative constituents, although the majority of the power resides in a more liberal perspective, unlike a majority of other city committees. The community as a whole, however, clearly supports education as evidenced by the over-ride of Proposition 2 1/2, (a state imposed tax limitation) the building of a new multi-million dollar section of the middle school including a new pool and computer facility, and a complete renovation of the existing middle school facility. This support extends the collective efforts of the neighboring colleges and universities that work together with public schools to create projects and opportunities for public school students and their teachers, and for college students and their professors.

## The School

This study was conducted at a newly renovated suburban middle school located just outside of the city limits. The school's facilities include a media and library center, two computer labs, a community room, cafetorium, gymnasium, pool, and two classroom floors separating the sixth graders from the seventh and eighth graders. The facility also includes special classrooms for reading instruction and special education. The school enrolls approximately 720 students from the nearby city and from the neighboring small towns. There are approximately 200 sixth graders, 280 seventh graders, and 240 eighth graders divided into teams of approximately 100 students. 70% of the students are reported as white, 20% are Hispanic, 5% are African-American, 3% are Asian, and 2% are Native American.

Each team includes an English, math, social studies, and science teacher who meet each day during a forty-five minute team period. Team period is designated for discussion regarding student achievement and behavior, parent meetings, guidance counselor meetings, and interdisciplinary project planning regarding a specific academic goal involving each academic discipline.

## The English Classes

Middle school team structures usually include one English teacher for each team. In this school, however, I am the second English teacher for all five seventh and eighth grade teams. During the study, this meant that each of my English classes were comprised of approximately ten to twenty students whose

schedules, for a variety of reasons, did not accommodate the team English teacher's schedule of classes or, if students' schedules did accommodate the team English teacher's classes, the team English teacher's classes exceeded the contractual limit of 100 total students. So, it was by default that students ended-up in my classes. Since our middle school administration strongly embraces an interdisciplinary approach to learning and some of the team English teachers did not fully employ this approach, students and parents did not, however, indicate to me or to the principal that they were unhappy with this arrangement. On the contrary, students in my classes participated in a wide variety of interdisciplinary learning activities that were supported by the building principal, the state mandated curriculum frameworks, and the English department.

### The English Department

The English department is composed of five teachers who teach seventh and/or eighth grade classes. The department embraces writing process theory, interdisciplinary learning approaches, and writing across the curriculum, although with varying interpretations. Writing process is theoretically embraced, but the practices within the department vary widely in terms of prewriting, drafting, and peer conferencing practices. With the exception of my English classes, language instruction includes the study of grammar and punctuation as a separate unit. Finally, some of the department members coordinate multifaceted, inspiring, interdisciplinary writing and research

assignments for their teams, while others include a few, perfunctory, interdisciplinary assignments in order to meet the school's goals and standards.

### The Participants

Participants in the study were students in one my eighth grade English classes and myself as their teacher. I chose this class because of its racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and academic diversity. As teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and students were asked to choose one of two academic levels for English, parents often over-ruled any decisions made by teachers or guidance counselors, and thus, the students in this English class were a mix of special education and regular education students of varying abilities. This class constituted a diverse group of white, Puerto Rican, Asian, and African-American students from working-class, middle-class, and upper-class socio-economic backgrounds. Out of 21 students there were 11 girls and 12 boys in my class. A majority of these students attended seventh grade in this middle school, and three students were new to the school. Additionally, there were four students who were in my seventh grade English class last year. I identify them and discuss how this may have influenced my data and analysis.

The selected pairs/groups of students whose talk was chosen for microanalysis are: Jane and Kristine; Matt and Tony; Lori, Mary, and Karen; and Bob and Brad. In addition to taking up a politicized view of language, these students were selected to meet the following list of criteria:

(a) represent a variety of ability levels. (Although not a focus of this study, I thought it was important to choose a variety of student ability levels in

order to ensure that not only the students who read and write above eighth grade levels could think about language in this very complex way.) Kristine was a special education student on an education plan. Tony was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and was also on an education plan. Tony and Bob were failing English during the time of this study. Brad and Jane were average students. Matt and Mary were above average students. Lori and Karen had earned an A both terms and were honor society members. Jon was also a special education student, who was not part of a selected pair, but is included in parts of the analysis;

(b) do not always adhere to the literacy conventions taught by the teacher. Mary, Tony, and Matt challenged these conventions;

(c) include several non-harmonious peer conferencing moments which include arguments and disagreements about the peer conferencing process itself, literacy conventions taught by the teacher, and ideological differences of opinion. For example, Matt argued with Tony about the conventions of a response paper. Mary, Lori, and Karen struggled with issues of writer authority. Bob and Brad argued about writer and responder authority;

(d) represent a variety of socio-economic classes. Kristine, Bob, and Mary came from working class families. Matt, Brad, Tony and Karen came from middle class families. Lori and Jane came from upper-middle class families;

(e) represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Matt identified as Jewish. Mary identified as Native American and of white European decent. Tony identified as first generation Italian-American. Bob identified as African-

American/Puerto Rican. Brad was white of European decent. In an effort to include more diversity in the study I also included the following students in parts of the analysis: Jamie, who identified as Native American/Puerto Rican; and Albert, who identified as Korean/Asian;

(f) represent both genders. Students chose their own conference partners which might explain why they chose members of the same gender. Therefore, it is a finding of this study, which is consistent with other studies of gender and writing, that in the early adolescent years students prefer to conference with same-gender partners; and

(g) having the necessary data in my possession narrowed my choices for pairs featured in the microanalysis. I needed the following from each conference pair: a Pocumtuck story with all drafts, a response paper with all drafts, and the corresponding peer conference forms filled-out for each paper; a term 1 portfolio that contains a language log and other assorted papers which could be used to identify intertextual references with peer conferencing transcripts and written papers; and an audible audio and/or video tape of two peer conferences in which both partners participated in giving and receiving feedback. (In a few instances, the audio tapes are not audible throughout the entire conference, but there is adequate audible discussion to analyze the talk.)

### The Design of the Curriculum

To conduct the study, I created and implemented a curriculum, in which students read and responded to articles, novel excerpts, poetry, advertisements,

films, and television vignettes about various aspects of language. This curriculum provided the critical language analyst theory, information, and strategies for the peer conferencing instructional intervention. This revised critical language analyst peer conferencing model assisted students in disclosing the subject positions of writers and peer responders in order to examine common sense notions of power and language. This intervention was an extension of the critical language analyst curriculum.

The study began in September, 1997, and concluded in January, 1998. During this time I met with students as their English teacher approximately five days a week for 45 minutes a day. There were several types of activities and lessons associated with the critical language analyst curriculum and critical language analyst peer conferencing within the Native American Unit. The critical language analyst curriculum included, for example, student conducted interviews with parents and peers regarding various aspects of oppressive language. These interview sessions, which occurred at home or in the cafeteria, were considered a critical language analyst activity. The critical language analyst peer conferencing within the Native American Unit included, for example, student conducted peer conferences with each other as they worked on various drafts of a Native American historical fiction piece, as well as a response paper focusing on a contemporary Native American issue. In response to these peer conferences, students were asked to consider their subject positions both as writers and as responders. These conferences were the major focus of this study.

In the following sections I discuss the lessons and activities from the critical language analyst curriculum, also referred to as the Language and Diversity Unit, (the way I referred to the unit with students), and from the critical language analyst peer conferencing within the Native American Unit. I discuss those activities and lessons that were of primary importance and that appear most connected to the findings of this study, particularly those lessons and activities that may have intertextual links to the microanalysis and student interview excerpts used to triangulate the data analysis in Chapter Four.

### Critical Language Awareness Curriculum

The beginning of this study involved implementing a critical language awareness curriculum with the overall goal of helping students to develop an understanding of themselves as language users in their families, schools, and the communities in which they live and interact with society. The purpose of this understanding was to empower students to gain some conscious control over their experiences, especially those experiences involving oral or written discourse. This goal was based on the following theoretical assumptions: 1) description and explanation of the discourse of society assists learners in understanding the relationship between language, power and society; and 2) students' own linguistic and other experiences are central to the learning process. The instructional goals were based on Lancaster and Taylor's (1988) case study of critical approaches to language learning and pedagogy: "1) to develop an awareness of the nature of language, its structure and the possibilities of its use;

2) to help equip students to live in a multi-ethnic, multilingual, democratic society; 3) to explore the way language is used in school, at home, in the street, and in the community; 4) to encourage students to explore attitudes about language and dialects" (Lancaster and Taylor, 1988, p. 268). The following sections discuss each instructional goal and the topics, texts, and activities that were employed in order to accomplish each goal. (See Appendix I for a complete bibliography of the texts used in this curriculum.)

Instructional Goal One: Developing an Awareness of the Nature of Language, its Structure and the Possibilities of its Use

Table 3.1  
Instructional Goal One: Curriculum Materials

TOPIC	TEXT	ACTIVITY
examining prior knowledge		Language Questions
gesture and politeness rituals		student as anthropologists
language is political	"Language, the Truest Tongue"	
"standard" English	"Usage and Meaning"	
propaganda techniques	"Propaganda Techniques"	identifying and deconstructing advertisements
dialectical nature of language		film as text: positioning audience and vice versa

The goal of developing an awareness of the nature of language, its structure and the possibilities of its use meant that students needed to

understand language as something other than lifeless words on a page. Understanding language as living, and therefore changeable, necessitated that students needed to identify their own uses of language in various discourse communities in which they interact. This understanding was contingent upon students understanding their own linguistic experiences, which was the goal of responding to the initial "Language Questions." These questions asked students to think about and process their own experiences with dialects, bilingualism, African-American English, Ebonics, language and politeness rituals, "standard" English, language in their homes, at school and in the community, language and gender, as well as their own development of language as readers, writers, and speakers. In this way, students were positioned as experts on their own experiences and, in many cases, experts on topics about which the teacher was not fully knowledgeable. For example, one student wrote and shared extensively about his experiences as a Puerto Rican male speaking Spanish at home, English at school, and what he called "Spanglish" with friends at the youth center. The "Language Questions" provided students and teacher with a baseline knowledge on which to construct a more complex understanding of the nature of language, its structure and the possibilities of its use.

Students were positioned as linguistic anthropologists when they were asked to observe and record the gestures and politeness rituals of specific cultural groups, such as teens, kindergartners, teachers, and administrators.

This information was shared in class and students wrote recommendations for successful interacting with each group. This lesson was the basis for their understanding of the nature of language as connected to power and positioning and also provided the background for a more complex lesson on dealing with cross-cultural misunderstandings.

In addition to various readings highlighting the political nature of language, students also learned about the nature of text as propaganda. Students specifically learned to identify and create seven propaganda devices commonly used by advertisers: "bandwagon technique," everybody is doing it, so you should too; "transfer technique," the respect we feel for a particular symbol is transferred to the object being sold; "card stacking," selected only the evidence supporting an argument regardless of its relevance; "testimonial," using biased or incompetent authorities to sell a product; "glittering generalities," using general and abstract words in order to allow the consumer to utilize his/her own perception of the word; "plain folks," appealing to ordinary people simply by employing plain everyday folks in ads; and "name calling," comparing the advertised product with other well-known products. (Please see Appendix I for the complete propaganda techniques sheet with examples.)

The focus of these lessons on propaganda was on understanding the power of language as shaped by and shaping society. By identifying and questioning the standards of language in advertising and in various persuasive writings, students considered the reshaping of the language of advertising. Students also identified the same propaganda techniques in their peer's Native

American response papers and, hence, questioned the logic of such arguments. This lesson assisted students in more critical reading of various texts throughout the study, as well as provided a more a complex understanding of the nature and structure of language as a personal and political tool used to unpack advertisements and persuasive writings.

Finally, the relationship between language and power, was presented through a film study of excerpts from "Roots" and "Gone With the Wind." In this lesson students watched excerpts from these two films in order to wrestle with how people from different social classes, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and religions might respond to the texts. I introduced the word "dominant" to describe the powerful subject positions within the specific contexts of the films and to describe what is commonly referred to as "standard" English. Students read the article "Usage and Meaning" in conjunction with the film study in order to gain an understanding of various English language structures, and their relationship to power and positioning. With an understanding that text can include visual representations other than letters, students developed a complex understanding of the relationship between language and power, the structures it can take, and the possibilities of its use.

Instructional Goal Two: Equipping Students to Live in a Multi-cultural, Multilingual, Democratic Society

Table 3.2  
Instructional Goal Two: Curriculum Materials

TOPIC	TEXT	ACTIVITY
language at home/school	"I Am Miguel" "Caught Between Two Languages"	Language Questions
bilingualism	"Can't Anyone..."	
African American English	"So, What is AAE?" "History of AAE" "Language for a Second Class..." "Response to Language..."	
language and gender	"Male/Female Communication"	request activity
resisting oppressive language	brainstorm session	letter to guidance department role play /situation cards

The goal of equipping students to live in a multi-cultural, multilingual, democratic society meant that students needed to understand how socio-cultural factors are related to language and subject positioning. Students' experiences provided rich examples and stories from which to correlate class readings and, sometimes, to take issue with the perspectives in class readings. The short story, "I Am Miguel," provided those students with little or no experience with bilingualism an opportunity to understand the complexities involved from an "insiders" point of view, as this story is told in the first person point of view. Other readings, such as "Can't Anyone Speak English?" and "Caught Between Two Languages," provided students with a variety of perspectives on the assets

and potential liabilities of bilingualism. Additionally, African-American English and the Ebonics debate were constantly in the news at this time. Students read and responded to several articles concerning this controversy, including a published editorial that I wrote, and frequently shared newspaper and internet articles in class. I also asked students to consider gender as a socio-cultural factor related to language and subject positioning. Students read "Male/Female Communication" with much skepticism, but began to understand the implications of this factor with a candy request activity which involved the video taping of girls and boys making requests for a piece of candy. After the taping, students were asked to study the video for linguistic as well as gestural differences in their requests. Students eagerly grasped the differences and created a chart to highlight their findings. All of these readings and activities were created to equip students with the critical language skills to live productively in a multi-cultural, multilingual, democratic society.

Finally, this instructional goal based on living in a pluralistic society included an activity called "situation cards" in which students were asked to work out strategies that would assist them in resisting oppressive language in various social contexts. For example, one group of students was given the following situation card:

You are in a coed physical education class. The female instructor refers to all students as 'guys.' What do you do?

- 1) write a script depicting the characters in your scene;
- 2) brainstorm a list of possible resisting strategies;
- 3) write a script that would include one of the resisting strategies that your group deems most likely to solve the problem;

- 4) make a list of the possible risks and benefits to this action;
- 5) decide if you would actually go through with this action. Would this particular situation possibly yield you enough satisfaction to make it worthwhile? Explain.

This activity provoked a letter writing campaign to the guidance department outlining what the students determined to be an “acceptable language use policy” as well as a brainstorm of resisting strategies frequently referred to throughout the microanalysis of the study. This activity, as well as the readings discussed above, was implemented in order to achieve my instructional goal of equipping students to live in a multi-cultural, multilingual, democratic society. The readings and activities provoked students to critically examine a variety of perspectives, to utilize and critically examine their own experiences, and to begin to detangle the complexities of equitable language use in a pluralistic democratic society.

Instructional Goal Three: Exploring the Ways Language is Used at Home, at School, in the Street, and in the Community

Table 3.3  
Instructional Goal Three: Curriculum Materials

TOPIC	TEXT	ACTIVITY
prior knowledge		Language Questions
multiple subject positions		identity charts
language at home and school	“I am Miguel”	

The goal of exploring the ways language is used at home, at school, in the street, and in the community meant that students, once again, needed to identify

their own uses of language in various discourse communities in which they interact. As already discussed in Instructional Goal One, this was the goal of responding to the Language Questions. Students' understanding of their own linguistic experiences is a premise to a critical understanding of language. These questions assisted students in considering the different ways they used language in various social contexts.

Students' understandings of their own linguistic experiences were then applied to the identification of multiple "identities" students take up and their status in their daily lives as writers in different social contexts. (I employed the word "identities" when I was with students as I felt that the term consistent with theory, subjectivities, would have been too sophisticated for students to understand.) In order to take stock of these "identities," students created identity charts in which they disclosed the variety of "identities" they took up within a period of a week. Additionally, I asked students to disclose their understanding of their English class and group status in order to begin tackling the issue of power associated with various identities. For example, Matt's writer identity chart included the following: brother, Jew, oldest son, soccer player, English student, born in the 80's, teenager, math student, science student, history student, technology student, a "Burkstein" (his last name), and a cousin. He wrote the following about his English class status: "I am in a relatively high place in English class because I was in this class last year. I have a lot of power." He also wrote the following about his status within his group in English class: "I am a big contributor to my group. I often act as a leader. I would say that I am very

high in the ranks when it comes to my group.” In this way students became aware of how they used language in multiple social contexts and the multiple “identities” they took up in the process.

Finally, I refer again to the short story “I am Miguel” as this story was brought up frequently in our discussions of the social contexts and “identities” one takes up as a writer and language user. Students often referred to Miguel feeling “schizophrenic,” and although they employed the incorrect psychological term, nonetheless Miguel’s character assisted students in understanding the matter of context, language use, and multiple “identities.”

Instructional Goal Four: Encouraging Students to Explore Attitudes About Language and Dialects

Table 3.4  
Instructional Goal Four: Curriculum Materials

TOPIC	TEXT	ACTIVITY
identifying dialects		dialect identification game
dialects and power	“What is English?”	
dialects and stereotypes	“American Tongues,” film	

The goal of encouraging students to explore attitudes about language and dialects necessitated working within the limits of students’ experiences with dialect identifications. Identifying dialects and sorting out students’ attitudes included both oral and written texts. The dialect identification game allowed students the opportunity to verbalize passages written in a variety of dialects found throughout the United States. Student groups were given a passage

written in a dialect other than the one they spoke and asked to read it, paraphrase it, and give an oral rendition of the passage. Next, students were asked to draw a picture of the person who they think might have said the passage. In many cases, students were able to both identify the dialect and, after viewing all of the pictures together, to identify stereotypes based on these dialects. The article "What is English?" provided a more detailed and academic description of the various dialects in the United States. Finally, the film "American Tongues" assisted students in understanding the relationship between dialects, power, and positioning through personal narratives of people who were either the victims of prejudicial attitudes or who were the perpetrators of prejudicial attitudes. This film and the "dialect identification game" were mentioned several times either directly or indirectly throughout the data. Furthermore, both these activities broadened students' experiences with dialects and assisted them in identifying personal and institutional prejudices associated with language. Finally, these activities also provided students with opportunities to understand the relationship between language, subject positioning, and power.

### The Native American Unit

The Native American Unit incorporated the curriculum discussed above and applied it to the study of the Pocumtucks, a local Native American tribe who inhabited New England prior to the early 1600's, as well as the study of the novel *The Light in the Forest*, by Conrad Richter. The study of the Pocumtucks involved a larger interdisciplinary unit about the colonization of the area

implemented by all the teachers of the team, including myself as the English teacher. *The Light in the Forest* was primarily studied in English class, although the history teacher frequently compared the Lenni Lenape and Pocumtuck cultures during class discussions. Additionally, this unit incorporated the learning and practicing of two composition formats, historical fiction and the response paper. The remainder of this section will discuss the lessons and activities of the Native American Unit that are most pertinent to this study. It is not my purpose to disclose the complete curriculum for each aspect of study. Rather it is my intention to disclose only those parts of the curriculum that may have a connection to the microanalysis in Chapter Four, especially those parts that may have given students essential background material from which they might have drawn ideological concepts. I will discuss lessons and activities from the interdisciplinary study of the Pocumtucks, the English classroom study of *The Light in the Forest*, and the composition study of historical fiction and the response paper.

#### The Interdisciplinary Study of the Pocumtucks

The interdisciplinary study of the Pocumtuck Native people involved the history, science, math, and English teachers; however, I will discuss only the contributions of the history and English teachers here as these contributions seemed to be the most pertinent to the data. Prior to the beginning of the study of the Pocumtucks, the history teacher focused his lessons on the history of Native American oppression. This included the Westward expansion and the colonization of the Northeast. Students gained information about reservations,

the colonists' ill treatment of the Native peoples, and the government treaties that were constantly broken by the colonists. Textbooks, magazines, and internet articles were the sources for this information. The teacher supplemented outdated history textbooks with his own expertise and with the expertise of guest speakers and the team leader.

As the English teachers of the team, my colleague and I offered a rich experience for the interdisciplinary study which included guest anthropologists from the local university who spoke specifically about the Pocumtuck dig that took place on Pocumtuck soil. Our guest anthropologist offered many interesting details about Pocumtuck daily life, history, gender roles, family life, and culture. She shared several artifacts with students who eagerly became Pocumtuck experts. We also had a local Abenaki story teller and historian tell Pocumtuck stories which highlighted the Pocumtuck's connection with the land. She also shared her personal background growing up as an Algonquin woman ashamed of her own language and heritage. This sharing prompted much discussion about oppression and power. This speaker seemed to leave quite a memorable impression on our students. Many of the details in students' historical fiction pieces may have been drawn from this experience.

The interdisciplinary study also included a field trip to a museum housing Pocumtuck artifacts, an ancient Pocumtuck burial ground, and an archeological dig site. They were escorted by the guest speakers mentioned above, who continued to share rich stories and historical information which the students would eventually incorporate into their historical fiction pieces.

### Novel Study: *The Light in the Forest*

The study of the novel *The Light in the Forest*, by Conrad Richter is about a young boy, True Son, who is kidnapped as a child by the Lenni Lenape in order to replace a son murdered by the "whites." The boy as a teenager is eventually returned to his own people, but has difficulty complying with the "white" culture. In the end True Son is alone with no Lenni Lenape family or his white family. This novel complemented the Pocumtuck interdisciplinary unit in that students had become well acquainted with the history and culture of a certain Native people. Although the Lenni Lenape Native people featured in the novel were a completely different tribe, students applied their understanding and appreciation of Native Americans based on their previous interdisciplinary learning experiences to the Lenni Lenapes.

Students read and responded to the novel primarily in dialectical journals and small group presentations. Writing in dialectical journals was a daily event which involved writing a chapter summary, questions about the chapter, vocabulary to look up, and a personal response to the characters and events in the story. Dialectical journals were exchanged with peers so that students could respond to each other's thoughts and questions about the reading. Frequently, small group presentations were based on the questions and/or issues documented in these journals.

Teaching the novel with a meant that I asked students to examine the language used to describe the Natives and the "whites" in the novel. Students

were asked to comment on how language positioned the two cultures and the author's intentions with his use of such language as "heathen," and "savage." Students were also asked to think about how the time period in which the novel was written, the 1930's, might have affected the author's decisions. The stereotypical notions of both cultures as evidenced in the author's use of native dialects and characters were also a focus of discussion.

In light of these discussions about stereotypical notions of Native people in *The Light in the Forest*, we critically examined the "Injun Jo" cartoon, which features a very stereotypical portrayal of a calculating, devious, and foolish Native American who tries to fool the "white" characters in the cartoon. We examined the Washington Redskins emblem and traced the character variations put forth to the public over the years. Advertisements and local news stories also became a major emphasis of our study of the stereotypical images of Native peoples. Students often brought in articles about a local school district that was struggling with its Native American mascot. Most importantly, students paid a lot of attention to the local high school's struggle with an incident involving what the students determined was a racist Native American joke shared on the school's intercom system. Several students complained, but one particular Native American student was outraged by the joke. In addition to the media examples discussed above, his actions and the ensuing results provided my students with many opportunities to critically examine the relationship between language, power, and social positioning.

## Composition Study: Historical Fiction and the Response Paper

The Native American Unit incorporated the learning and practicing of two composition formats, historical fiction and the response paper. Each genre provided students opportunities to embed a within their knowledge about Native Americans.

The goal of the historical fiction piece was to write a story based on the historical, spiritual, and cultural information students learned about the Pocumtucks of Deerfield. Students were asked to pay special attention to the ways they positioned Native people in their writing. Historical accuracy was the goal, but creativity was encouraged. Students were exposed to and encouraged to experiment with Native American storytelling narrative formats. These formats were exemplified through the use of Joseph Bruchac's *Return of the Sun: Native American Tales from the Northeast Woodlands* (1989). Students listened to this collection of stories featuring several Native American tribes, and were encouraged to experiment with the more circular narrative format used in these stories. Students wrote several drafts and employed a conferencing format which is discussed in the next major section of this chapter.

The goal of the response paper was, first, to learn the response paper format and, second, to express an opinion about a potentially controversial Native American issue. The response paper format included the following: an introduction with a thesis sentence that included a subject and an attitude. The attitude explained how the author felt about the subject; a minimum of three body paragraphs with topic sentences, specific examples from articles and/or

personal interviews to support the topic sentence; and a concluding paragraph that restated the thesis and provided additional information the writer wished to convey about solving the issue presented in the paper. Students were asked to pay special attention to the language they used to convey their arguments in terms of propaganda devices learned in the Language and Diversity Unit discussed above. A major emphasis of the assignment was also to pay special attention to the ways students positioned Native people in their writing. As with the historical fiction paper discussed above, students wrote several drafts and employed a conferencing format which is discussed in the next major section of this chapter.

#### CLA Peer Conferencing Within the Native American Unit

Most importantly this study consisted of the implementation of a peer conferencing model based on the theoretical notions introduced in the critical language curriculum discussed above. The peer conferencing model had a similar overall goal as the curriculum project, that was to help students develop an understanding of themselves as language users and writers in school and in society. The more specific goal was to empower students to gain some conscious control over their writing. The same theoretical assumptions applied to peer conferencing within a critical language analyst framework: 1) description and explanation of written discourse assists learners in understanding the relationship between language, power and society; and 2) students' own linguistic and other experiences are central to the learning process. In the case of peer conferencing, students' own writing and talk about writing was the basis for

explaining and experiencing the relationship between language, power and society. The instructional goals were based on Ivanic's (1994) and Lee's (1995) revisions of writing process instruction to reflect a more critical conception of peer conferencing. They are as follows: 1) to help students understand how and why writers are positioned by the act of writing and may be repositioned during the peer conference; 2) to understand how it is that discourses may not be available to all writers; 3) to understand why some discourses are preferred over others, to employ alternative genres and to understand the consequences for these social actions; 4) to examine and deconstruct authoritative positions within the writing conference. The idea was to promote more talk about writing that contributed to an understanding of a pluralistic society, and to promote positive social change for those who are denied privilege and opportunity.

In the sections below I will discuss the teacher-created materials utilized to embed CLA into the peer conference. I discuss the use of the initial peer conference sheet students employed during the writing process, the peer conference sheet students utilized for the second draft, and the process paper questions students responded to after final drafts were complete. All of these sheets became important in the corpus of data as they became a prime resource for understanding students' experiences with peer conferencing and CLA. These sheets are frequently referred to throughout the remaining chapters of this dissertation. (Please see Appendix II for the complete text of all sheets discussed in this section.)

The initial peer conference sheet. The initial peer conference sheet was designed to meet all of the criteria listed above: 1) to help students understand how and why writers are positioned by the act of writing and may be repositioned during the peer conference; 2) to understand how it is that discourses may not be available to all writers; 3) to understand why some discourses are preferred over others, to employ alternative genres and to understand the consequences for these social actions; 4) to examine and deconstruct authoritative positions within the writing conference. The result of meeting all of these instructional criteria was a rather lengthy three page conference sheet, which I was doubtful students would take the time to complete. However, students did comply with my instruction and, thus, this initial sheet became an important source for data analysis.

The peer conference sheet was modeled after the more traditional peer conference sheet I have used for years which was based on Elbow's recommendations for peer conferencing. Elbow's recommendations for peer conferencing include: summarizing the writer's words; pointing to what's almost said or implied; making suggestions to the writer based on the writer's needs; and pointing to those parts of the written piece that are especially well written. The critical language analyst peer conference sheet, however, offered students a much more complete opportunity to process the writing and the peer conference itself. The sheet began by asking the writer to identify the "identities" from which they write in the writing they will ask their peer to review. The issue of safety and writing from these "identities" was also broached to assist students in

reflecting upon the risks and benefits of writing and sharing from these "identities."

The next section was to be filled out by the peer responder. The first part of this section closely resembled my original peer conference sheet which asked the peer responder to explain what he/she would like to hear more about, to give suggestions to the writer, to indicate which parts he/she especially liked, and to indicate which part was the best "show." Students understood "show" to be the most descriptive part in their writing. These questions were designed to give the writer some specific suggestions that could be either utilized or rejected and some positive feedback about their writing.

The following questions in this section, however, incorporated a critical language awareness as they asked the peer responder to consider whether the story/ response paper was a conventional or unconventional format. This required the peer responder to think about the structure of the writing and whether it complied with the structures either taught or encouraged by the teacher or inherently accepted as institutional school writing, and encouraged peer responders to weigh the risks and benefits of the chosen format. Additionally, this section of questions asked the peer responder to consider his/her own identity as either helpful or as a potential source of prejudice in the process of giving feedback to the writer.

The last section of the initial peer conference sheet required the writer to process the peer responder's comments, suggestions, and authority. Based on the peer responder's comments, the writer was also asked to weigh the risks and

benefits of writing in the paper's present format. The writer was also asked to consider his/her own identity as either helpful or as a potential source of prejudice in the process of receiving feedback from the peer responder.

Finally, in both the writer's and peer responder's sections each were asked to reflect upon their feelings about the conference. This item offered students opportunities to comment on the degree of success they felt the conferences provided and/or opportunities to reflect upon topics that did not fit into the peer conference sheet's items.

The second peer conference sheet. The second peer conference sheet was created largely because I felt it was unreasonable to ask students to fill out a second peer conference sheet as detailed as the first. By this time I was able to hone the questions down to six items that I felt would be most beneficial to writers' critical language awareness and to my monitoring of these potential understandings. Writers were asked to peer conference with the same partner, to record the changes they made in their second drafts, and to brainstorm a list of questions they would like answered during the second peer conference. The second section asked peer responders to respond to the changes writers made in their second drafts and to answer the questions intimated by the writer. The last two questions, however, focused on a critical language awareness in that they asked peer responders to comment on the conventionality of the writer's paper and whether or not the format "worked." Finally, and perhaps most importantly, peer responders were asked to comment on whether the writing was respectful to Native people. This single

item provided me with a plethora of data regarding students' perceptions of language and positioning cultures other than one's own in writing.

Process paper questions. Employing process writing pedagogy which incorporates metacognitive awareness concerning the writer's own writing and thinking method, the writers in this study were asked to think and respond to a set of questions that asked them to review their writing process. Students responded to these questions after their final drafts were complete. This set of questions, as in the previous sheets discussed above, combined my original process paper questions with questions that offered a critical language awareness of the writer, the text, and the subject positions of both the writer and the peer responder.

The first six questions were repetitive as they asked students to reflect on issues of "identity" and format. My intention here was to monitor any changes since the second draft and the rationale for those potential changes. The first three questions asked students to identify, explain the rationale for, and discuss the potential risk factors related to the "identities" they chose to take up in this piece of writing. The next three questions required students to disclose information about the format of their papers, whether they followed the teacher recommended format, and how they conformed their papers to their audience.

The next questions focused on audience and how they chose specific language in order to position characters with respect to a multi-cultural audience, especially a Native American audience.

The final process paper questions gave students opportunities to disclose understandings about their gender and culture in their writing. These questions were added to create a complete ethnographic inquiry of students' perceptions about social, cultural and political issues in their writing. However, these questions did not provide new or particularly compelling data. The more traditional items following these questions about gender and culture provided students a final opportunity to process the quality of their final drafts, and their writing and editing processes.

### The Research Design

The design of my study brings together critical discourse analysis of discursive events and ethnographic analysis of social structures and settings. This study was grounded in sociolinguistic ethnography, deriving principles from theorists and researchers such as Bloome & Egan-Robertson (1993), Green and Wallat (1981), Ely (1991), and Spradley (1979).

The design of the study is based on Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (D. R. S). See figure 3.1 below. As the figure indicates, I began examining the chosen English class and developing an ethnographic analysis of the peer conferencing and language practices there. The focus also featured students' responses to the curriculum. Next I introduced the instructional intervention, the critical language analyst peer conferencing, and remained focused on the entire class. I then narrowed the focus of the study to an examination and analysis of selected writing partners doing peer conferencing embedded within the practices that I employed as a instructional intervention. I

broadened the study's focus to re-examine all students doing peer conferencing embedded within the practices in order to see how the ethnographic focus was related to the rest of the cultural scene. It is important to note that the writing partners who were the initial focus of the study were not all observed in an in-depth manner throughout the study for various reasons discussed throughout the dissertation. Additionally, I also included an examination of myself teaching curriculum throughout the entire study.

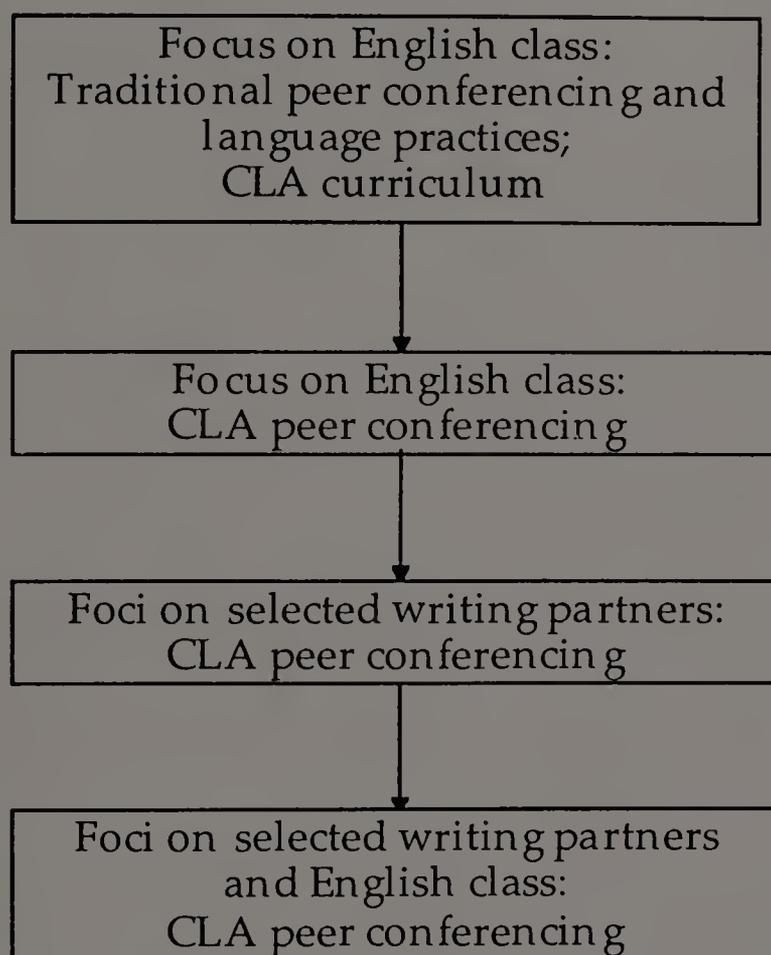


Figure 3.1

### Ethnographic Study of CLA Peer Conferencing

## Major Access and Informed Consent

This brief section includes details concerning how I accessed the participants of the study through the administrative gatekeepers, the parents, and the students themselves.

### Administrative Gatekeepers

The administrative gatekeepers I needed to gain access from were the superintendent and the building principal. I wrote a formal letter of request and spoke with each one individually regarding the specific details of my study. Since I had completed other studies, including an ethnography, in my classes in earlier phases of my doctoral study, I looked forward to requesting and sharing this work with my direct supervisors. Both the superintendent and building principal eagerly granted me permission to conduct the study. They remained very supportive throughout the entire process of the study.

### Parents

I gained permission from parents in the early planning stages of this study. My consent letter included the following: a brief description of the dissertation project; an explanation of how the study might be beneficial to the school and to the students; the research techniques I would use, including audio/video recording, interviews, and photocopies of student writing; an explanation of what I would write, why, and with whom I might share the information; anonymity and special requests; and finally a direct request to allow students to participate in the study (See Appendix III). Students were

responsible for returning the cut and return form with parent responses. I filed all forms as the first piece of ethnographic data. All parents agreed to allow their sons/daughters to participate in the study.

### Students

I also gained student permission during the early planning stages of this study. I used a letter similar to the one described above in addition to emphasizing the following issues: participation in the study was completely voluntary and did not require additional or different writing projects than would otherwise be assigned; whether or not students participated would in no way affect student progress in the class or their grade; and students had the option of withdrawing from part or all of the study at any time. I also invited students to view/listen to video/audio tapes at various stages of the study (See Appendix III). Only one student declined to participate in the study because of her shyness in front of the video camera.

### Data Collection

In this section, I discuss each technique of the research design and describe the corpus of data. Data collection included: 1) observing participants and being a participant observer; 2) writing field notes; 3) audio taping and/or videotaping peer conferences and selectively taping whole class lessons; 4) interviewing; and 5) collecting written texts and other artifacts.

## Participant Observation and Observant Participation

Upon entering the field in the beginning of the study, I established a dual role as a teacher and as a researcher. This also included taking on an active role as a curriculum coordinator and community liaison as this work was shared with the administration, the school committee, and with parents. Like other ethnographers, I assumed a role of learner and viewed participants as sources of knowledge about their ways of believing, communicating, doing, feeling, interpreting, and knowing (Ely, 1991). My goal was to learn from my students and from myself, through critical reflection, how and why we did things as we did (Spradley, 1979).

The implementation of the critical language curriculum provided the background necessary for the most important part of the study. The implementation of the critical language analyst curriculum occurred between September 3, 1997 and November 5, 1997. Due to interruptions for team events at the beginning of the year, the implementation of the critical language analyst curriculum extended into the beginning of November. Over this nine-week time period, I was with students for approximately five days a week for 42 minutes each day.

The implementation of the critical language analyst peer conferencing constituted the major focus of my research. It occurred between November 5th and January 30th, 1998. My role as participant-observer shifted somewhat as I spent time interviewing writing partners in addition to teaching and observing my English class. I established an interview corner in the library in an attempt to

change the formality of the classroom setting. This data helped me to answer my major question: How do a diverse group of eighth grade students respond to the critical language components of peer conferencing in which they are asked to consider the social, cultural, and political aspects of language? Specifically, interviews regarding the peer conference forms, in which I asked students to respond to their conferences, helped me to answer questions regarding the relationship between peer conferencing and the drafting process after having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language. During the last week of January I continued to examine selected peer conferences within the broader culture of the English class.

#### Field Notes

I systematically recorded observations in field notes, which comprise a significant part of the data used by ethnographers to understand a group (Ely, 1991; Spradley, 1979). I recorded field notes whenever I presented or when students were directly involved in an activity or discussion that was directly related to the instructional intervention and/or if there was an unplanned lesson or event that I felt was connected to the study. I wrote field notes on most days, but, for example, not on days when students were writing quietly, taking a test, or engaged in other "quiet work." My field notes include several sections: descriptions of peer conferencing and critical language analyst teaching practices; theoretical notes about patterns related to emerging theoretical ideas; methodological notes about the way data was collected, noting changes in research design as a response to the setting. Additionally, I included personal

notes about my feelings and reactions to the study, the students, and the lessons (Ely, 1991; Spradley, 1979). These notes helped me to identify sections of the data that I wanted to examine more closely. I also used these notes to identify broad themes connected to other sections of the data.

### Audiotaping and Videotaping

A video camera and/or tape recorder was used to record the peer conference partners whenever peer conferencing occurred, and to record selected critical language analyst lessons in which active classroom activities or discussions were directly related to the instructional interventions. There were a total of eighteen different peer conferences on audiotapes and a total of two peer conferences on videotapes for each writing project. There were two writing projects which necessitated peer conferencing. The purpose of taping these sessions was to capture the verbal and nonverbal interactions of participants in order to generate an analysis of peer conference practices. The recordings allowed for a detailed moment-by-moment analysis of participants' interactions which was valuable for microanalysis and the identification of ideologies, subject positions, and discourses that surfaced in peer conferences and other classroom conversations.

### Ethnographic Interviews

I interviewed the selected peer conference members informally at the end of each writing project. In-depth interviews with chosen peer conferees were conducted near the end of the study. Peer conference interviewees were chosen

primarily by reviewing their peer conferencing forms and written drafts for any indication of a and/or a specific positive or negative response to the peer conference interactions and their willingness and availability for an interview. However, I also chose to interview students at various times during the study, especially when there were moments when students challenged or questioned ideologies about language, writing, or the writing process. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights about their participation in peer conferences. The interviews also focused on students' writing. As indicated above, these interviews helped me to understand how students shaped their writing after having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts. I drew on questions from their peer conference forms, their drafts, and process notes (student generated meta-cognitive writings about the writing process). Questions focused on their final decisions regarding the final draft in terms of the critical components of peer conferencing I asked them to consider. Questions were also included in regard to the challenge of "common sense notions" of language present in the peer conference talk or in the peer conference response forms.

### Collection of Written Texts

I photocopied selected writing partners' texts generated as part of their writing process, especially long-term projects, such as, their Pocumtuck stories and response papers. This writing included all drafts, peer conferencing sheets, and any other written artifacts pertinent to the study. The examination of these written texts helped me to determine how students shaped their writing after

having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts.

I also photocopied all writing generated throughout the study that was part of the critical language study curriculum. This writing included dialectical journals in which students responded to the readings and with each other about the readings.

### Data Analysis

In this section, I discuss the two primary methods of data analysis employed in this study: thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis. Each method made a distinct yet overlapping contribution to the analysis. Table 3.5 illustrates the connections among the four methods of data collection and the two methods of analysis. In the remaining sections I describe how I conducted the data analysis.

Table 3.5

#### Data Collection and Analysis

	Peer Conference Audio tapes Video tapes	Student Writing	Field Notes	Taped Student Interviews
Thematic	√	√	√	√
Critical Discourse Analysis	√	√		

### Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis involves searching for patterns in a particular social situation. In order to make inferences about what the participants knew, it was necessary to describe patterns in cultural behavior, cultural artifacts, and cultural knowledge (Spradley, 1980). This analysis provided the means to discover the relationships among the cultural domains (categories of meaning) and the relationships of all the parts to the whole cultural setting (Spradley, 1980). For instance, identifying written conventions as a theme in student talk about writing necessitated an analysis of written convention practices in other student-centered talk in the English class. Thematic analysis assisted me in identifying patterns in student talk and in student writing about how students addressed the social, cultural, and political aspects of language with each other and with the teacher. I logged my audio- and videotapes according to speaker(s), event, topic, setting, purpose, and outcome. Logging the tapes involved identifying cultural categories, or patterns in topics. I recorded the counter numbers and wrote a log entry for each tape, and briefly described the tape segment. This allowed me to locate specific segments for further listening and thematic analysis. Additionally, I wrote responses to my field notes. In these notes I discussed major themes and insights as I progressed in the study (Spradley, 1980).

### Critical Discourse Analysis

Textual analysis was conducted on oral and written student texts and involved microanalysis. I used microanalysis on selected segments of those texts both to support my thematic analysis and also to explore the ways in which

language use constituted ideologies, subject positions, and discourses. Using critical discourse analysis I sought to accomplish the following goals: 1) to examine the naturalized ideologies or common sense representations which underlie writing and peer conferencing; 2) to become aware of the social effects of naturalized ideologies involved in speaking and writing; 3) to understand how written and spoken discourse contributed to the reproduction of macro structures (institutions like school, government, democracy etc.); and 4) to identify resistant discourse that was not constrained by institutional norms for that specific subject position (Fairclough, 1995). More specifically, the textual analysis identified the ideologies, subject positions, and discourses that students employed in peer conferences and in their writing and the categories within these systems. Toward this aim I identified themes in their oral and written texts and analyzed the connections between their oral and written texts. I coded and charted the reappearance of ideologies, subject positions, and discourses in peer conference transcriptions and in corresponding student writings. After completing a textual analysis of peer conferences and students' writing, I examined other data sources, including transcripts from interviews and other artifacts, to support or confirm my interpretations.

### Transcription of Tapes

I adapted methodological tools developed by Bloome (1989), Willett, Solsken, and Wilson Keenan (1996), and Green and Wallat (1981) to conduct in-depth microanalysis of a variety of transcripts. Transcripts included non-verbal texts as messages were influenced by nonverbal cues such as prosody,

intonation, gestures, etc. (Green & Wallat, 1981). I transcribed those segments of audio and videotapes that supported my thematic analysis and that helped me to explore the ways in which language use constituted ideologies, subject positions, and discourses.

Chapters 1 and 2 presented a review of the research on peer conferencing, which suggests that studies of peer conferencing need to include: 1) a broad socio-cultural view of participants including, but not limited to, different genders, classes, and ethnicities; 2) a politicized view of language and communication which demonstrates patterns of subject positioning; 3) contentious peer conferencing moments; and 4) a detailed microanalysis of language and power. I kept these four issues in mind as I chose selections for microanalysis from the data.

### Message Units

The transcriptions of oral discourse are organized into message units. A message unit is a minimal unit of conversational meaning (Green and Wallat, 1981). Using prosodic cues, as discussed above, I identified the boundaries of each message unit. This format made it possible to do critical discourse analysis. Message units were organized into a table as illustrated in figure 3.3.

Unlike Fairclough's broader analysis of discourse, Bloome & Egan-Robertson's analysis of message units allows for a more detailed analysis of interactions as whole, meaningful events. The message unit descriptions are based on Bloome & Egan-Robertson's work (1993) which extends Green and Wallat's work on message unit analysis (1981).

Transcript #1: January 13, 1998  
Lori, Mary, and Karen

1. LO: And you can put this in it.
2. LO: Now as a result they don't have it.
3. MA: I think they shouldn't have jokes.
4. LO: I don't think he should have gotten suspended.
5. KA: But
6. he got all out of control.
7. You know that deserved one.
8. He jumped on the desk.
9. He knew he could have handled it differently.

Figure 3.2

Partial Transcript #1: Message Units

Coding the Transcriptions

In a second step of data analysis, the transcripts were coded to describe message units using Fairclough's critical language analyst categories in order to examine the data for relationships between ideology, subject positions, and discourses. I identified the participant or speaker of a message unit, form of the message (e.g., interjection, hedge, transition, etc.), the text type (e.g., analogy, character line, example, etc.), the genre from which the text type was most likely drawn (e.g., character monologue, personal narrative, exposition, etc.), the discourse from which the genre was likely drawn (e.g., peer conference, discrimination, , etc), the intertextual references likely drawn from (e.g., critical

language awareness curriculum, personal experience, interdisciplinary curriculum, etc.), the cultural ideology(ies), and the subject position(s) taken up in each message unit. An example of the microanalysis of the message units is included in the next section of this chapter, "Coding the Ideological Construction of Discourse." It was necessary to add categories and/or consolidate others in order to reflect the data in this study.

In order to present the coding categories and provide definitions and examples of each from the transcripts and microanalysis charts, I will present a sample transcript, microanalysis and discussion from Transcript #1 to demonstrate Fairclough's three levels of analysis. The microanalysis chart labels the line number for message-by-message description, participant, text type, genre, discourse, intertextual references, cultural ideology(ies), and subject positions.

It is important to understand that these coding categories do not represent an absolute stable set of conventions. They represent a range of options rather than a single rigid pattern. According to Fairclough, coding terms should be used cautiously as a determinate list of genres, discourses and other conventions is not possible given the diverse and heterogeneous nature of orders of discourse (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough recognizes the sometimes arbitrary decisions that we are often faced with regarding whether or not something is or is not a separate instance of one of these types.

Keeping the arbitrary nature of coding categories in mind, I offer further insight into the nature of my coding decisions. Firstly, some message units may

belong in more than one category as text types, for example, can be drawn from more than one genre. Comparative statements, for instance, could be drawn from argumentation genres or exposition genres, although it's more likely that they were drawn from argumentation genres in these transcripts due to the somewhat contentious nature of the social interactions. When coding these comparative statements, as with all of the message units in the transcripts, I considered the social context as key to the coding analysis decisions. Therefore a message unit may be coded more than once in a single category, more than once in another, and/or may be left uncoded if the message unit did not represent a category meaningful to the study. For example, some message units categorized as statements are also categorized as counter statements or hedges. These incidences, however, do not drastically shape the data analysis with one important exception. Most message units coded as discrimination discourse are frequently coded as critical language analyst discourse as the two discourses nearly always overlapped in the transcripts.

Finally, the cultural ideology category is not coded as subcategories in the microanalysis because the individual cultural ideologies are key to understanding the full range of ideologies taken up by critical language analysts in the context of each unique social interaction. For example, the ideologies "There are benefits for resisting culturally accepted discourses" and "The benefits of resisting culturally accepted discourses may be minimal" could both be coded as ideologies pertaining to the potential benefits and risks of resisting oppressive texts. However, there are substantial differences in the ideological

aspects taken up in each of these ideologies. The ideology "There are benefits for resisting culturally accepted discourses" demonstrates that students may understand the potential benefits of challenging, for example, school sanctioned discourse. The ideology does not imply any risk factors, outcomes, or other potential difficulties with resistance. However, the second ideology, "The benefits of resisting culturally accepted discourses may be minimal" demonstrates a more complex and, perhaps, realistic understanding of the outcome of resisting culturally accepted discourses. The participant who takes up the second ideology demonstrates a substantially different understanding of such challenges, which must be made available in the data in order to understand the full range of interactions. Additionally, the microanalysis of individual ideologies demonstrates how participants worked together to build off initial ideologies put forth in earlier parts of the transcripts. For example, in the ideologies discussed above, the ideology "There are benefits for resisting culturally accepted discourses" occurs first in the transcript. As the interaction continues, the second ideology occurs, "The benefits of resisting culturally accepted discourses may be minimal." Although it was not in the scope of this study to code for the scaffolding that might have given rise to more complex understandings of a , the inclusion of individual ideologies in the microanalysis charts assists in the discussion of how the participants interacted and may have constructed a together, which is included in the discussion of the transcripts.

Line. Enumerates message unit from transcript. A message unit is a minimal unit of conversational meaning, defined by prosodic contextualization cues (Green and Wallat, 1981).

Participant. Identifies the speaker.

Form. Identifies the basic structure of the message unit

hedge: text that is potentially offensive to the client, but is toned down through hypothetical meaning (Fairclough, 1992)

Example: "because I haven't really faced that much racism" (Transcript #2, line 3) The meaning expressed in line 3 may be potentially offensive or unbelievable to his peer, but it is toned down through hypothetical meaning with the words "that much." These words allow for a margin of error and releases the speaker from the potential consequences of his statement.

transition: a word or group of words that shifts one topic or point of view to the next

Example: "He knew he could have handled it differently/Like/ I'd appreciate it" (Transcript #1, lines 9-11) Line 10 is the transition as the participant uses the word "like" to change her point of view from third person to first person.

question: an asking, inquiry

Example: "You have that thing recording, don't you?" (Transcript #3, line 18)

statement: an assertion

Example: "I think they shouldn't have jokes" (Transcript #1, Line 2)

Text Type. A communicative form likely drawn from one or several genres or discourses

character line: a piece of dialogue spoken to an audience as in a play

Example: "He knew he could have handle it differently/ like/ I'd appreciate it/ if you'd get the boy or person who wrote the joke/ so I could talk to them/ They could all work it out or something" (Transcript #1, lines 9-14) In lines 11-13 Karen takes up a first person narration and a character role in order to demonstrate a strategy for mediating a problem.

example: a typical instance used to provide substance to any kind of a statement

Example: "he got all out of control/ You know that deserved one/ He jumped on the desk" (Transcript #1, lines 6-8)  
Karen provides a specific example in line 8 in order to substantiate her claim that the boy deserved a detention.

emphatic statement: an assertion with a force of expression

Example: "He barely told them what his problem was!" (Transcript #1, line 15) Mary expresses her anguish with the boy's lack of communication.

conditional statement: an assertion that is dependent of a condition or conditions; often begun with words "if" or "then"

Example: "Imagine if you weren't a white girl/ You might be offended by your paper" (Transcript #4, lines 1 and 2)  
Kristine asserts that ethnicity may be dependent upon how writing is interpreted.

comparative statement: an assertion that examines similarities or differences

Example: "That would be like/having a joke/ like if it was a joke about white people/ there would be like a HUGE apology" (Transcript #1, lines 26-29) Lori asserts and examines the potential differences between responses to ethnic jokes based on the status of the joke's target.

summary statement: as assertion that presents a generalized idea already stated in brief form

Example: "He barely told them what his problem was!/ He just got on the desk and started threatening people/ and jumping around/ So/ I think he deserved the suspension" (Transcript #1, lines 15-19) Mary ends her list of examples concerning why the boy deserved the suspension with a summary statement, line 19.

counter statement: an assertion in opposition to a statement

Example: LO: "I don't think he should have gotten suspended" KA: "But/ he got all out of control" (Transcript #1, lines 4-6) In opposition to Lori's assertion in line 4, Karen asserts her opposition in lines 5 and 6 that the boy's suspension was justified.

Genre. Identifies a relatively stable set of conventions implying particular text types and a particular process of producing, distributing, and consuming texts (Fairclough, 1992)

character monologue: text from a play in which one speaker speaks to an audience

Example: See "character line" above.

personal narrative: personal experience in the form of story, told through first person narration

Example: "When I was in/ um/ elementary school" (Transcript #2, lines 11-13) Matt takes up a personal narrative genre here to share a personal experience with his peer conference partner.

exposition: a text that explains the nature of a belief or idea by providing an example or an explanation

Example: "See that's the thing/ I don't think it happens around here" (Transcript #2, lines 6 and 7) Tony explains his belief that he hasn't faced that much racism with the explanation in line 7 that racism doesn't happen in his community.

argumentation: persuasive text that supports or presents opposing view(s)

Example: See counter statement above.

Discourse. An "element of order of discourse," which means that discourse refers specifically to topic, content or subject matter (Fairclough, 1992, p. 128). This definition drives much of the microanalysis, especially the analysis of intertextual references, which are thematic connections students make during peer conferences.

school: discourse that ideologically and topically relates to the institution of school and/or school policies. School discourse, however, is not an academic discourse because the ideologies and topics demonstrate how school in general is accomplished through the operation of institutional procedures, such as discipline.

Example: "he got all out of control/ You know that deserved one/ He jumped on the desk" (Transcript #1, lines 6-8).

These message units here are ideologically and topically related to the language of school discipline. Ideologically, the student states the belief that students who get out of control deserve to be suspended. The topic itself, school discipline, further marks the sample as topically related to school discourse, as opposed to more specific discourse related to specific academic content.

peer conference: an academic discourse that ideologically and topically relates to conventions of the original peer conference (without the instructional intervention). Peer conference discourse is an academic discourse because it necessitates the taking up of specific conventions that are taught and reinforced through an academic institution. Here the academic institutions may include the Western Massachusetts Writing Project, university writing programs, and the local school district.

Example: "And you can put this in it/ Now as a result they don't have it" (Transcript #1, lines 1 and 2). Employing the traditional peer conference discourse, Lori suggests a sentence that Karen could add to her paper.

The message units in this example are ideologically and topically related to traditional peer conferencing. The ideologies expressed in this sample, peer responders may offer suggestions to writers, and peer responders may dictate specific suggestions to writers, are ideologically connected to traditional peer conferencing. The topic of this example focuses directly on the writer's text, which is within the conventions of peer conference discourse.

discrimination: an academic discourse that topically and ideologically and focuses on identifying and understanding the social construction of oppression related to race, ethnicity, and/or culture; often overlaps critical language analyst discourse.

Example: "But it was an Indian joke/ in a dominant white school" (Transcript #1, lines 31 and 32). In this example there is an overlapping of discrimination and critical language analyst discourses, which are commonly found throughout the data, but here I will focus solely on the discrimination discourse in an attempt to more clearly define the term. In this example, Karen expresses the ideology, a person's race is related to the power one possesses within specific social institutions, which is an ideology related to understanding discrimination.

In the example above, specific vocabulary is used when taking up the topic of discrimination in the school context. Karen employs the word, dominant, which is ideologically invested in the school's wider ideological stance toward discrimination.

CLA: an academic discourse that is ideologically and topically related to the critical analysis of language in terms of its social, cultural, and/or political aspects. critical language analyst discourse is an academic discourse because it necessitates the taking up of specific conventions that are taught and reinforced

through an academic institution. Here the academic institution is the critical language study group from Lancaster University (Clarke and Smith, 1992; Fairclough, 1992; Ivanic and Simpson, 1992; Lancaster and Taylor, 1988; and Martin-Jones, 1992) and, on a different level, myself and other doctoral students and who are experimenting with this academic discourse.

Example: "I think they shouldn't have jokes" (Transcript #1, line 3). In this example, Mary criticizes the sanctioning of jokes in the institution of school. The ideology, jokes are not appropriate for school culture, indicates that the critical language analyst discourse is being referenced. The topic, the sanctioning of jokes in the institution of school, is a topic that demonstrates the weighing of the social and political implications of a particular language convention within a particular social context. This is an important goal of critical language analyst and, in addition to the other identifying features discussed above, indicates the presence of critical language analyst discourse in this sample.

Intertextual references. Specifies what other texts are overtly drawn upon in the text (Fairclough, 1992).

personal experience: texts drawn from the students' own life experiences

Example: "My friend got a stick through his ear" (Transcript #2, line 24) Matt likely draws from his experience of being with a friend who was badly hurt as a result of a racist name calling incident.

interdisciplinary curriculum: texts drawn from the history class or field experiences from the interdisciplinary unit on the Pocumtucks

Example: "because you haven't learned about the Indians/ the Native Americans/ having their land taken away from them" (Transcript #4, lines 9-11) Jane may draw from her history text and possibly other texts when discussing why the Europeans may have different understandings about Native people than those who have studied and learned about their history.

peer conference: texts drawn from the traditional peer conference format and conference forms

Example: "And you can put this in it/Now as a result they don't have it" (Transcript #1, lines 1 and 2) As discussed above, this text may be a reference to the traditional peer

conference sheet that specifically asks peer responders to offer suggestions to the writer.

Critical language analyst curriculum: texts drawn from the unit (otherwise known to students as the Language and Diversity Unit)

Example: "But it was an Indian joke/ in a dominant white school" (Transcript #1, lines 31 and 32) The use of the word dominant may be drawn from the Language and Diversity unit as it was one of our vocabulary words and a word I often used in the context of this unit.

Cultural Ideology. Identifies the belief systems that are naturalized and that contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination (Fairclough, 1992).

Subject Position. Identifies the position taken up by or assigned to the speaker or other participant(s) ( Fairclough, 1992; Willett, Solsken, and Wilson Keenan, 1996).

Self and other as equal: participant positions self and other as equal in authority

Other as authority: participant positions other in position of authority

Self as CLAnalyst: participant positions self as authority when providing an alternative frame in which to understand seemingly "naturalistic" ideologies within a text; when critically aware of the dialectical relationship between language, power, and positioning.

Self as authority: participant positions self as authority

Self as subordinate: positions self as less authoritative than other

Other as subordinate: positions other as less authoritative than self

Table 3.6  
Sample Microanalysis #1

Line	Participant	FORM	TEXT TYPE	GENRE	DISCOURSE	INTERTEXTUAL REFERENCES	CULTURAL IDEOLOGY	SUBJECT POSITION													
								Self and other as equal	Other as authority	Self as Critical Language Analyst	Self as authority	Self as subordinate	Other as subordinate								
1	LO	Statement																			
2	LO	Statement	Summary Statement		Peer Conference	Peer Conference	peer responders may offer suggestions to writers														
3	MA	Statement					peer responders may dictate specific suggestions to writers; there are benefits to resisting oppressive discourse														
4	LO	Statement					jokes are not appropriate for school culture														
5	KA	Statement					students should not be punished for resisting school approved text (joke); there are risks to resisting culturally accepted discourses														
6	KA	Statement	Counter Statement				writers participate in peer response														
7	KA	Statement					students should be punished for losing self-control regardless of circumstances														
8	KA	Statement					students should be punished for losing self-control regardless of circumstances														
9	KA	Statement					students have knowledge about resisting school-sanctioned oppressive discourse in culturally appropriate ways														

### Critical Discourse Microanalysis: Line-by-line Descriptive Interpretive Analysis

The microanalysis above allows me to address Fairclough's three levels of analysis: 1) a description of the text; 2) an interpretation of the interaction process that aims to specify which conventions are being drawn upon and how; and 3) an explanation of how the interaction process relates to the social action whether it be conventional or oppositional. The following line-by-line descriptive interpretive analysis is an example of the three levels of analysis.

In lines 1 and 2, Lori offers Karen a suggestion for her final paragraph ("And you can put this in it/ Now as a result they don't have it) which is a typical in traditional peer conference discourse and practice. In line 3 ("I think they shouldn't have jokes") Mary takes up the critical language analyst discourse and is the first participant to take up the critical language analyst position as she challenges the ideology of "appropriateness" concerning jokes in school. Lori also takes up the critical language analyst position as she responds in line 4 by disagreeing with Karen's opinion, ("I don't think he should have gotten suspended") as exemplified in her response paper, regarding the ideology of social justice for challenging the school administration. These two positioning moves establish the critical frame for the entire conference which is sustained for more than fifteen minutes. Karen takes up the critical language analyst position in line 9 ("He knew he could have handled it differently") when she suggests that students have knowledge about resisting oppressive school discourse in culturally appropriate ways.

Fairclough's three levels of analysis are employed in this example. This analysis includes Fairclough's concepts of ideology, subject positioning, and discourses.

### Summary of Method Chapter

In this chapter I have discussed the theoretical framework of this study, described the curriculum, the critical language analyst instructional intervention, the research design and the way I analyzed the data. This study is a sociolinguistic ethnography of eighth-graders peer conferencing within a framework, examined in terms of ideology, subject positioning, and discourses. The goal was to generate understandings about critical language awareness and peer conferencing. I have described each type (thematic and critical discourse) and level (descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory) of analysis conducted. The focus was on extending Ivanic's and other work on employing theory in the teaching of writing by examining the ideologies, subject positions, and discourses embedded within peer conferences.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents findings from the study about critical language awareness and the writing process: evidence of students demonstrating the practices of critical language awareness in peer conferencing and student writing in a suburban middle school English classroom. The goal of this study was to develop understandings about how students may interpret and employ critical language study in conjunction with peer conferencing and student writing. The research questions, which guide the organization of the chapter, examine peer conferencing in a critical language framework from the standpoints of power relationships and ideologies. The research questions are:

How do a diverse group of eighth grade students respond to the critical language components of peer conferencing in which they are asked to consider the social, cultural, and political aspects of language?

How do students address the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in peer conference talk about their writing?

What subject positions, ideologies, and discourses are taken up during peer conference talk?

What ideologies and discourses are taken up in their final drafts?

How do students revise their writing after having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts?

In this study I examined specific strategies for creating a critical language awareness and investigated to what extent students writers may have been influenced by this sort of awareness. As noted in Chapter 3, the findings provide a detailed analysis of key processes in peer conferences. This overview section discusses the logic and organization of the presentation of the data analysis in the remainder of the chapter.

Following Spradley (1980), the analysis focused on key processes within peer conferencing and revising in an eighth grade English class. These key processes correspond to my four questions and provide the basis of the organization of the chapter. The key processes are: (a) addressing and challenging the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in peer conference talk about their writing; (b) taking up subject positions, ideologies, and discourses during the peer conference talk; (c) employing ideologies and discourses in their final drafts; and (d) revising their writing after considering the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts.

Throughout the description of the above listed processes, I emphasize how the students took up positions that assisted them in understanding the dialectical (two-way) relationships between language, subject positions, and power. By dialectical I mean that there is a two-way relationship between these three elements (Fairclough, 1992). This is a different understanding of language study than traditional language learning. Traditional language study focuses on the study of grammar and usage and rarely includes the study of social, cultural and political aspects of language and power.

(a) Addressing and challenging the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in peer conference talk

In order to demonstrate how students addressed and challenged the socio-cultural aspects of language in peer conference talk about their writing, I present a thematic analysis of two sets of conference sheets which were designed to assist students in identifying and analyzing the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their writing and in their responses to their writing. Students used these conference sheets with two different writing projects in the Native American Unit: a Pocumtuck story project in which students wrote an historical fiction paper based on their research of a local Native American culture; and a response paper project in which students wrote about contemporary Native American issues. The intent of the thematic analysis is to show how a broad range of students in this English class responded to the critical language aspects embedded in the peer conference sheet, otherwise referred to as the instructional intervention. The first analysis of peer conference sheets provides a description and interpretation of the ways in which students' expressed concern about language conventions. These themes remained important throughout the study, and therefore it is important to present an analysis of how the students and myself, as the teacher-researcher, responded to the conference sheet embedded in the critical language awareness framework discussed in the previous chapters of this dissertation.

A second analysis of peer conference sheets provided a description and interpretation of the ways in which students understood how language positions others. Discrimination was an important theme in this study and will be discussed throughout the remaining sections of this chapter.

b) Taking up subject positions, ideologies, and discourses during the peer conference talk

In order to demonstrate the self-declared subject positions that students took up during the peer conference talk, I present a thematic analysis of both Pocumtuck story and response paper peer conference sheets focusing on self-declared subject positions of writers and responders. Self-declared subject positions are those positions students self-identified as present in their written or oral text. The intent is to show how a broad range of students in this English class identified and understood their subject positions as writers and peer responders during the peer conference. Interview comments are included to triangulate the findings.

Next, I demonstrate the undeclared subject positions that students took up during the peer conference talk. Undeclared subject positions are those positions students did not identify as present in their written or oral texts. I present a brief thematic analysis of both Pocumtuck story and response paper peer conference sheets focusing on undeclared subject positions of writers and responders. The intent is to show the undeclared subject positions of writers

and peer responders during the peer conference within a broad range of students in this English class.

Next, I present a microanalysis of the talk of students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position, which includes ideologies and discourses that surfaced during the peer conference. This microanalysis necessitated an examination of selected students who took up and sustained this position during the peer conferences. The selected pairs/groups of students whose talk was chosen for microanalysis were: Jane and Kristine; Matt and Tony; Lori, Mary, and Karen; and Bob and Brad. In addition to taking-up the critical language analyst subject position, these students were selected to meet the list of criteria discussed in Chapter 3 regarding representation of literary conventions, moments of contention, socio-economic classes, ethnic backgrounds, gender, as well as possessing the necessary data for analysis.

Although the critical language analyst subject position was taken up in both Pocumtuck story and response paper conferences, the response paper conferences provided me with sustained and richer instances as a basis for analysis and conclusions. During the Pocumtuck paper conferences students focused mostly on reading and answering the peer conference sheet, demonstrating a "procedural display" of peer conferencing, whereas the response paper peer conferences provided me with lengthy and rich peer talk that offered detailed and tangential discussions, which will be discussed later in the analysis. For these reasons I present a microanalysis of the response

paper peer conferences in which students took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position. Additionally, I present a thematic analysis of the ideologies, plausible intertextual references, and the corresponding discourses represented in these peer conferences. Finally, I present a thematic analysis of ideologies and corresponding discourses in students' response papers.

(c) Employing ideologies and discourses in final drafts

In order to demonstrate the discourses and corresponding ideologies that students took up in their final drafts as a result of sustained moments of critical language analyst subject positionings in peer conferences, I present a microanalysis of representative samples from the selected students' response papers. Samples were chosen to represent the variety of discourses in their response papers which are the same discourses represented in the peer conference moments where one or more participants took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position. Although these are not the only discourses taken up in their response papers, these discourses constitute a majority of the discourses represented in this particular set of papers that provide a category meaningful to this study. The analysis also includes a microanalysis of ideologies and intertextual references to demonstrate how students may have drawn from CLA ideologies and ideologies about racism and discrimination brought forth in their peer conferences, and how they may have incorporated these ideologies in their revisions. Interview

comments are incorporated to lend credence to the findings. This analysis extends the previous analysis and provides the basis for the final analysis of students' revisions.

(d) Revising writing after considering the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts

In order to demonstrate how students shaped their writing after having considered the socio-cultural and political aspects of language in their drafts from both brief and sustained critical language analyst subject positionings, I present a brief thematic analysis of revisions in the broader context of the English class. Next I present a more detailed analysis of the aforementioned selected students' Pocumtuck stories and response papers in which students made changes as a result of sustained critical analyst interactions. The analysis includes passages from drafts read during peer conferences and the corresponding revisions from the subsequent drafts. Also, interview comments are incorporated in order to triangulate the data and to keep student voice and interpretation as a valued source of analysis and interpretation.

As noted in Chapter 3, the thematic discussion of data from the peer conference sheets provides a descriptive and interpretive analysis that builds a framework for the microanalysis of selected transcripts. The advantage of microanalysis is that it reveals the linguistic strategies, ideologies, and subject positionings employed by participants within an event. Therefore, findings

are reported out both in the context of thematic discussion and in line-by-line discussion. At the end of each section, I provide a discussion of the findings. This discussion creates an explanatory framework, linking the social processes within the peer conferences with broader social, cultural, and political contexts. Chapter 5 will discuss how the findings from the analysis of each section fit together. The chapter concludes with summary of findings by category.

#### Addressing and Challenging the Political and Socio-cultural Aspects of Language in Peer Conference Talk

In this section, I present a thematic analysis of the peer conference sheets students filled-out as writers and responders before, during, and after the peer conferences, as well as audio and video tapes recorded during the actual conferences for both Pocumtuck stories and response papers. The peer conference format for this study was based on an adaptation of Elbow's model for content-related feedback, rather than grammatical and surface structure feedback. Conference partners worked together to address the CLA elements of the peer conference sheet. The peer conference sheets included a variety of questions and prompts which were designed to assist student writers and responders in disclosing the dialectical relationships between language, power, and subject positions embedded in their written texts and in their interpretations of those texts. (See Appendix II) This analysis allowed me to show how students addressed the political aspects of maintaining and challenging story and response paper conventions and how students addressed the socio-cultural aspects of representing Native Americans in a

socially responsible way. The discussion also includes the intertextual references that students employed as a strategy for challenging discoursal conventions and discriminatory language practices.

### Maintaining and Challenging Conventions

This section demonstrates how students addressed the political aspects of maintaining and challenging story and response paper conventions and how students addressed the socio-cultural aspects of representing Native Americans in a socially responsible way. Two major themes were extracted from the data: conventions in relation to student's preoccupation with evaluation; conventions in relation to how students defined a well-written story. The discussion also includes the intertextual references that students employed as a strategy for challenging discoursal conventions and discriminatory language practices.

### Making the Grade: Pocumtuck Stories

Our first thematic unit, "Native Americans: The Language, Life, and Times of the Pocumtucks," was introduced as an interdisciplinary unit involving history and English classes. As previously described in Chapter 3, this project focused on researching the language, life and times of the Pocumtuck Native people by examining primary historical sources, interviewing archeologists, visiting the archeological site on which the Pocumtucks lived, worked, and died, and reading and responding to a variety of historical texts. These collective experiences positioned students as "experts" in this very esoteric field. Students then applied their

understandings of the Pocumtuck language, culture, history, and politics by shaping them into an historical fiction story, from here on referred to as the Pocumtuck stories. Part of the instruction also included experimentation with alternative genres, such as Native American narrative styles that were represented in the Native American stories students listened to as part of the unit. This particular discourse was introduced as an alternative to the dominant conventions of story writing, which I supposed might offer students opportunities to uncover the cultural benefits and limitations of the genre by experimenting more intimately with Native American vocabulary and narrative styles.

Despite my permission and encouragement to experiment with Native American narrative style as an alternative genre, peer conference sheets, process writings, and audiotapes reveal students' concerns about following traditional story conventions in order to earn a good grade. Rather, students employ the teacher's vocabulary based on a review lesson on westernized story writing (exposition, setting, climax, falling action, resolution) and on students' previous experiences within the school system's curriculum that reinforces these westernized conventions. Most students showed concern about varying from the conventions and recommended to their conference partners that they should not take the risk of writing in an unconventional format as their grade might suffer for it. The following written remarks are representative of the students' concerns about conventionality. Conrad wrote on Ned's conference sheet in response to his Pocumtuck story, "I think you

should not use the unconventional format, because you're kind of taking a risk of getting a lower grade." Alex wrote to Mandy, "I want to get a good grade," and therefore she wrote her story in the conventional format.

Conventional story formats were employed in all but two of the Pocumtuck stories, as student familiarity with these conventions and concerns about grades were deemed important.

### Making the Grade: Response Papers

Unlike the Pocumtuck story lessons in which I taught and encouraged an alternative genre as a possibility, the response paper lessons focused primarily on employing the genre itself. The response paper, otherwise known as a five-paragraph essay, was introduced. However, unlike the writing lessons taught in traditional English classes, the response paper was presented within a CLA frame. This critical framework necessitated that students inquire into the social, political, and cultural benefits and limitations of the genre. Grading and evaluation were part of this discussion.

Consequently, when students actually set forth writing and peer conferencing, they were aware of the benefits and risks of employing the genre and were practiced in the CLA discourse required to analyze the genre from both socio-cultural and political perspectives.

Because the framing of the response paper lessons did not include encouragement to experiment with alternative genres as students are expected to reproduce this format on Massachusetts standardized testing early in the spring, students understood the purpose of the response paper was "to

write in a conventional way" (Lori) which was connected to their goal of academic achievement and high test scores on the state examination. Jamie explained to Albert that writing his response paper in the conventional format "would be better and safer" in terms of earning a high grade on the paper. Matt's comment, "I don't have a choice," however, stands out as it implies a lack of agency. Here Matt is fully aware of the power of discoursal conventions and the subject positioning of the teacher, and laments his subordinated subject positioning in relation to both. These examples show student recognition that their grade was linked to a discoursal convention and that varying from this format introduced by the teacher carried a high degree of risk. Even though a majority of these students did not employ an alternative genre, they still made discoursal decisions based on a CLA awareness. Students recognized the political aspects of employing a culturally accepted written form, weighed alternatives, and the majority decided that the risks were too high in relation to their grade and to their opportunity to learn and practice a genre linked to gate-keeping mechanisms controlling high school graduation and post-secondary school admission.

### What's in a Good Pocumtuck Story?

Peer conference sheets, process writing, and audio taped peer conferences reveal students' concerns about following story conventions reviewed in class in order to write what they deemed to be a good story. Students defined a good story as one that "entertains, really pulls the reader

in and flows really well." Furthermore, they defined a good story as one that is usually tied to western conventions. Although they did not articulate this last qualification, it is unequivocally present in their evaluative comments throughout the data. However, in a few cases, students recognized the political aspects of alternative story forms as assets to their writing and decided that the risks were worth taking. Tony wrote that Matt's Pocumtuck story is "sort of conventional" and that even though it read more like a diary, he should take the risk of continuing in the same format because the story was "really great." Lori wrote that Mary's Pocumtuck story was very interesting because "the end is the beginning of another problem." Lori concluded that Mary's Pocumtuck story was not conventional because it did not end in a resolution, but was an entertaining story, and that the risk of writing in an unconventional format was worth taking. Mary explained in an interview that she purposely ended her story with a problem rather than a solution as her goal was to experiment with a narrative style closer to Native American oral storytelling forms that I offered as an alternative genre. These examples represent the students' belief that if the story is "good," (i.e. "entertains, really pulls the reader in, and flows really well"), the risk is worth taking. Students recognized the political aspects of employing a culturally unacceptable written form, weighed alternatives, and decided that the risks were acceptable if the story entertained the reader, a criterion which in all but the two cases cited above was satisfied by mainstream western conventions.

Other students remarked that they liked the conventional format and didn't want to "damage the flow" of their stories. Comments, such as "This is the way my story works best," "it works out well," ". . .it makes my story better," and "It is a good way of writing" exemplify the ease which most students find in complying with the more familiar conventions set forth by myself and reinforced in the broader context of the school system and in the dominant culture. In most cases, students recognized the political aspects of employing a culturally accepted written form, weighed alternatives, and decided that the flow of their stories depended on a familiar story format.

#### What Makes a Good Response Paper?

As a second part to the thematic unit on Native Americans, students focused on researching contemporary Native American issues by collecting, reading, and responding to a variety of newspaper, magazine, and media texts on an issue of interest to the student. Students became experts on their topics, which ranged from Native American casinos to re-naming the "Redskins" football team. Students applied their understandings of their topics by shaping them into a response paper, which is similar to a traditional form of the commonly known five-paragraph essay as described in Chapter 3. The response papers included a thesis statement, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The thesis statement, also referred to as "the map" of the paper, espouses the student's overall response to the chosen issue and grounds the essay in a particular point of view. The body paragraphs develop the thesis with examples and discussion. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the

points developed in the body paragraphs and suggests ways to resolve the issue. This writing activity specifically required students to respond to a potentially controversial issue within the institutional demands of the response paper genre.

Peer conference sheets, process writing, and audio taped peer conferences reveal students' concerns about following response paper conventions reviewed in class in order to write what they deemed a good response paper. Guided by extensive lessons on how to organize a response paper, students deftly wrote introductions with thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions, with topic sentences, specific examples, explanations, and summary statements. Therefore, students evaluated each other's writing according to these criteria without exception. Jon commented on the organization of his partner's paper, "I like how you put everything in exact order." Similar comments from Jane to Kristine also acknowledged that a good response paper was one that "follows the format that was given."

However, Matt's comments to Tony implied a lack of agency as he wrote, "I feel the format of your response paper is traditional except for the map. I think it works because it has to." Matt's comments here were scribbled lightly in pencil. The implication here is that Matt himself could have written a good response paper without following these conventions. Matt recognized the political nature of employing a culturally accepted discourse valued by the teacher and academic institutions, made the decision to comply, but also acknowledged to me and to his conference partner his dismay in

doing so. It is notable that Matt felt comfortable expressing his truth to me which may have been a result of the critical awareness of cultural discursal forms brought forth by the CLA framework, as well as his powerful subject positioning in this class which will be discussed in the next section.

However, most students recognized the political aspects of employing a culturally accepted written form, weighed alternatives, and decided that the success of their response paper depended on the conventions set forth by the teacher.

#### Critical Language Awareness, Intertextual References and Discoursal Conventions

As part of the awareness theoretical frame driving the curriculum, all writing lessons offered opportunities for students to think critically about the history and socio-political meanings of any discursal form presented. This critical analysis included examining the origins of the convention, its status in school culture and in the wider culture, the benefits of employing the convention in a variety of social contexts, and the potential consequences of employing alternative discursal forms in the same or similar social contexts. What follows is a discussion of how students responded to the alternative genres offered in the study of the Pocumtucks.

#### Intertextual References and Discoursal Conventions: Pocumtuck Stories

The CLA lesson on story forms included a review of the conventions of the "westernized" version story which included the following terms:

exposition, setting, climax, falling action, and resolution. A critical discussion offering alternatives to this format included examples of Native American story forms which are more circular than linear and based on oral narratives rather than written text. Many Native American story endings, for example, are almost indistinguishable from their beginnings. Students listened to Joseph Bruchac's *Return of the Sun: Native American Tales from the Northeast Woodlands* (1989) and discussed the contrasts and similarities of form and style with various stories and novels we read earlier this year. Later, as students wrote their own Pocumtuck stories after having done a good deal of research on the tribe, they had to make decisions regarding the conventions of their story. Only two students chose to employ alternative discursal forms for their Pocumtuck story. However, in both cases during their peer conferences students made conscious decisions based on a critical language awareness of the risks and benefits of the alternative form. Mary employed a Native American circular form in her story which is a clear intertextual reference to the above CLA lesson. Fully aware of the unconventional form she took up in her writing from corresponding with her peer conference partner and from her own conscious decision to use a more circular narrative form, she explained on her peer conference sheet, "That is the way my story works best." Matt, on the other hand, experimented with first person narration and a diary format, but the final draft is more conventional than the drafts. Matt's writing process included a discussion with his partner about the diary format which he modeled after

*The Dairy of Anne Frank*, an individual reading selection from the first month of school. The final product was an alternative genre that combined the “western” conventions of a story with a narrative style similar to a diary. He concluded in his conference sheet, “My story is conventional enough, and I won’t change this.” The CLA of story form created in the earlier phase of the Pocumtuck project shaped their discussion during the peer conference and, ultimately, their decisions to successfully employ alternative discursal forms.

#### Intertextual References and Discursal Conventions: Response Papers

The CLA lessons on response paper forms included a discussion of the response paper genre and its relation to the standardized test all students would be required to pass in order to graduate from high school. Students also discussed the response paper genre’s potential “gatekeeping” role for those who wish to attend private schools, colleges, and universities. We discussed the academic and social advantages of being well practiced in this genre and who might be at a disadvantage and why. Culture, ethnicity, urban and suburban settings, parents’ educational backgrounds, class, and even learning styles were all brought up during this discussion. In this way, students were critically aware of the potential benefits and limitations of being well practiced in this genre.

During a critical language analyst lesson and class discussion regarding the response paper format, Matt explained the limitations he identified with employing this form, “Just like if they limit you—your mind might not work

in the same way as the person who invented this way, and so, it restricts you.” This remark demonstrates Matt’s frustration with conventions and his awareness of how conventions may position people in ways that are not consistent with their learning style or culture. Matt recognized the limitations of conventions not only for himself, but for others as well. This is a key goal and one of the more challenging aspects of a critical language awareness: thinking critically about how language and conventions position and oppress people. Matt negotiated his critical stance during the peer conference when he encouraged Tony to “Put a map in your thesis statement” and when he revised his own paper to be more consistent with the conventional format despite perceived restrictions, while he acknowledged the limitations of his creativity. Interestingly, Matt did not discuss the issue with me, rather I discovered it on the video tape so I did not have the opportunity to assist Matt in experimenting with alternative genres in his response paper, or to give him permission to do so. The issue of teacher responsibility to empower students in dominant discourses while at the same time extending creative freedom and a sense of agency is discussed in Chapter 5. However, the critical language awareness of academic writing, specifically the response paper, created in the earlier phase of the response paper project may have shaped the peer conference discussion and also Matt’s decision to write in a slightly modified conventional format. A critical language awareness may have helped Matt to conform, but with his eyes

open, to articulate his feelings about it, and to recognize the compromises he made in shaping his final draft.

### Breaking Conventions: The Roles of Subject Position, Critical Language Awareness, and Peer Support

These middle school students demonstrated in their peer conference sheets, process writing, and audio taped peer conferences that they understood and recognized how the dominant discursal forms of a "westernized" story and a response paper shaped their writing. They consciously weighed the risks and benefits of employing these forms but, even when directly taught alternative forms and encouraged to employ alternative forms, usually chose dominant discursal forms. Further analysis and discussion of the two students who broke conventions offers some insight into how their subject positionings, a critical language awareness, and peer support may have contributed to their decisions to challenge dominant discourses and why most students chose dominant forms.

In both instances the convention-breaking writers, Matt and Mary, were leaders of the class. Both students were outspoken, very familiar and adept with writing, and had very positive relationships with the teacher. Also, both students had much prior experience with the teacher. Matt was in my English class in the seventh grade, and I know Mary as the local paper carrier in my neighborhood who periodically stops by to chat. However, it is equally important to note that there were three other students who were in my English class last year, which suggests that more than prior experience

with the teacher may have contributed to powerful subject positions for Matt and Mary.

It is likely that Mary's and Matt's subject positions contributed to their willingness to take on the risks associated with employing alternative discursal forms. Mary, although not a frequent discussant in whole class discussions, was a silent leader. She wrote on her identity chart, "In English class I have some power, not as much as the teacher, but enough. I have enough power in this group." In an interview, Mary explained that "enough" meant that she was both "respected and helped to change her peers' opinions from time to time." Matt was also very aware of his powerful subject positioning in this English class. He wrote on his identity chart, "I am in a relatively high place in English class because I was in this class last year. I have a lot of power. I am a big contributor to my group. I often act as a leader. I would say that I am very high in their ranks when it comes to my group." Mary and Matt's subject positions may have contributed to their willingness to take on the risks associated with employing alternative discursal forms. These examples demonstrate that powerful subject positions may have worked together with a critical language awareness that offered them the knowledge to actively engage in weighing the risks and benefits of alternative story forms, and ultimately in choosing alternative forms.

Additionally, unlike the other peer conferencing pairs, Matt and Mary's peer conference partners strongly supported their decisions to break conventions. In both cases, peer responders felt that their stories benefited

creatively from the alternative genre. Although there may have been other contributing factors, powerful subject positions, CLA, and supportive conference partners may have contributed to their decisions and their ability to employ alternative discursal forms in their writing.

### Respect and Concern for Native People

The respect and concern for Native people was another theme that surfaced in my analysis of how students addressed the social, cultural and political aspects of representing Native Americans in a socially responsible way. In this section I analyze peer conference sheets, process writings, and audio taped peer conferences in order to document instances in which students demonstrated in earnest that using discourse which did not disempower others was an important element of peer conferencing discourse. Students, both as individuals and as a class, developed a sincere social responsibility towards the people they wrote about, Native Americans, as evidenced in their peer conference talk. Students demonstrated an awareness of how they positioned Native Americans in their writing, and that their discursal choices were directly related to these positionings.

### Accuracy, Respect and Social Responsibility in Pocumtuck Stories

In their Pocumtuck stories, students showed concerns about the historical and cultural accuracy of their depiction of Native people. They wanted to position Native people in socially responsible historical contexts. Jon wrote on his peer conference sheet to Brian, "I feel this story is respectful because Native people had to worry about the Mohawks just like you

described in your story.” Employing socially responsible spiritual beliefs was also a chief concern of these writers. Jane wrote to Kristine, “You didn’t make up any beliefs for her that would be untrue.” In this example, Jane is impressed with Kristine’s attention to her protagonist’s spiritual connections to the natural world, which portrayed Native people responsibly.

Additionally, students’ widely integrated Algonquin words to help the reader understand and respect Native American language and communication styles. “You used Native words respectfully and it sounds like it wouldn’t offend anyone” Kristine explained to Jane during a peer conference, “You don’t dis them. You use the words in your story respectfully. The girl has a name from the Earth.” Kristine applied her knowledge about the origination of girls’ names in Pocumtuck culture as part of her critical thinking about cultural and historical accuracy.

History, spiritual beliefs, vocabulary, and naming practices were areas of chief concern for all students who demonstrated sincere social responsibility in representing a culture other than their own. The students’ goal was to show respect through language choice, empowering Native people rather than merely avoiding or disempowering them. By using Algonquin language in their stories, students demonstrated their willingness to learn, value, and use language with which Native people may identify. This may be a particularly important aspect of a critical language awareness, as the use of words that may empower those we write about may encourage learners to eradicate disempowering language. This adoption of the

Algonquin language, which recognizes the values of the Pocumtuck people, may also have been influential in assisting students in considering the "Redskins" issue (discussed in a later section) in many response papers, as this is a usage which advocates of critical language awareness would deem disempowering. The adoption of the Algonquin language, in conjunction with students vast knowledge about the Pocumtucks gained from many weeks of research and field trips, resulted in students' ability and desire to write "respectful" Pocumtuck stories.

The only instance in the data where a student identifies a section of his peer conference partner's paper as disrespectful was from Brad. He wrote to Bob, "I feel your story is not respectful to Native people because you made the Indians look like they're lazy or it could be respectful if you're just saying that about one guy. Maybe that's just the point of your story." Here Brad is concerned about interpreting Bob's protagonist as symbolic of the larger culture of Pocumtuck people. While this is a superlative example of Brad's awareness of the positioning of Native people in written text, there is another interpretation to consider when analyzing this passage that includes a closer examination of the historical context of Brad's participation in class, and his rather contentious relationship with his peer conference partner, Bob.

In the historical context of the class, as recorded in my field notes, Brad demonstrated difficulty on several occasions in negotiating issues related to his partner's ethnic background and his own. Brad is a white boy of European descent from a middle class family and Bob is an African-American boy from

a working class family. There are several instances in my field notes where Brad has difficulty expressing his views "without looking like I'm racist. I'm not." In a passage in Brad's dialectical journal he explained his view about African-Americans and education: "But I don't think that they should give more classes to immigrants. It's their choice to be here." Brad had a lot of misconceptions to unravel at the beginning of the year regarding African-American people. His definition of immigration and citizenship was the first. Consequently, Brad had difficulty negotiating peer conferencing authority with Bob.

These examples, however, point to Brad's contradictory ideologies about race and the possibility that he over-compensated in order to quell racist ideologies, but in doing so may have transferred his stereotypical notions of African-Americans onto Bob's protagonist. Consequently, Brad understood Bob's protagonist as lazy, rather than fearful and protective of his younger siblings as Bob had intended. Bob's response to Brad's peer conference remark was to rewrite the whole story, complete with a new protagonist who took a very active role in the rescue of a white captive, as well as his brothers and sisters. This example provides me with an important opportunity to think reflectively about the complexities involved in teaching social responsibility through a critical language awareness. It is not enough to teach students to be aware of and to challenge the way language positions the people we write about, in this case Native Americans, but teaching an awareness of the disempowering practices and ideologies within the peer

conference itself is equally important. This topic will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter 5.

### Defining and Challenging Discrimination in Pocumtuck Stories and Response Papers

In their response papers, students were conscious of equity and discrimination towards Native Americans, and showed empathy and concern regarding the subject positioning of potential Native American readers of their stories. It is in the peer conference sheets that discourse about racism and discrimination emerge as part of the peer conference talk, and consequently, as a major theme in the analysis. In a representative sample from his peer conference responses to Tony, Matt recognized issues of discrimination and equity with his written comment, "What you said had nothing but sympathy for the targets of racism." Jon understood one of his responsibilities as peer responder to be assessing for discriminatory language practices and wrote to Brian, "I don't see any discrimination in this paper." Jane writes to Mandy, "You are telling about the reason for prejudice" which Jane understood to be an important aspect of Mandy's paper. During a peer conference Jamie explained to Albert, "It's respectful. There are no racist comments." This last example shows Jamie's narrow definition of "respect" as merely the omission of racist comments, although it does demonstrate a minimal awareness that language has the potential to disempower others.

Students also show empathy and concern regarding the subject positioning of potential Native American readers of their stories. Conrad wrote to Ned, "You didn't say anything that might offend a Native

American." These written and oral comments demonstrate the broad range of students' genuine concern regarding discriminatory language practices and their critical language awareness in their peer conference writings.

Peer conference writings also revealed instances when students identified language as contributing to discrimination towards Native Americans. In one instance, Brian challenged Jon's understanding of discrimination. He wrote to Jon, "I think you should change the last paragraph a little bit, because I think that some people might take it the wrong way." Here Brian was concerned about how Native people were positioned in the following passage found in the conclusion of Jon's paper:

I personally think the Indians should calm down because they have been called Redskins for 300-500 years and this is the only big situation their arguing over for being called Redskins." (from "Redskins: Is it yes or is it no? Does it stay or does it go?" by Jon)

Brian explained in an interview that he was uncomfortable with the words "calm down" because he felt "it was a put down towards the Indians. It means they're overreacting. And personally, I think they have a right to react any way they want. Redskins is a negative stereotype. Besides, isn't this a sort of bandwagon thing?" During the interview, Brian positioned himself as a critical language analyst concerned with what may be deemed offensive to a cultural group other than his own. He challenged Jon's language ideology regarding the significance of name practices. In his peer conference writing, Brian demonstrated a critical language awareness and attempted to enlighten Jon with the same awareness so that he would change his conclusion and,

thus, promote social change. However, Brian failed to bring about any such linguistic changes as evidenced in Jon's final draft; it reads exactly the same. Critical language analysts are not always successful in promoting social change in their partners writing, but may reinforce their own social, cultural and political understandings about language.

### Intertextuality and Challenging Discrimination

The peer conference sheets for the response paper revealed that students linked their understandings of language and discrimination to texts introduced during the Language and Diversity Unit taught in the first term. These intertextual references are also evidenced in the peer conferences recorded on audio and videotapes which will be discussed with the microanalysis later in this chapter. In the following example which continues the analysis above, Brian's understanding of the relationship between language and discrimination is linked to multiple sources.

The basis of Brian's understanding of language and discrimination is evidenced in his dialectical journal kept during the Language and Diversity Unit. The purpose of this journal was to write notes and responses to articles, films, stories, and poems focusing on a variety of language topics, such as discriminatory language. (See Chapter 3 for a partial listing of these topics.) Brian wrote the following notes in response to the "Memorial Hall Exhibition Labels" he read while on a school field trip investigating the history of the Pocumtucks:

Notes: . . .the bloodthirsty "savages" against civilized innocents.  
. . .native people began inhabiting New England more than 10,000 years before the arrival of the first Europeans.

Responses: People should not think things like this just because one person thinks so. "Savages" is not a fair thing to call someone who lives different than you.

In this example Brian intertextually references the word "savages" as stereotypical in the same way that he responds to "Redskins" in Jon's response paper discussed above. A link may also be established between a full class discussion of the word "savage" in the context of the book *The Light in the Forest* and his response to Jon in the same example. In both cases Brian identified language that disempowers Native people, and wrote against this language. Similarly, prior to the class discussion of "savage" and during a classroom presentation in which Brian was one of five students responding to the following teacher-initiated question, "How does language function to create stereotypes?," Brian said the following as part of a report for his group:

Language has negative words to express stereotypes. . .a language can define racism because of all the different dialects. . .slang can be good or bad, but it's usually stereotypical.

Clearly these intertextual references demonstrate that Brian has a critical language awareness about the power of language to oppress cultural groups. In this example taken from a written artifact produced by this group, Brian and his group members see some connections between language, racism, dialect, and stereotypes. Although this example shows some confusion regarding these connections, it demonstrates that students grappled with the issues and articulated variations of these understandings.

In the interview in which I wanted to know more about Brian's understandings about his comments to Jon regarding the "Redskins" issue, Brian asked, "Besides, isn't this a sort of bandwagon thing?" in reference to Jon's writing. It is highly plausible that this is an intertextual reference to the lesson on propaganda techniques taught as part of the Language and Diversity Unit earlier in the semester. Brian makes the connection between a "naturalized" illogical thinking pattern called "The Bandwagon Technique," meaning "everybody's doing it—you should too," and Jon's paper. Later in the interview, Brian explained what he meant by this comment: "Just because somebody has called them Redskins for 300 years doesn't make it right." Although Brian did not share this insight in the context of the peer conference, the interview with the teacher helped him to link together pieces of knowledge he already had about propaganda techniques, social responsibility and language, to articulate this knowledge, and to possibly add it to his future repertoire of oppositional discourse in the context of the peer conference.

#### Summary of Findings from Thematic Analysis

This section has provided a thematic analysis of representative peer conference responses to describe and interpret peer writers' and responders' interactions as they addressed and challenged the socio-cultural and political aspects of language in their talk about their writing. The analysis shows that students may employ alternative genres under multiple conditions.

However, given the complexity of conditions, few students in this study

experimented with alternative genres. Even when encouraged by the teacher to experiment with alternative narrative styles, for example, most students adhered to conventional story forms as they showed a concern about academic achievement, which they understood as writing in a conventional form for both Pocumtuck stories and response papers. This trend was consistent in both papers, despite my attempt to teach alternative narrative styles and encouragement to experiment with these styles in conjunction with the Pocumtuck story assignment.

Students utilized the following in order to consider employing alternative genres in their writing: intertextual references to instruction on alternatives from which to experiment; encouragement to experiment with alternative genres by the teacher; support from peer conference partners; a critical language awareness of the benefits and risks of employing alternative genres; and perhaps strong social positioning in the class among peers and, perhaps, even the teacher.

The analysis also shows how students used a critical language awareness in order to employ discourse which does not disempower others and how students challenged their peer conference partners to do the same. Students demonstrated concern about historical accuracy, Algonquin language, Pocumtuck spiritual beliefs, and naming practices in their Pocumtuck stories. Students also challenged others to use language that did not disempower Pocumtuck people by identifying instances where specific words or phrases contributed to a discriminatory view of Native Americans

in both Pocumtuck stories and response papers. Also, by using Algonquin language in their stories, students demonstrated their willingness to learn, value, and use a language with which Native people may identify.

The analysis of intertextuality demonstrates that students appeared to take up specific aspects of CLA instruction in framing their own texts. Students identified alternative story narrative forms which elicited critical peer conference responses concerning writing conventions and their socio-cultural and political implications, and to somewhat of a lesser degree, students experimented with these alternative genres in subsequent and final drafts. This critical language awareness of the political and institutional issues embedded in written conventions and traditional forms appeared to assist students in understanding the broader implications of their writing. This information also may have increased the likelihood of students' sharing their honest thoughts and feelings about employing the conventions, which also was conducive to a critical language awareness. Students appeared to take up specific aspects of instruction, such as incorporating vocabulary, history, interdisciplinary research, and communication styles of cultures that were represented in their writing that showed concern and social responsibility in representing a culture other than their own. Finally, specific magazine articles, newspaper articles, and lessons that were introduced earlier in the year through the Language and Diversity Unit, such as propaganda techniques used in advertising and response journals in which students recorded significant facts and personal responses to articles, field trips, etc.,

were likely intertextual references students made when framing their own texts and on peer conference sheets that further demonstrated a critical language awareness.

#### Subject Positions, Ideologies, and Discourses in Peer Conference Talk

This section is divided into two subsections. In the first subsection, I present a thematic analysis of the self-declared subject positions, ideologies, and discourses that surfaced during peer conference talk, as recorded on audio and video tapes, and also on the peer conference sheets students filled-out as writers and responders before, during, and after the peer conferences. These subject positions are referred to as self-declared because students self-identified these subject positions in the context of their peer conferences. Both Pocumtuck stories and response papers are included in the thematic analysis.

The thematic analysis of the self-declared subject positions of writers and peer responders in both Pocumtuck stories and response papers revealed two categories of peer conference talk. The first category of peer conference talk was talk elicited directly from the peer conference sheet, students rarely straying from the direct content of peer conference questions. Much of this talk could be classified as, at least partially, procedural display which is "the display by teacher and student to each other of a set of academic and/or interactional procedures that themselves counted as the accomplishment of a lesson." (Bloome, 1987).

The second category of talk, however, demonstrated evidence of CLA as students offered a variety of responses that required some level of understanding of the relationship between subject positions and texts. The thematic analysis of the self-declared subject positions allows me to show evidence that students developed a critical language awareness of text and self-declared subject positions of writers and responders in both Pocumtuck stories and response papers in this second category of talk.

In the second subsection, I focus on critical language analysts' talk that appeared to either veer from the peer conference talk and/or extend traditional peer conference talk and demonstrated evidence of more complex understandings of critical language awareness. I present a microanalysis of the undeclared subject positions, ideologies, and discourses that surfaced during peer conference talk, as recorded on audio and videotapes.

The microanalysis draws only on data from the response papers as these papers evoked more complex critical language analyst interactions, which may be due to the social justice issues embedded in the assignment. Unlike many of the peer conferences from the Pocumtuck stories, many of which could be construed as procedural displays (Bloome, 1987), the response paper peer conferences demonstrated evidence of multiple occurrences of complex and sustained peer talk that went beyond the procedural displays and more characteristic of the Pocumtuck peer conferences. These complex and sustained peer discussions were present exclusively in the response paper peer conferences, in addition to some procedural displays. These complex

and sustained peer interactions prompted me to closely examine the subject positions, ideologies, and discourses taken up so I could identify and understand whether and how a critical language awareness might have been embedded in these interactions. The microanalysis also allows me to show how students as critical language analysts may have provided alternative frames in which to understand seemingly "naturalistic" ideologies within a text and the ideologies, discourses, and genres that surfaced when students provided these alternative frames. Additionally, the microanalysis includes discussion about plausible intertextual references, including those drawn from the Language and Diversity Unit presented earlier in the semester.

Next I provide a thematic analysis of the CLA ideologies and related intertextual references students took up in sustained interactions as critical language analysts in the microanalysis. I identify and categorize the ideologies these students took up and suggest how those ideologies might be related to instruction.

#### Self-Declared Subject Positions for Writers and Peer Responders

Part of the purpose of developing a critical language awareness as an element of peer conferencing is to understand the dialectical relationships between texts and their producers and interpreters, as language shapes attitudes and meanings and is in turn shaped by them. The more visible the subject positions behind the texts are, the easier it is to write and maintain writer identity (Ivanic and Simpson, 1992). Thus the peer conferencing model in this study asked students to write and talk about their subject

positions as both writers and responders. Students eagerly complied with the peer conference items that asked them to disclose their subject positions, but did so sometimes in a perfunctory way. I suggest that many of the peer conference responses, especially from the Pocumtuck stories, were a kind of procedural display. In this case, students knew that I would be listening to their peer conferences on tape and reading their peer conference sheets; therefore, my "presence" is definitely a part of the interaction. Bloome suggests that procedural displays "might not necessarily be related to the acquisition of academic content or to learning cognitive strategies" (Bloome, 1987, p. 128) and, furthermore, that if learning occurs it is, at best, secondary or accidental. Because of the extensive peer conference modeling that I did throughout the study, and the "ask a question—get an answer" nature of the peer conference form, I suggest that there are several instances of procedural display in the data, especially in the Pocumtuck story data regarding subject positions. Many of these procedural displays were represented in the question-answer exchange structure (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) of peer conferences. However, I assert that the data analysis does suggest that some degree of acquisition of a critical language awareness has taken place. The categories of self-identified subject positions, for example, demonstrate students' awareness of, at the very least, a potential and/or partial critical language awareness. This seems reasonable to conclude especially because there were no lists from which students could draw their peer conference

answers to any of the items, including those items that asked them to disclose the writer's and responder's subject positions.

The following categories of self-identified subject positions surfaced from their Pocumtuck stories and response paper peer conference sheets, assorted process writings, and conversations: race and ethnicity, gender, and student writer. Age, family roles, and religion were also categories of self-declared subject positions. Both boys and girls listed their age and family roles (brother, son, daughter, sister) as safe subject positions from which they wrote and responded to Pocumtuck stories and response papers. Safety was defined as the students' degree of comfort writing from a specific subject position. For example, most students felt comfortable writing from a student writer's subject position. This subject position carried with it the "comfort of numbers," whereas other positions, such as foster child, which was not a desirable subject position, were not deemed safe positions from which to write. Lori was the only student who listed her subject position as a Jew as a safe position from which she wrote her Pocumtuck story. Jane listed her subject position as a Jew as a safe position from which she wrote her response paper. There are two other Jewish students in the class, but neither listed their religion as a position from which they write. No student listed this subject position as helpful or as a possible source of prejudicial responses. No other religious subject positions were mentioned throughout the data, excluding Native American spiritual beliefs. The self-declared student positions associated with age, family roles, and religion were apparent in the

data, but did not provide information in relation to the questions of this study. Therefore I will discuss in the following sections each of the major categories—race and ethnicity, gender, and student writer—and provide examples that demonstrate development towards a critical language awareness of text and the subject positions of writers and responders through these categories.

### The Limitations of Non-Natives: Writer and Responder Positioning

Student writers understood their subject positions as non-Native American as slightly unsafe positions from which to write their Pocumtuck stories. Matt explained on his peer conference sheet, "My story is from a Native American point of view and I want to portray them properly." Brian, whose story was about an adolescent boy coming of age, wrote, "I'm not quite sure what a Pocumtuck boy's thoughts and feelings would be (about growing up)." Mary wrote, "I might not really know how they lived and I could sound corny." Albert explained to his peer conference partner, Jamie, that his subject position as an Asian and a white person made him feel slightly unsafe about writing about Pocumtucks. He said during a peer conference that he felt "slightly unsafe about writing from a biracial point of view because I really don't have a true knowledge of the Pocumtuck Indians." Interestingly, Jamie explained that his subject positions as a white person, a Puerto Rican, and a Native American may not produce a historically accurate paper. "I might put things in that aren't true." As part Sioux, Jamie recognized that Native American cultures are distinct from one another even though they

may share some commonalities. As recorded in my field notes, he also maintained that he identified strongly with his Puerto Rican heritage and knew little about his Sioux heritage.

All of these examples demonstrate a critical language awareness of language and subject positions as students negotiate their own subject positions in relation to with their perceptions of Pocumtuck culture. They identified their non-Native heritage as a deficit in writing about and positioning Pocumtucks in their stories. Students did not assume that their truths were Native American truths, and recognized how the relationships between subject positions and language influenced their writing and their thinking about a culture other than their own.

Student writers also expressed slightly unsafe feelings while writing about Native American issues from non-Native subject positions in their response papers. Jane explained, "I feel slightly unsafe about writing from a white identity because I don't know if I might be offending them or not." Jamie wrote that his identity as a Puerto Rican and Native American was a helpful subject position from which to write his response paper because "I understand how it feels to be dishonored because of my race." His partner, Albert, wrote that he felt safe writing from his Asian subject position because "I know a little bit more on how it feels (to be) disrespected by my race" which he clarified in an interview. "Sometimes people disrespect Asians because we're Asians. So I know what it feels like to be disrespected because of who I am." He explained, "I feel slightly unsafe about writing from a white identity

because I might take sides on the issue." Albert recognized how his subject position played an integral part of his text and how this may have affected others' responses to it. It is interesting to note that he identifies himself as white in this response. I asked him about this in an interview. "What I mean by that is not that I'm white, but that I'm not Native American." This indicates an either/or ideology concerning white and Native American subject positions, but is complicated by the fact that Albert sees himself as Asian as well. This example points to the complexity of subject positions and the remarkable tenacity these students showed in sorting and learning from them.

These examples from their response paper peer conference sheets demonstrate a critical awareness of language and subject positions. Most students identified their non-Native heritage as a deficit to writing about and positioning themselves as authorities on a Native American issue in their response papers; however, multi-racial and non-white students expressed comfort and safety in writing about Native people in their response papers as these students strongly identified with issues of dishonor and disrespect associated with discrimination of non-white cultures.

I suggest that because of the social justice issues embedded in the response paper assignment, students' attention may have been drawn to ideas regarding dishonor and disrespect, especially those students who had first-hand experiences with dishonor and respect, which in this case were the students with multi-racial and non-white backgrounds. The Pocumtuck

stories, on the other hand, did not deal directly with social justice issues. The focus of the Pocumtuck stories was to represent Native Americans respectfully, whereas, with the response paper, students focused on social justice issues of Native American peoples. Therefore, the nature of the two assignments themselves resulted in different degrees of comfort and safety from multi-racial and non-white student writers.

Students also pointed to their positions as "outsiders" when writing response papers about issues that they were concerned about, but about which they lacked first-hand knowledge. For example, many students wrote about a current issue involving the renaming of a local school's sports team because some community members suggested their present name, "Redskins," was racist and perpetuated a negative stereotype. Lori wrote about her subject position in relation to her writing, "I feel safe writing from a non-discrimination identity because many people agree with me and respect what I think. I feel slightly unsafe writing as a person who is not a member of (the school) because I do not know everything that has gone on there." Lori struggled with negotiating her subject position as a member of this class in relation to her position as an outsider of the other community's sports team. Similarly, Ned wrote that he felt slightly unsafe for the same reasons, "I don't know what happened at (the school)," and added that his subject position as an athlete further complicated his positioning. He wrote, "I know what tradition is all about." Ned's comments demonstrate that in addition to negotiating his position as an "outsider," he also negotiated his position as an

athlete, which complicated his understanding and his writing. He identified with at least two opposing ideologies: "tradition is a valued aspect of sport" and "racism towards Native people should not be allowed." While not necessarily opposing ideologies, in the context of this controversy, students positioned them as such through class discussion. Because the student subject position was so unpredictable and, hence, could not be pinned down, Ned listed his student subject position as a slightly unsafe position from which he wrote this response paper. This is not surprising when examining the variety of clashing ideologies that emerged from the subject positions he identified in his paper in addition to the vast number of subject positions and ideologies from which his classmates wrote and responded.

Response papers and the peer conference sheets provided students with a basis from which to sort out the influences of outsider and student subject positions as students continued to develop an understanding of subject positionings in relation to their texts. This "ideological stew" was the perfect food for a critical language awareness; students were not passive recipients of positionings and beliefs. Rather, students were active diners—tasting, smelling, blending, and sorting an array of possibilities. Because of students' socio-cultural differences that surfaced as a result of a critical language awareness, there were more opportunities to question "naturalized" beliefs and to write and speak against those beliefs that disempower others.

Peer responders to Pocumtuck stories recognized the possibility of prejudiced thinking when responding to their peers' stories as non-Native Americans. They also recognized how this thinking may not be helpful during the peer conference and, consequently, within their partner's writing. Matt wrote on Tony's peer conference sheet, "My identity as a white person prejudiced my thinking about Tony's writing because it is often hard to relate to the Indians and their life style." Jamie wrote on Albert's peer conference sheet, "My identity as a white person prejudiced my thinking about Albert's writing because I think or would (if he lived at that time) that it was the English's land." Jamie identifies himself here again as "white" rather than Native -American and Puerto Rican. When I asked him why in an interview, he explained, "Well I am really those other things, but compared to Albert, I'm white. I guess I'm more American." Despite Jamie's skewed understanding of his own subject position, he identified possible interpretive differences between Albert and himself because of their different ethnic backgrounds. Albert wrote on Jamie's peer conference sheet, "My identity as a white person prejudiced my thinking about Jamie's writing because he would think a little less about the Indians and not have as much if he were a one-hundred percent Indian." On the other hand, Albert also recognized that his subject position as "an Asian helped me to understand and respond to Jamie's writing because it would be harder to take sides because I don't know what lens I am seeing through." Although Albert may not have understood that people can see through many lenses at the same time (multiple

subjectivities), he understood that he may or may not have conscious control over which lens he looked through when responding to a text.

Although it is difficult to determine which of these peer responses are a procedural display, I suggest that some of these responses may be superficial and obvious. Although students borrow the peer conference items for the first part of their answers, "My identity as a . . .," many of the answers do include at least a partial understanding of complex language issues. For example, when Albert talks about his confusion regarding the lens he is seeing through, this language demonstrates, at the very least, that he is aware that his understanding is limited and dependent upon his subject position. This peer conference provided both Albert and Jamie with an opportunity to unravel these complex relationships between texts and their producers and interpreters. They recognized, at least partially, the subtleties of multiple ethnic heritages and that these subject positions are sometimes dependent on each other, affecting the creation of text and its interpretation.

Peer responders to response papers also identified their subject position as white as a possible source of prejudicial responses when responding to their partner's writing. Mary wrote, "My identity as a white prejudiced my thinking about Lori's writing because we were talking about Indians being discriminated against and we are white." Brad wrote that because his partner, Bob, is "of another race and background," he felt that his position as a white may have prejudiced his responses, not because the paper was about Native Americans, but because of the subject positioning of his partner, although he

wrote that being from the same town helped him to understand and respond to Bob's writing. In this example and throughout this study, Brad worked to negotiate his feelings and understandings about his partner's subject position as an African-American and his subject positioning as a white writing about Native Americans. His use of the word "another" to describe Bob, indicated his understanding of "other" as any race other than his own as a white person of European decent. However, Brad's subject position as a "white" middle class student negotiating his feelings and understandings about his partner's subject position as an African-American working class student, constituted much peer talk and appeared on peer conference sheets from both self-declared and undeclared subject positions. Brad recognized the relationship between his peer responses, his subject position, and Bob's writing which demonstrated a limited understanding of a critical language awareness, although the barriers of "naturalization" and ethnicity have yet to be unraveled in the context of the peer conference.

#### Gender Across Cultures and Writer and Responder Positioning

Only two of the eleven boys in the class listed their gender as a safe subject position from which they wrote Pocumtuck papers. In both cases the boys felt safe writing from these positions because as Brian wrote, "I am one and I might know what he is feeling (referring to his Pocumtuck male protagonist)." The girls also expressed safety in writing from a girl's subject position as they assumed similarities of gender roles between cultures. Mary wrote, "Having this (gender) in common with my character helps me to write

more realistically." In contrast to the boys, on all but one peer conference sheet, girls listed their gender as a safe subject position from which to write. I suggest that the majority of the boys may not have listed their subject positions as boys as either safe or unsafe positions from which to write because the safety of this subject position was taken for granted and, consequently, was an invisible subject position. I assert that if gender, as a socio-cultural aspect of a critical language awareness, was given more attention in the curriculum, boys might have included it as a subject position on their conference sheets or in their peer conferences.

Girls also expressed their preference to conference with other girls because of their more compliant subject positionings. Amy wrote on her peer conference sheet, "I could relate to Shannon, to some of her opinions, as a male might disagree." Lori also wrote that her preference was to conference with other girls, "She (Karen) gave me many ideas, and I took them as constructive criticism rather than telling me it was wrong." Mary's conference remark was written following a day in which both partners, Karen and Lori, were absent and she had to conference with Matt whose partner, Tony, was also absent. Unfortunately this conference was not recorded on tape, but field notes from this day document that the partners requested teacher intervention in order to resolve disputes concerning conferencing procedures. In retrospect, a discussion between Mary, Matt, and myself together with a class discussion concerning these preferences may have yielded more conclusive data concerning this issue of gender preference, and

may have offered an even finer lens through which students could have grappled with language and communication differences. However, by identifying their gender as a safe position from which to write and talk about writing, students began to understand the relationships between texts and their producers and interpreters. This was beneficial even if they weren't fully aware of cultural differences across genders and of the gender and communication issues inherent in the peer conference itself. Introducing these concepts, however, would be a significant contribution to the curriculum and to students' critical language awareness.

Girls and boys also listed their gender as safe positions from which they wrote response papers, but, as with Pocumtuck stories, more often girls identified their gender as a safe subject position from which to write. The two boys who listed their gender as safe subject positions from which to write also listed their positions as athletes as safe positions. Interviews revealed that these boys felt comfortable writing from these positions because they were in tandem with their writing topic, "renaming a sports team," and this topic was "easy for a guy to write about," according to Jon.

There was not a single incidence in which a male student listed his subject position as a boy as helpful or as a possible source of prejudicial remarks while peer responding to a partner's Pocumtuck story. While female writers overwhelmingly listed their subject positions as girls as safe positions from which to write, they also recognized this subject position as beneficial to responding to those of the same gender. They did not recognize this position

as exemplifying any prejudicial potential, rather their subject positions as girls were described as a completely safe and knowledgeable position from which to write and respond to other girls' writing. Kristine wrote, "My identity as a girl helped me to respond to Jane's' writing because girls are curious and some girls can do brave things." Kristine identified what she believes as a universal truth about curiosity and bravery for all girls, regardless of race, class, or generation, including the Pocumtuck heroine in Jane's story.

While the goal of a critical language awareness is to disclose the socio-cultural bases of these "naturalistic" truths, Kristine's assessment of her subjectivity examines the common threads of what it means to be a girl, which does necessitate a understanding of text, writer, and responder. However, there is also another possible topic to add to the Native American curriculum: the construction of gender in Native American cultures. Students must be given the tools, in this case the necessary cultural information, from which they can begin to unravel seemingly "naturalistic" truths embedded in their texts.

Peer responders to response papers continued the division along gender lines. But according to the girls, their common gender may also work against them when peer conferencing. Girls alone wrote that their subject positions as girls may have prejudiced their thinking about their partner's writing because girls, according to Jane, "think differently how this subject should be handled and what they should do about it." In an interview, Jane explained that because she felt differently than her partner did about the issue

of naming a sports team "Redskins," it was hard to disagree. "Disagreeing with boys is not unusual, but with a female partner, it's harder. It just doesn't feel right. Girls should stick together." Her peer conferencing partner, Kristine, agreed with her adding, "Living in the same state and having the same exposure to the topic and coming out with two different opinions is hard. It makes it hard to respond when your partner is a girl. . .but I'd still rather disagree with her than any boy, well most." These students were critically aware that their subject positions as girls played a significant role in the process of responding to texts in peer conferencing. As they discussed their discomfort with their differing texts, the ideological disagreements, and gender they demonstrated development towards an understanding of the dialectical (two-way) relationship between their response papers and their subject positions as writers and responders.

#### Student Writer: Writer and Responder Positioning

The student writer subject position was framed in different ways depending on whether students focused on achievement in comparison with their peers, their relationships with each other, or their achievement in comparison with the teacher. Students listed their subject positions as student writer as both safe and slightly unsafe positions from which they wrote Pocumtuck stories. From a student achievement frame comparing himself to other students, Jamie listed his student identity as a safe position from which he wrote his Pocumtuck story. He wrote on his peer conference sheet, "I have learned things about these Indians" and consequently he felt

satisfied with his ability to communicate this knowledge as a student writer. From a student comparison frame comparing herself to the teacher, however, Ashley wrote that she felt slightly unsafe about writing from her student position, "I feel that if I were a teacher my writing would be much better." It is interesting to note the contrasts here in confidence and in their choices of academic comparison. Jamie was confident about his knowledge and writing in comparison to other students, while Ashley expressed her lack of confidence in her writing in comparison to the teacher, even though Ashley was a stronger writer than Jamie. This is an example of how the tools of CLA, specifically reflective practice, were used to inform the teacher of the frames students used to grapple with their subject positionings in the class.

This particular example involving Amy led to an after-school session in which I learned that my teacher's sample Pocumtuck story, "Willow's Return," had positioned Amy as "poor writer" after she had compared it to her own writing. She explained that my piece of writing made her feel like her writing "had a long way to go. It was really, really bad." During the session Amy and I discussed power and language and how I might have said that I was an accomplished writer before handing out the story. Although I disagreed that I was an accomplished writer, the message was clear: my teacher's text did not support Amy's subject position as a writer in the class. This session provided an opportunity for Amy and me to reflect on both our subject positions and our writing practices. By grappling with these issues, we came to a greater understanding about the dialectical (two-way) relationship

between a text, in this case a seemingly neutral teacher-written story, its producer, a conscientious well-meaning teacher, and its interpreter, a writer with low self-esteem. In this case, teacher reflection was a key component to grappling with a critical language awareness with my student.

Students also framed their student writer subject position in relation to their social relationships with one another in familiar instructional practices. From this frame, students often stated that their collective experiences as members of this particular English class and as student writers were helpful in understanding and responding to each others' Pocumtuck stories. Brian wrote, "My identity as an eighth grader helped me to understand and respond to Jon's paper because we have a lot of the same ideas and thoughts. I have worked with Jon before and know what kind of a writer he is." Brian suggested that he and Jon were familiar with the same writing and responding practices and deemed these experiences helpful during peer conferencing. Brian also wrote that because he and Jon have many of the same ideas and that he has expectations about Jon's writing, "My identity as a person who has worked with Jon before may prejudice my thinking about Jon's writing. . ." Although Brian did not use the word "dialectical" to describe this two-way relationship between the text, the writer, and the responder, he has at least partially disclosed this relationship and shared information with his partner, which demonstrates a critical language awareness of text, writer, and responder.

In contrast to the Pocumtuck stories in which writers framed their student writer subject positions in relation to peer or teacher achievement and their social relations with peers, the response papers revealed that writers framed their student writer subject positions solely in relation to their social relations with peers. Furthermore, writers did not often list their student subject position as a helpful identify from which they wrote their response papers. However, Lori wrote in her peer conference sheet that as a student, "many people agree with me and respect what I think" which made her feel safe writing from her student subject position. She recognized that having a powerful position in which her classmates respected her, was helpful when writing her response paper. She also recognized that someone outside of this classroom environment might think differently about her paper, especially a person who is a member of the school with the "Redskins" team name. She wrote, "I do not know everything that has gone on there." These examples demonstrate Lori's critical language awareness of how her text may be interpreted differently depending on the subject positions of the reader/responder.

Student responders wrote that their subject positions as students were both helpful and a source of potential prejudicial responses when responding to response papers. "Knowing what to expect" in a partner's writing was identified by several students as both helpful and a source of possible prejudicial responses. Throughout the duration of this study, Jon and Brian wrote about how the student subject position worked as both a help and

potential hindrance to their peer conferences because they had conferenced on so many occasions, understood each others' thoughts, and were familiar with each others' writing styles. Jon explained in an interview, "Sometimes I already knew that I was going to say good things about Brian's writing because I think he is a good writer. I already had my opinion even before he read (his response paper)." This demonstrates that Jon was critically aware of how his subject position as student, or peer, shaped his response to Brian's text.

#### Summary of Self-declared Subject Positions of Writers and Responders in Peer Conferences

This section has provided a thematic analysis of representative peer conference talk and accompanying written texts to describe and interpret the self-declared subject positions of writers and responders from both the Pocumtuck and response paper assignments. The analysis shows evidence that students' considered self-declared identities from the following categories in their writing and responses in peer conferences: race and ethnicity, gender, and student writer.

Students identified subject positions as white of European descent or non-Native American as slightly unsafe positions to write about Native people in both Pocumtuck stories and response papers. They identified their non-Native heritage as a deficit in writing and positioning Native people in their writing, and recognized how the dialectical (two-way) relationship between subject positions and language may have influenced their writing and their thinking about a culture other than their own. Furthermore,

response papers revealed that students who identified as multi-racial or as non-white, for example, Sioux and Puerto Rican or Asian, expressed more comfort and safety in writing about Native people as they identified strongly with issues of "dishonor" and "disrespect" associated with non-white cultures. This was most likely attributable to the social justice issues embedded in the response paper assignment. Additionally, peer responders identified possible interpretive differences based on different ethnic backgrounds. Students also identified their positions as "outsiders" as slightly unsafe subject positions from which to write about issues of which they lacked first hand knowledge.

Students also struggled with and negotiated multiple identities and the corresponding opposing ideologies as they wrote. For example, students struggled with identities such as athlete and "outsider" or non-racist and "outsider" identities. However, because of students' knowledge of socio-cultural differences that surfaced as a result of a critical language awareness, there were more opportunities to question "naturalized" beliefs and to write and speak against those beliefs that disempower others.

Overwhelmingly, girls listed their subject position as female as both a safe and knowledgeable position from which to write, which was a sharp contrast to boys of whom only two even mentioned their gender on conference sheets and in peer conferences. I suggest that the boys took their subject positions as boys for granted, and, hence, this subject position was invisible. Girls also expressed their preference to conference with other girls

because of their more compliant subject positionings, but also recognized discomfort with disagreeing between girls about a topic. Although, the girls in this study lacked the tools to differentiate the potential differences between the construction of gender in Native American culture and their own, their identification and awareness of their gender at play in their writing and in their talk about the writing demonstrates a critical language awareness.

Student writer was an identity that students felt both safe and unsafe writing from. Furthermore, the student writer subject position was framed in different ways depending on students' focus on student achievement in comparison to other students, students' social relations with other students, or on students' achievement in comparison to the teacher. Writer confidence surfaced in this category. In one situation, where the student framed her student writer subject position in relation to the teacher as writer, the teacher-written text positioned a student as a poor writer, which made the student feel very unsafe as a writer. However, other students who framed their student writer subject position in relation to other students both academically and socially, stated that their collective experiences as eighth graders in this particular English class as student writers were helpful in understanding and responding to each others' writing. Some students also stated that with familiarity also come automatic expectations which may prejudice their responses.

Students' recognition of and attention to their writer and peer responder subject positions as "white" or non-Native American, multi-racial,

"outsider," female, and student writer demonstrate that students were critically aware of the dialectical (two-way) relationship between text and the subject positions of the writers and interpreters who produced and responded to the text.

### Undeclared Subject Positions of Writers and Responders in Peer Conference Talk

As explored in the subsection above, peer conference talk could be divided into two categories, procedural displays and those segments that demonstrated evidence that there was some degree of critical language awareness embedded in the peer interactions, or critical language analyst talk. These students offered a variety of responses that demonstrated some level of understanding of the relationship between subject positions and texts. However, as I began to examine the detail in this second category of critical language analysts' talk, I realized that there were differences in the ways students demonstrated CLA.

Much of the critical language analysts' talk from this second category began with talk elicited directly from the peer conference sheet, but the talk veered sharply from the direct content of the peer conference questions. While first examining the data, I supposed students were simply off task. However, while examining the data a second time, I discovered that these instances of seemingly off-task talk were rich opportunities from which I could learn how and if students really understood a critical language awareness beyond the doubt of procedural display. Interestingly, I also

noticed that these more complex talk instances were mostly connected to the peer conferences from response papers. I suggest that the response paper assignment, which asked students to identify, research, and write about social justice issues related to Native Americans, in combination with students' knowledge about social, cultural, and political language issues may have created the space for this kind of talk. Additionally, students had practiced identifying social, cultural, and political issues related to language with the Pocumtuck story peer conferences. I suggest that students may have taken their understandings about language to a more complex level based on the critical nature of the response paper assignment, and their experiences with identifying socio-cultural issues of language in the Pocumtuck story peer conferences. Hence, I chose to microanalyze the more complex and sustained peer conference talk resulting from the response paper assignment. I wanted to know what exactly was transpiring in these segments of talk, if the students demonstrated a more sophisticated level of CLA, and if they did, what subject positions, ideologies, and discourses they took up in this talk. I also wanted more definitive data that demonstrated how and under what circumstances students demonstrated a critical language awareness, as opposed to data that was identified, at least partially, as a procedural display of CLA.

Unlike the thematic analysis of the peer conference talk from the first category, which includes the self-declared subject positions (or identities) students declared that they took up in their peer conferences as writers and responders, the microanalysis of the talk from those response paper

conferences that veered from the peer conference directives does not include an analysis of the self-declared subject positions disclosed in the thematic analysis. A trial microanalysis of these more complex and sustained instances of talk revealed very few examples of the same self-declared subject positions based on race and ethnicity, gender, student writer, and outsider positionings. This suggested that there was something different happening in these segments of talk. I wanted to know more about how power and language were operating within this talk. Therefore, I determined that a microanalysis of subject positions, ideologies, and discourses in these more complex and sustained instances of peer conference talk might reveal important evidence about CLA and peer conferencing.

Writers and responders took up a variety of subject positions during peer conferences that they did not report on the peer conference forms; hence, I have categorized these subject positions as undeclared. Some of these positions were constituted by the peer conference sheet and others by the process writing discourse sponsored by the teacher and by students. The process writing subject positions included: complimentor, one who said something positive about the piece of writing; evaluator, one who ascertained the value of a piece of writing in comparison to others; idea generator, one who offered "non-critical" plot or character ideas to the writer; and teacher, an authority who provided "non-critical" instruction to the writer, especially concerning the conventionality of the piece of writing. "Non-critical" means that there were no CLA elements embedded in these subject positions. These

process writing subject positions were predictable and generally received positively by students, except in the case of "teacher," when the authority of the responder occasionally resulted in conflict over genre conventions and the teacher's directions, especially with the response papers. The teacher subject position was the most predictable subject position for students to take up given the conferencing format, expectations of the teacher, and the overall attention students gave to genre conventions.

The most provocative of all subject positions taken up by students in the response paper peer conferences was the critical language analyst. The critical language analyst subject position was distinguishable from those positions directly constituted by the peer conference form and characterized as partial procedural displays as discussed above, and from those that resulted in harmonious outcomes or non-conflictual peer conference talk. Writers and responders took up the critical language analyst subject position, fully or partially, during moments of contestation or conflict, and/or during moments of seemingly off task-talk that veered from the directives of the CLA peer conference 'initiation-response-feedback' exchange structure (Fairclough, 1992). An exchange structure is a recurrent pattern of the turns of different participants (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975), and includes a routine of who is in control of the interaction. (Exchange structures will be discussed more fully within the context of the microanalyses.) Unlike the peer conferences directly constituted by the peer conference form in which the teacher, by virtue of her peer conference agenda, and the traditional peer

conference discourse controlled the exchange structure, these complex peer conferences demonstrate that students may be more invested in the CLA discourse and ideologies. Because of this investment in CLA, they take up the kind of power and authority being offer to them within the CLA discourse. This power and authority may indicate a partial shift towards student control, even though the CLA agenda originates with the teacher.

Through an analysis of subject positions, ideologies, and discourses I determined that these more complex and sustained interactions resulted in students' critically examining the language of the text, and of the writer and responder subject positions. It was when a student became a critical language analyst, one who provided an alternative frame in which to understand seemingly "naturalistic" ideologies within a text, that students were critically aware of the dialectical relationship between language, power, and positioning, and hence, demonstrated a critical language awareness. The critical language analyst position was represented in audio and video taped peer conferences in conjunction with peer conferences from both the Pocumtuck stories and response papers, but the longer more complex segments were associated with the response paper peer conferences.

This critical language analyst subject position occurred in both brief and sustained instances. In brief instances students took up process writing subject positions in conjunction with the critical language analyst subject positions. These brief interactions usually pertained to the peer conference sheet agenda and, hence, were embedded in the process writing discourse and

traditional peer conference exchange structure. The following brief critical language analyst interaction taken from a Pocumtuck story peer conference demonstrates this positioning move. In this example, Conrad gives feedback to Ned who has already read his story. Conrad initiates with the item from the peer conference sheet, "I'd like to hear more about..."

Conrad to Ned: "I'd like to hear more about (reading from his peer conference sheet) how his father lives. As an American I don't know how his Native American father lives. . .they have totally different thoughts than us."

Ned: "Yes. I can put that in."

Conrad: "OK. I have the following suggestions (reading from his peer conference sheet). You used I a lot. I'd take some of those out."

Ned: "OK. But what should I put instead?"

Conrad: "I'd use names."

Ned: "Oh, OK."

This brief critical language analyst interaction taken from a Pocumtuck story peer conference demonstrates how students took up subject positions from both process writing and CLA discourses. Conrad's initial statement "I'd like to hear more about. . ." is taken directly from the peer conference sheet and is also a feedback statement specifically suggested by many of the process writing teachers in our middle school. He takes up a process writing subject position as an idea generator (one who offers "non-critical" plot or character ideas to the writer) when he suggests that he'd like to hear more about how the father lives. This initial suggestion might position him as a typical curious student responder. However, Conrad's next statement, "As an

American I don't know how his Native American father lives. . .," suggests that fathers from a Native American culture might live and think differently than "American" fathers. This statement demonstrates Conrad's awareness of how his own subject position as an "American" may not be adequate to make assumptions about a Native American father's life. This is a critical language analyst subject position as he has provided an alternative frame in which to understand a seemingly "naturalistic" ideology about fathers within Ned's text. Conrad acknowledges that he and the writer may not be completely knowledgeable about Native American fathers. Conrad is critically aware of the dialectical relationship between language, power, and the positioning of a Native American father. He suggests that the Native American father subject position in Ned's story may require further attention. Ned's response is to agree and to "put that in," which demonstrates his apt use of the peer conference exchange structure. Conrad's feedback to Ned's answer is "OK," and with the successful accomplishment of the agenda item, he proceeds to the next item on the peer conference sheet. The topic is tightly controlled by the teacher's agenda. Thus, the traditional exchange structure, initiation-response-feedback continues. Conrad, as the peer responder, works through a pre-set agenda or routine, shifting from one stage of it to another as soon as he has accomplished the agenda item. In this example, the power and authority is located in the teacher's agenda and in the peer conference discourse due to students' limited investment in the CLA discourse and ideologies.

Brief critical language analyst interactions similar to this example were frequent and did demonstrate students' critical language awareness. However, students who transcended these brief discussions tied to the process writing discourse and the peer conference agenda and sustained these critical interactions, demonstrated richer and more complicated understandings of the dialectical (two-way) relationships between language, power, and subject positions. These sustained critical language analyst interactions also went beyond the simple initiation-response-feedback exchange structure as peer responders and writers abandoned and/or expanded the pre-set agenda and created more complex exchange patterns. In doing so, students take up the kind of power and authority being offer to them within CLA discourse. This power and authority may indicate a partial shift towards student control, even though the CLA agenda originates with the teacher. These richer and more complex understandings and exchange structures were found in the peer conferences of the response papers.

Students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position veered from the directives of the peer conference agenda and/or extended the process writing discourse during these interactions. When sustained, the critical language analyst subject position did not overlap significantly with the process writing subject positions mentioned above. Rather it was when students transcended the process writing subject positions and relinquished the process writing discourse and peer conference agenda, that they took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position.

Hence, many of the sustained critical language analyst positioning moves were initiated through peer conference discourse from the peer conference sheet, but eventually transcended this discourse. Transcending the discourse included extending the traditional initiation-response-feedback exchange structure and/or abandoning it all together. When students abandoned both the traditional exchange structure and the specific peer conference agenda, the data suggests that students sustained the deepest levels of critical language awareness. Thus, students took up the kind of power and authority being offer to them within the CLA discourse. This power and authority may indicate a partial shift towards student control, even though the CLA agenda originates with the teacher. The microanalysis suggests that these sustained instances concluded when students returned to more simplistic exchange structures and explicitly took up the process writing discourse and peer conference agenda. Hence, power and authority shifted back to the teacher and the process writing discourse.

In this section I present an analysis of students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position during peer conferences from the response papers. The microanalysis of their interactions includes an examination and discussion of the genres, discourses, subject positions, ideologies, and exchange structures student analysts employed. As previously discussed in Chapter Three, specific selection guidelines were also used to insure diversity in the selected students. The interactions selected for microanalysis are taken from response paper peer conferences as this

particular assignment generated critical language analyst interactions that lasted for more than two lines of conversation, as opposed to the Pocumtuck stories in which the critical language analyst interactions were brief and mostly pertained directly to the peer conference sheet agenda and, hence, the process writing discourse and traditional exchange structure.

This is not to suggest that brief sequences of similar positionings, as discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, were not meaningful learning moments or not helpful to the writer. Rather, I suggest that the sustained critical language analyst subject positions are distinctly different than any other positioning moves in the data. They are characterized by extended critical interactions between peer conference partners, are shaped by specific discourses and ideologies, and appear to be facilitated through specific intertextual references. Furthermore, the critical language analyst positions are characterized by complicated exchange structures that demonstrate that students may be more invested in the CLA discourse and ideologies. This demonstrates that the nature of the exchange system is relevant to the kinds of things people can say (Fairclough, 1992). They are also facilitated by the blatant social justice issues embedded in the response paper assignment, as opposed to the more subtle social awareness associated with the Pocumtuck story, and storytelling in general. Finally, this microanalysis served as a vehicle of reflection for me as the teacher-researcher of these critical events, and, consequently helped me to understand how those students who took up

and sustained this powerful subject position as critical language analysts were able to do so.

Each of the four transcripts microanalyzed below each offer a unique contribution to the discussion of critical language awareness and peer conferencing. The first transcript discloses how students weighed the risks and benefits of challenging discursal choices. The second transcript discloses how students identified and challenged the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers. The third transcript, which may be the most authentic piece of data because students were unaware of the recorder in operation, discloses how authoritative positioning interrupted or impaired the taking up the critical language analyst subject position. Finally, the fourth transcript discloses how students wrestled with subject positions, social and political contexts, and text interpretation. Each microanalysis discloses key issues regarding complex social relations, as well as the text types, genres, discourses, intertextual references, and ideologies students employed in order to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position in peer conferences. The discussion also discloses exchange structures which transcend traditional exchange structures and appear to shift power and authority toward student agendas.

#### Weighing the Risks and Benefits of Challenging Discursal Choices

Throughout my study, social justice issues involving Native Americans in our locale were featured news items both in print and in

school-wide discussions, which provided numerous possibilities for classroom discussions and, eventually, response paper topics. In addition to language and diversity topics discussed earlier in the semester, these very controversial issues fueled student curiosity and confirmed Native American issues as relevant to contemporary society. Students cut out articles from local newspapers and school magazines, and shared stories from older siblings concerning some events which took place in nearby high schools and school districts. One of these events, as recounted by several students and chronicled in the local newspaper, involved a young man who was suspended at a nearby high school for allegedly responding "inappropriately" to a racist joke about Native Americans. The joke was apparently read to the entire school during the morning announcements, after which a Native American student left his class, walked into the office, and spoke against the decidedly racist joke. The young man was then suspended for "getting out of control" when administrators apparently did not listen intently to his concerns.

In this first transcript, Karen has just finished reading her response paper concerning this event. Her peer conference partners Lori and Mary, have already read their papers and received feedback on the previous day, so Karen's response paper is the sole priority for the peer conference. This transcript excerpt is taken from a video tape of the three girls conferencing in the librarian's office, which was specifically reserved for this purpose. The following line-by-line microanalysis of Transcript One provides a description

and interpretation of the specific linguistic strategies used by peer conference partners to weigh the risks and benefits of challenging discoursal choices as critical language analysts.

Transcript #1: January 13, 1998

Lori, Mary, and Karen

1. LO: And you can put this in it.
2. LO: Now as a result they don't have it.
3. MA: I think they shouldn't have jokes.
4. LO: I don't think he should have gotten suspended.
5. KA: But
6. he got all out of control.
7. You know that deserved one.
8. He jumped on the desk.
9. He knew he could have handled it differently.
10. Like,
11. I'd appreciate it
12. if you'd get the boy or person who wrote the joke
13. so I could talk to them.
14. They could all work it out or something.=
15. MA: =He barely told them what his problem was!
16. He just got on the desk and started threatening people
17. and jumping around.
18. So,

19. I think he deserved the suspension.
20. LO: But a person,
21. MA: Well,
22. they shouldn't have had it in the first place.
23. LO: Yea,
24. But it's like
25. And he shouldn't have done that.
26. That would be like
27. Having a joke,
- 28, like if it was a joke about white people
29. there would be like a HUGE apology.=
30. KA: =Yea.
31. But it was an Indian joke
32. in a dominant white school.
33. So,
34. what does it mean that for a week or so she like,
35. hi, I heard about...
36. MA: But
37. I think as a joke
38. It's just so pathetic to begin with.





In lines 1 and 2, Lori offers Karen a suggestion for her final paragraph ("And you can put this in it/ Now as a result they don't have it) which is a typical in traditional peer conference discourse and practice. In line 3 ("I think they shouldn't have jokes") Mary takes up the CLA discourse and is the first participant to take up the critical language analyst position as she challenges the ideology of "appropriateness" concerning jokes in school. Lori also takes up the critical language analyst position as she responds in line 4 by disagreeing with Karen's opinion, ("I don't think he should have gotten suspended") as exemplified in her response paper, regarding the ideology of social justice for challenging the school administration. These two positioning moves establish the critical frame for the entire conference which is sustained for more than fifteen minutes. Karen takes up the critical language analyst position in line 9 ("He knew he could have handled it differently") when she suggests that students have knowledge about resisting oppressive school discourse in culturally appropriate ways. In lines 11-14 (I'd appreciate it/ if you'd get the boy or person who wrote the joke/ so I could talk to them/ They could work it out or something"), Karen suggests a specific strategy I modeled as part of a lesson on challenging oppressive discourses (situation cards), which was part of the Language and Diversity Unit taught earlier in the semester. Discrimination discourse and ideology combined with a CLA discourse and ideology are also embedded in these lines. These discourses and ideologies suggest that politeness is necessary when resisting oppressive discourse and that individuals are responsible for

creating oppressive school discourse rather than the institution itself. Karen combines these two discourses and ideologies together to position herself as a critical language analyst and as an authority. She also expresses her alternative frame using a character monologue, a genre she is both familiar with and adept at using in the context of English class.

In line 15 ("He barely told them what his problem was!") Mary takes up the critical language analyst position again and positions Karen as an authority at the same time. Employing both the CLA discourse and discrimination discourse, as well as the corresponding ideologies, Mary recognizes that it is through language and discourse that student problems are created and resolved. She also recognizes the dialectical (two-way) relationship between language, subject positions and power by agreeing with Karen's analysis of the boy's behavior and her strategy for dealing with the oppressive language. (line 19, "I think he deserved the suspension") Later in line 22 ("they shouldn't have had it in the first place") she returns to her original point that some genres are not appropriate for school communities, which shows critical language awareness of the seemingly naturalized ideology and discourse of appropriateness currently in practice at the school.

Lori agrees with both Karen and Mary that the boy's behavior was not acceptable, but initiates an alternative frame in line 26 in the form of an analogy. In lines 26-29 ("That would be like/ having a joke/ like if it was a joke about white people/ there would be a huge apology") Lori takes up the critical language analyst position through CLA discourse and discrimination

discourse as well as the corresponding ideologies. She recognizes in lines 28 and 29 that there are benefits to belonging to the dominant culture as writers and interpreters of text, in this case a racist joke. She implies that people should think about how language positions others and not just how language positions themselves, which may be a benefit to weighing the risks and benefits of challenging discursual choices, such as a racist joke.

Karen again takes up the critical language analyst position in line 30 when she agrees with Lori's analysis of language and positioning. Next, through both CLA and discrimination discourses and corresponding ideologies, Karen offers two key alternative frames involving subject positions, power, and the value of awareness. Firstly, in lines 31 and 32 ("But it was an Indian joke/ in a dominant white school") she recognizes the dialectical (two-way) relationship between power, text, and the subject positions of both the writer and interpreter. She returns the participants to the original frame that specified an "Indian joke" in a "dominant white school." The use of the word "dominant" is an intertextual reference to a vocabulary item from the Language and Diversity Unit and from class discussions throughout the study. This is an excellent example of a critical language awareness as the critical language analyst position is taken up through the discourses, ideologies, and intertextual references from the instructional intervention embedded in the peer conference process. Secondly, in lines 34 and 35 ("what does it mean that for a week or so she like,/ hi, I heard about. . .") through these same discourses and ideologies,

Karen questions the value of challenging the status quo as she is not convinced of its lasting merit. She summarizes her entire refutation by suggesting that if awareness and understanding of oppression and language is only momentary, it may not have value, and hence, the benefits of resisting culturally accepted oppressive discourses may be minimal. In this example, Karen demonstrates a profound understanding about language, power, and oppression in that she weighs the benefits and risks of challenging the status quo. As she writes and publishes the paper with her original point of view regarding the inappropriateness of ethnic jokes in school, she decides that the risks are worth taking to engage in social action—regardless of the tenuous outcome.

Finally, in the last two lines of this transcript (lines 37 and 38, "I think as a joke/ it's just so pathetic to begin with") Mary takes up the critical language analyst subject position once again, and through CLA discourse acknowledges that evaluating the text from a non-Native subject position is relevant to understanding its social meaning in the context of the joke genre as she calls the joke "pathetic" and adds "to begin with." Mary also suggests that texts may be rendered meaningless if they do not elicit strong responses from all interpreters, which refutes Karen's ideology that the joke could have profound meaning for anyone. Although this suggestion may not appear to support a critical language awareness, Mary's comment locates the source of the problem in text, a joke, and challenges its power and authority which is one of the goals of a critical language awareness. However, it is Karen and

Lori who critically examine the subject positions in connection with texts and power, and therefore, demonstrate a complex understanding of the relationship between text, power, and subject positions of writers and interpreters; specifically, the relationship between a racist joke, the power it has on individuals within the school context, and the responsibilities writers and interpreters have to weigh the risks and benefits of challenging school sanctioned texts.

This transcript also demonstrates how students take up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position and take up the kind of power and authority being offer to them within the CLA discourse. Students accomplish this by transcending the traditional initiation-response-feedback exchange structure found in the brief instances of critical language awareness. For example, Lori begins by initiating with a suggestion in lines 1 and 2, "And you can put this in it./ Now as a result they don't have it." This is a typical peer conference exchange initiative taken from the peer conference agenda item that asks peer responders to offer suggestions to the writer. However, instead of offering a typical response pertaining directly to the suggestion for the writer, thus reinforcing the teacher agenda and the peer conference discourse, the peer responder shifts the topic toward an ideologically based discussion of jokes and school. This topic shift stimulates a complex exchange structure in which students take up the power and authority offer by the CLA discourse. This investment in CLA may indicate more student control, although the teacher's CLA agenda is still ultimately in power. All

three peer responders offer emphatic responses topically related to the social and political implications of the concept of jokes in school, (lines 3, 4, 5 and 6, "MA: I think they shouldn't have jokes./ LO: "I don't think he should have gotten suspended./ KA: "But/ he got all out of control.) as opposed to typical responses topically related to Karen's writing. The typical exchange structure is replaced with this series of emphatic statements and counter statements which challenge the pre-set exchange structure.

This exchange structure, which could be described in lines 3 through 6 as response-counter response-response-counter response, appears to be facilitated by the critical language analyst. From here, the exchange structure is unpredictable and remarkably different than the initiation-response-feedback exchange structure of the brief critical language analyst interactions. All three girls participate in elaborating on the topic with additional information, (line 16, MA: "He just got up on the desk and started threatening people"), personal opinions, (line 25, LO: "And he shouldn't have done that"), and/or suggested strategies, (line 15, KA: "They could work it out or something"). This transcript demonstrates that the nature of the exchange system is relevant to the kinds of things people can say (Fairclough, 1992). In this transcript the taking up of a complex exchange structure and transcending of the simple peer conference agenda appears to be associated with topics that seemingly include student investment in CLA. Here, for example, the agenda includes differing opinions about justice and school discipline. Thus, the critical language analyst subject position is characterized

by the complex exchange structure and the revised topic, which demonstrates investment in CLA discourse and ideologies. Students take up the kind of power and authority being offer to them within the CLA discourse, which may indicate a partial shift towards student control, even though the CLA agenda originates with the teacher.

Transcript One shows that a critical language awareness was at the core of peer conference talk about writing. Here, as an extension to the way students often talk about their writing in traditional "Elbowian" peer conference formats as an element of process writing, ethnicity, language, and power were viewed as topics of social significance when weighing the risks and benefits of challenging discorsal choices. These topics became established as more than simply issues of individual importance as students examined and tried to unravel systems of social relations and power. For example, they raised issues about the social significance of ethnic jokes in the context of school and the systems of justice involved in speaking against the dominant culture. They also question the lasting value of challenging the discorsal choice of the status quo, in this case an ethnic joke. Their discussion demonstrates a critical language awareness in that they examine and weigh the risks and benefits of challenging the ideologies of "appropriateness" associated with "dominant white school culture" and the language and communication styles that support this culture.

The intertextual reference students employed when they took up the critical language analyst subject position demonstrate which aspects of

instruction might have assisted students in critical language awareness. In this transcript, Karen employed a strategy associated with the situation card lesson I taught in the Language and Diversity Unit. In this transcript she models a character monologue in which she identified the specific offensive text and requests to speak with the individual responsible for its creation. Furthermore, she demonstrates that politeness is a necessary factor in identifying and challenging discursal choices with individuals who may have higher status than the challenger.

Another intertextual reference employed includes the use of the word "dominant" to describe the school in which the racist joke was initiated. I employed the word "dominant" frequently throughout the Language and Diversity Unit and included it on students' vocabulary sheets.

Finally, all of the references to the racist joke are intertextual references to a newspaper article students read and discussed in class. This was a student initiated activity that students continued to refer to several times in response papers and in class discussions. Students employed all these intertextual references from the Language and Diversity Unit, also called CLA curriculum, in their process of weighing the risks and benefits of challenging of discursal choices.

#### Identifying and Challenging the Potentially Dangerous Relationship Between Texts and Consumers

Earlier in the year, I introduced several concepts regarding language and oppression in the Language and Diversity Unit. One of these lessons

focused on a short cartoon clip of "Injun Jo," who is a Native American character featured in a series of Warner Brother's cartoons from the 1950's still broadcast on cable television. Many students were already familiar with the character prior to the classroom broadcast of the cartoon; however, in the context of our study of language, advertising and the media students envisioned this seemingly innocuous "Loony Tune" with new eyes. Tony called the cartoon and character "dangerous for kids" in a class discussion after viewing the cartoon clip. Tony continued to draw from this experience in his peer conference with Matt three months after the cartoon debut and accompanying class discussion.

In this second transcript, Tony has just finished reading his response paper on "TV Stereotypes" to his peer conferencing partner, Matt. Matt is responding by filling out the peer conference sheet and orally responding to the items as he does so. This transcript excerpt is taken from a video tape of the two boys conferencing in the back of the English classroom. The following line-by-line microanalysis of Transcript Two provides a description and interpretation of the specific linguistic strategies used by peer conference partners to identify and challenge the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers as critical language analysts.

Transcript #2: January 13, 1998

Matt and Tony

1. MT: My identity as a white person
2. may have prejudiced my thinking about Tony's paper
3. because I haven't really faced that much racism.
4. TO: Yea . . .
5. I haven't either.
6. See that's the thing.
7. I don't think it happens around here,
8. hat much.
9. MT: But
10. there actually is though.
11. When I was in,
12. um,
13. elementary school,
14. like,
15. there was this,
16. um,
17. big thing.
18. Like a kid called someone,
19. one of my friends actually,
20. a nigger

21. and he got really mad  
22. and it wound up that,  
23. Ah,  
24. my friend got a stick through his ear  
25. and he had to get stitches inside of his ear.=  
26. TO: Ah.  
27. That's weird.  
28. MT: That was like,  
29. bad.  
30. TO: Wow.  
31. But  
32. I think it's just as dangerous to watch shows that have it in it,  
33. you know,  
34. racism,  
35. cause you can't always see it  
36. right away,  
37. especially if you're just a kid.  
38. So like,  
39. even adults,  
40. can't always see it.



Table 4.2 Continued

Line	FORM	TEXT TYPE	GENRE	DISCOURSE	INTERTEXTUAL REFERENCES	CULTURAL IDEOLOGY	SUBJECT POSITION							
							Self and other as equal	Other as authority	Self as Critical Language Analyst	Self as authority	Self as subordinate	Other as subordinate		
27	MT	Statement				lack of personal experience doesn't negate racism's existence; racism is hard to explain	•							
28	MT	Statement				racism exists even if it is outside of immediate personal experience			•					
29	MT	Statement			•	racism exists even if it is outside of immediate personal experience			•					
30	TO	Emphatic Statement				racism exists even if it is outside of immediate personal experience		•						
31	TO	Statement								•				
32	TO	Statement			•	passive observation of racist texts is dangerous				•				
33	TO	Statement												
34	TO	Example												
35	TO	Statement			•	racism is embedded in text and context; racism may be subtle and blatant				•				
36	TO	Statement			•	racism is embedded in text and context; racism may be subtle and blatant				•				
37	TO	Statement			•	racism is embedded in text and context and is difficult to identify without experience				•				
38	TO	Statement												
39	TO	Statement			•	racism is embedded in text and context and is difficult to identify with experience				•				
40	TO	Statement			•	racism is embedded in text and context and is difficult to identify with experience				•				

In lines 1 and 2 ("My identity as a white person/ may have prejudiced my thinking about Tonio's paper") Matt reads from the peer conference sheet which asks students to consider how their subject positions may have affected their responses to their partner's writing. According to my definition of critical language analyst, these lines demonstrate this position in a brief moment. This brief interaction is representative of many of the critical language analyst subject positionings in the Pocumtuck story peer conferences, and in the response paper peer conferences of students whose peer conferences were not chosen for the microanalysis of this study due to their brevity and non-sustaining of the critical language analyst position. However, Matt and Tony continue their critical language analyst positioning moves and veer from the peer conference sheet, and thus, they sustain the critical analyst subject interaction. The ideologies born of Matt's critical analyst subject position suggest that subject positions are important to consider during peer conferencing, and that there is a dialectical (two-way) relationship between text and the subject positions of the writer and responder. Matt employs a CLA discourse in order to take up this position, which is expected as the peer conferencing sheet calls for taking up this position.

In line 3 ("because I haven't really faced that much racism") Matt launches a statement regarding doubt about the presence of racism in his life. The words "really" and "that much" hedge the statement and eventually open up the possibility for a reconsideration of this statement. In past class

discussions, Matt initiated many issues revolving around the subtleties of anti-Semitism in our community which makes his hedged comment even more interesting. The implication here is that anti-Semitism is something other than racism, but not completely different from racism. Matt draws on discrimination in lines 1 through 3 which overlaps with CLA discourse.

Tony agrees with Matt in lines 4 and 5 ("Yea, . . . / I haven't either") which suggests the ideology that personal experience is important. In line 7 ("I don't think it happens around here) Tony positions himself as an authority and suggests that his lack of experience with racism means that it doesn't happen and then, in line 8, adds "that much" which suggests that he hesitates to make a blanket statement on this subject. This may indicate that early in the conversation Tony recognizes, as Matt does in line 3 above, the limitations of his experience as a white male in a privileged position. Neither of the boys directly articulates discomfort regarding statements about the non-existence of racism "around here," but this microanalysis of their talk suggests otherwise. This is confirmed in lines 9 and 10 ("But/ there actually is though") when Matt positions himself as an authority, invoking discrimination discourse by suggesting that lack of personal experiences doesn't mean that racism fails to exist. He initiates this positioning using counter statements, a text type associated with the argumentation genre.

In lines 11 through 13 ("When I was in/ um/ elementary school") Matt continues as an authority and initiates a personal narrative through the discrimination discourses which suggests that indirect personal experiences

can substantiate ideologies about racism. As Matt refers to a previous text from an elementary experience, he draws on material from other contexts to make meaning of the present text embedded in the peer conference. In lines 15 through 17 ("there was this,/ um,/ big thing") Matt takes up the critical language analyst subject position through the personal narrative genre. When Matt refers to the "big thing" he is referring to a significant episode involving name calling and racism. Personal narrative genre is taken up by critical language analysts on several occasions as it is a familiar and widely employed genre used across disciplines and throughout the elementary and middle school grades; thus it is both a familiar and accessible tool students use to position themselves as both authorities and as critical language analysts. Furthermore, Matt combines this personal narrative genre with intertextual references to elementary school experiences as resources to take up the critical language analyst subject positioning.

As a critical language analyst, Matt goes on to tell his story in lines 18-25. ("Like a kid called someone,/ one of my friends actually,/ a nigger/ and he got really mad/ and it wound up that,/ ah,/ my friend got a stick through his ear/ and he had to get stitches inside of his ear.") In these lines Matt refutes his and Tony's original ideology about the non-existence of racism "around here." Most importantly, Matt confirms the ideologies that there is a dialectical (two-way) relationship between language and power, and that there can be negative consequences for resisting oppressive language. Matt's story combines the personal narrative genre with CLA discourse and

discrimination discourse, suggesting that indirect personal experiences can substantiate ideologies about racism. The use of the word "nigger" in line 20 clearly signifies the overlapping of these two discourses, as Matt is well aware of the consequences of employing racist language outside of this critical context of classroom discussion. He even whispers the word. (It may be helpful to note that during class discussions, students dubbed this word "the n word.") Lines 24 and 25 are statements which Matt uses to continue the personal narrative and to end his story.

Tony agrees with Matt's statement and his revised ideology regarding the potential negative consequences for resisting oppressive language and racism. As determined through a careful analysis of the video, Tony's comments "That's weird" and "Wow" from lines 27 and 30 both show agreement. Matt's response in lines 28 and 29 ("That was like/ bad") reiterates the final message of the story with a summary statement just to be sure that Tony fully understands the serious physical implications of having a stick go through an ear. The narrative story, Tony's response, and Matt's summary statements are communicated through CLA and discrimination discourses and substantiate Matt's refutation that racism exists even if he is merely a witness to a racist event. Matt takes up the critical language analyst position by employing these discourses and ideologies which initiate and support Tony in positioning himself as a critical language analyst in the subsequent peer conference text.

In line 31 Tony initiates a potential refutation of Matt's revised statement and positions himself as an authority with the word "But." However, in line 32 ("I think it's just as dangerous to watch shows that have it in it") Tony extends Matt's ideology of language and racism by suggesting that the passive observance of racist texts is just as dangerous. Through both discourses, Tony takes up the critical analyst subject position. He also uses intertextuality as a strategy to support his critical language analyst subject positioning as he mentions watching "shows that have it (racism) in it," which refers to the cartoon discussed above. Tony continues to extend this ideology in lines 34-40 ("racism/ cause you can't always see it/ right away/ especially if you're just a kid. So like/ even adults/ can't always see it") through both discourses and by employing statements from the argumentation genre which support his critical analyst subject position. Lines 35 and 36 suggest that racism is embedded in text and context and may be subtle or blatant. Finally, Tony suggests in lines 39 and 40 that racism is embedded in text and context and is difficult to identify without experience or even with experience. Both boys critically examine the relationship between subject positions, language, and power and, therefore, demonstrate a critical language awareness of those who are positioned by text (Matt's friend in the personal narrative; and Tony's reference to kids and adults) as well as those who produce the text (the perpetrator of the violence in Matt's story; the implied producers of the cartoon; and Matt and Tony as writers). These boys challenged each other to examine the seemingly innocuous texts that saturate

our culture and subtly support illicit racist messages for both children and adults.

This transcript also demonstrates how students took-up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position and invested in the CLA discourse by transcending the traditional initiation-response-feedback exchange structure. For example, Matt begins as a critical language analyst by initiating with a peer conference item, "My identity as a white person/ may have prejudiced my thinking about Tony's paper/ because I haven't really faced that much racism" (lines 1-3). Tony responds, "Yea. . ./ I haven't either" (lines 4 and 5). This is a simple exchange structure so far. However, Tony interrupts the typical exchange structure by initiating rather than providing feedback. "See that's the thing./ I don't think it happens around here, / that much" (lines 6-8). Furthermore, Tony initiates with a topic that isn't directly related to the teacher's agenda concerning the writing, but is thematically related to Matt's previous statement. Tony takes control of the topic in these lines, and takes up the kind of power and authority offered to him within the CLA discourse. The complex exchange structure and student topic control indicate that, at least partially, the power and authority may have shifted due to students' investment in the CLA discourse. This is true for the remainder of the transcript .

Similar to the girls in Transcript One, the typical peer conference exchange structure is replaced with a series of statements and counter statements which challenge the pre-set exchange structure. For example, in

the next line, Matt refutes Tony's comment with a counter statement, "But/ there actually is though" (lines 9 and 10). Next, Matt initiates a personal narrative that further develops the topic of racism and its existence in our community. Matt sustains his authoritative positioning when he again takes up the critical language analyst subject position in line 17, when he refers to a racist name calling incident as a "big thing." Afterwards, Tony takes up and sustains the critical language analyst subject position in lines 31 and 32, "But/ I think it's just as dangerous to watch shows that have it (racism) in it." Tony responds with a counter statement thematically related to Matt's statements. Matt begins with a counter response, as well as initiating a personal narrative. This is a complex exchange structure remarkably different than the simplistic initiation-response-feedback exchange structure of the brief critical language analyst interactions. As demonstrated in these examples, once the boys relinquish the simple exchange structure, both boys participate in elaborating on the topic controlled by their investment in CLA. Thus, the critical language analyst subject position is characterized by the complex exchange structure and the revised topic, which demonstrate that students are taking up the kind of power and authority being offered to them within the CLA discourse.

Transcript Two shows that the CLA elements of the peer conference extended the traditional Elbowian conference agenda and created a space for sustained critical interactions in which students acknowledged their social responsibility to uncover oppressive language, especially for children. For

example, Tony raised issues about the danger of exposing children to racist representations of Native people on television as children are not equipped with the tools necessary to uncover and analyze these complex subject positions. Their discussion demonstrates a critical language awareness in that they identified and challenged the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and their consumers. In this case the consumers were children. The boys examined and challenged the ideologies of "appropriateness" associated with television stereotypes and the potential danger for children because of their limited ability to readily read and identify the subtleties of racism disguised as innocuous children's texts.

In this transcript both boys utilized intertextual references in order to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position. In addition to directly referring to the peer conference item that asks students to think about how their white identity may have influenced their interpretation of response papers, both boys employed intertextual references that may be derived from school wide and CLA curriculums. For example, Matt employed personal narrative when he told his personal experience story, albeit as a witness, which focused on the relationship between language and oppression. Personal narrative is commonly used in English curriculums at our middle school. It was also encouraged throughout the Language and Diversity Unit in informal writing and thinking exercises and in numerous classroom discussions. Personal experience narration was at the core of many lessons that focused on the response papers as students were required to take

up a position on a specific issue. Students utilized their personal experiences as well as other readings to substantiate their claims in these papers.

Another intertextual reference employed in this transcript was the "Injun Jo" cartoon which Tonio refers to as a dangerous text for children's passive viewing. This cartoon was featured in a lesson on Native American stereotypes. Tonio was an active participant in the class discussion around this lesson and often cited it as a blatant example of a socially sanctioned racist text. All of these intertextual references seemed to assist students in identifying and challenging the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers, who may be unconscious of the potential harmfulness of such texts.

#### Impairing the Critical Language Analyst Subject Position and Struggling for Authority

Throughout the course of this study I arranged for quiet, comfortable spaces for students to conference with each other. My motive was two-fold: one, to ensure an audible video or audio tape; and two, to create a safe, private space in which students could read their writing without the unwanted ears or disturbances from others sharing the space, which is often a problem in our English classroom. Therefore, I often reserved the library, including adjacent offices and activity rooms, for peer conferences. On this particular day, Brad and Bob were sharing one of the adjacent rooms with Shannon and Amy. Tape recorders were set up at either end of the room, which is relatively the same size as the English classroom where we normally

hold our classes. Round tables and soft cushioned chairs were provided as well as blank cassettes. Brad and Bob proceeded to peer conference and record their conference just as the two girls across the room did the same. Brad had finished reading his response paper and was recording Bob's comments on his peer conference sheet.

Upon initial examination of the boys' audio taped peer conference, I did not select it for microanalysis because it did not meet the criteria I listed in the previous section of this chapter as it contained critical language analyst subject positions that were not sustained for any length of time. The tape was also difficult to hear and had frequent clicks where, I supposed, the boys had turned off the recorder in order to "ditch" the teacher as an interpreter of their conference. However, two coincidences inadvertently conspired to create a very interesting and informative piece of data. One coincidence was that I walked into the room unnoticed towards the end of their conversation and silently recorded field notes during their peer conference, although I was unaware of their significance at the time. The second coincidence was that prior to my presence, Shannon and Amy had accidentally recorded Bob and Brad's initial "shouting match," which I discovered later as I reviewed the audio tapes for themes in the initial stage of my analysis. Therefore, between the boys' self-recording, the girls' inadvertent recording, and my field notes, I was able to piece together and microanalyze Bob and Brad's peer conference.

In this third transcript, taken from Shannon and Amy's audio tape, Brad and Bob are nearing the end of their peer conference in which Bob was

responding to Brad's response paper, "Save the Redskins." Prior to the discussion in the transcript below, much of their conversation was directly guided by the peer conference sheet, although both boys took up the critical language analyst position in brief moments as they moved through the conference items. Prior to the beginning of this transcript, Bob had previously raised criticisms of Brad's paper which Brad had emphatically rejected. My field notes reveal Brad's rejections as consistent with other interactions with Bob since the beginning of the term. The following line-by-line microanalysis of Transcript Three provides a description and interpretation of the specific linguistic resources used by critical language analysts and, most importantly, discloses how authoritative positioning may have interrupted or impaired the taking up of the critical language analyst position.

Transcript #3: January 13, 1998

Brad and Bob

1. BR: You have my paper right in front of you!
2. BO: Well
3. I don't know what else to say.
4. BR: I don't know what to say either.
5. It's my paper
6. and I don't think I should make changes.
7. BO: Well,

8. I don't know what else to say.
9. BR: I don't think you should tell ME what is respectful.
10. BO: I think Redskins is OK,
11. But you need to show more respect to the Native Americans.
12. You can't use the Redskin word
13. when you're not talking about the team.
14. It's not right.
15. BR: All right then.
16. I'll use the word savage. [laughs]
17. BO: Ya, right. [sarcastic tone]
18. You have that thing recording don't you? [says this to Amy who smiles and says, "Yup." Brad is not aware of the recorder.]
19. BR: OK. OK.
20. I get it.
21. Now
22. Let's see what changes YOU need to make.



This transcript begins with Brad's angry demand in line 1 ("You have my paper right in front of you!") which sets the tone and establishes his authoritative position in this section of the transcript. My field notes reveal that Bob has completed the items on the peer conference agenda and offers suggestions regarding Brad's use of the word "Redskins." Brad, however, has rejected these suggestions and I surmise, from the field notes from previous observations, that Brad still waits for suggestions he deems helpful. Bob shuffles papers and focuses elsewhere because he is fearful of Brad's angry responses. In an interview with Bob, I learned that Bob was often embarrassed and frustrated with Brad's "outrages" as Bob often saw the world from different eyes than Brad. In lines 2 and 3 ("Well/ I don't know what else to say") Bob succumbs to the subordinate position imposed by Brad which safely distances him from his angry partner. It is through peer conferencing discourse and the corresponding ideologies in lines 5-6 ("It's my paper/ and I don't think I should make changes") that the boys are able to continue their conversation and Brad continues to rigorously sustain his authoritative positioning. In lines 6 and 9 (line 9, "I don't think you should tell ME what is respectful") Brad forcefully suggests that writers make the decision about revising their work and that writers have a right to their own definition of respectful language, which are ideologies embedded in peer conference discourse. As a critical language analyst, Bob, in line 10 ("I think Redskins is OK") attempts to calm the writer by demonstrating some ideological agreement regarding Brad's use of the word "Redskins." Immediately

following this agreement, in line 11 ("But you need to show more respect to the Native Americans") Bob continues as a critical language analyst through the CLA discourse, discrimination discourse and their corresponding ideologies that suggest peer responders should identify disrespectful language to writers and that Native Americans deserve more respect. This positioning move is accomplished through a counter statement which is a text type from an argumentation genre. Sustaining this position and rendering Brad quiet for the first time during the peer conference, Bob continues to explain the rules for "appropriateness" concerning the word "Redskin" in Brad's paper in lines 12-14. ("You can't use the Redskin word/ when you're not talking about the team") Through the aforementioned discourses, Bob successfully refutes Brad's ideology of respect, substantiates his own ideology of respect, and summarizes it in this one succinct statement. Bob also uses intertextuality as a strategy from which he draws his refutation of Brad's ideology of respect. Bob draws his ideology from class discussions focused on the "Redskins" issue which stemmed from related articles introduced by students prior to this peer conference. In this positioning move, Bob suggests that positioning others with oppressive language is unacceptable and that language is context bound; hence, the word "Redskin" is "appropriate" for a team name but not outside of this sport context. Although this "appropriateness" ideology leaves room for a more complex understanding of CLA, Bob's deftness with this critical language analyst subject position provides both students with an analysis of the language practices that oppress Native people, changes the

course of the entire peer conference, and consequently assists the writer in revising his paper.

Brad's attitude is noted in his transitional statement in line 15 ("All right then") as he positions himself as equal to his partner. This is further exemplified in the next line (line 16, "I'll use the word savage") when he laughs as he informs Bob that he'll use the word "savage" instead of "Redskin," which he recognizes as a term that oppresses Native people. This is a clear intertextual reference to a class discussion on words that disempower Native people. This is Brad's sole positioning move as critical language analyst in this transcript, other than the brief moments indicative of the peer conference procedure as discussed above. As the word "savage" was derived from a noteworthy class discussion during the study of *The Light in the Forest*, Brad employs intertextuality as a strategy to take up the critical language analyst position in line 16. Brad suggests the ideology that there are levels of discriminatory language through CLA and discrimination discourses and the corresponding ideologies. He also mocks Bob's ideological stance regarding oppressive language, but he does so lightheartedly in a successful attempt to change the tone of the conference to a more positive interaction.

Bob sustains his critical language analyst subject position in line 17 ("Ya, right") as he recognizes Brad's sarcasm and delivers an equally sarcastic remark back in which he suggests that the word "savage" is just as oppressive as "Redskins" in this particular context. It is at this moment when Bob notices that although their recorder was shut off several minutes ago, the two

girls behind them have had their tape recorder on for the entire time he and Brad were peer conferencing, hence the comment to Amy, "You have that thing recording don't you?" in line 18. It is indeterminable as to whether Brad ever hears Bob's comment to Amy, but he finally agrees that Bob's point regarding the "Redskins" word has merit and that he will consider it (lines 19 and 20, "OK OK/ I get it") His previous sarcastic remark regarding the word "savage" led me to believe that he did really "get it" which denotes a critical language awareness. However, Brad's reluctance to readily accept this criticism may be hampered by his unwillingness to relinquish his authoritative position. In this light, authoritative positioning may have impaired Brad's taking up and sustaining the critical language analyst subject position as his critical stance is short-lived. In the final two lines of this transcript (lines 21 and 22, "Now/ Let's see what changes YOU need to make.") he repositions himself as an authority exclusive of the critical language analyst position, and returns to the peer conference discourse similar to the beginning of this transcript. Brad reminds Bob that the power to suggest revisions lies in the peer responder as they switch roles. In this transcript both participants take up the critical language position, but it is Bob who initiates and sustains the position.

This transcript also demonstrates that the taking up of the critical language analyst subject position as a weapon to secure power and authority over others not only interrupts the critical language analyst subject position, but also seems to interrupt the creation of complex exchange structures that

characterize this positioning move. For example, in line 9, Brad initiates with a very contentious statement, "I don't think you should tell ME what is respectful." Bob relinquishes the peer conference discourse and simple exchange structure, which have dominated the conference so far, and takes up the critical language analyst subject position, "I think Redskins is OK" (line 10). Bob then elaborates his response beginning with a counter statement, "But you need to show more respect to the/ Native Americans./ You can't use the Redskin word/ when you're not talking about the team./ It's not right" (lines 11-14). This response includes a counter statement and further specific details that create a rich and complex source from which Brad could elaborate. Brad, however, takes up the critical language analyst subject position and uses it as an authorized weapon to offer biting feedback to Bob's statements, "All right then./ I'll use the word savage" (lines 15 and 16). This feedback and positioning move, as well as their sudden awareness of the tape recorder, interrupts the critical language analyst subject position and the possible continuation of a more complex exchange pattern initiated through Bob's comments. Bob then returns to the simple exchange structure typical of peer conference discourse. He suggests that he knows what to do and then presses forward so that his partner can have a turn. "I get it./ Now/ Let's see what changes YOU need to make" (lines 20-22). This comment carries the power and authority back to the peer conference, which may signal a return to a more simple exchange structure. Here, Bob's investment is in reclaiming power and authority outside of CLA. Thus, the momentary shift to the kind

of power and authority being offered within the CLA discourse is interrupted by the taking up of the critical language analyst subject position as an authorized weapon to gain power over others.

Both boys in this transcript took up the critical language analyst subject position, but Brad did not sustain this position. Brad appeared more invested in taking up an authoritative position. For example, Brad repositioned himself as an authority or positioned Bob as a subordinate in at least ten positioning moves in this brief section of the transcript. It was Bob's persistence in sustaining the critical language analyst subject position that enabled both boys to unravel the language and power issues embedded in Brad's text. The data also suggests that Brad's struggle with power and authority may have prevented him from taking up the critical language analyst subject position more often or for extended moments which, as discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, may have been embedded in Brad's difficulty with Bob's subject position as an African-American.

CLA could also be seen in this example as giving each boy new weapons in a struggle for supremacy. Bob was able to use CLA to challenge Brad's racism in authorized ways, but Brad used sarcasm and the final peer conference position to regain his authoritative position and suggested that he hasn't really changed his views. In this way critical language awareness provided both Bob and Brad opportunities to position themselves in ways that allowed them to unravel the language and power issues in Brad's text,

but also new tools that may have assisted them in supporting authoritative positions which may not be helpful in peer conferences.

As the transcript shows, both boys took up the critical language analyst subject position. For example, Bob raised issues about the social and political significance of the word "Redskin" to describe Native people out of the context of sports. While it may be argued that the word "Redskin" has social and political significance in any context, their discussion demonstrates a critical language awareness in that they examined and challenged the ideologies of "appropriateness" associated with language that positions Native people in a broader cultural context.

Finally, both boys used intertextuality as a strategy for interacting in the critical language analyst subject position and draw from CLA curriculum. Bob draws his ideology of respect from class discussions focused on the "Redskins" issue which stemmed from related articles introduced by students prior to this peer conference. Brad uses the word "savage" which was derived from a noteworthy class discussion during the study of the novel *The Light in the Forest*.

#### Wrestling with Subject Positions, Context, and Text Interpretation

During our study of Native Americans, students combed through newspapers and magazines in hope of locating related topics for large and small group discussions. This activity wasn't a requirement; in fact, it wasn't even my idea. Nor did I give extra credit, although students who brought in related articles were given special notoriety and class time to share their

articles in either whole group or small group discussion. Mary initiated the practice of article sharing, and in the weeks that followed students brought in over twenty articles about language, Native Americans, or related topics. In early January, Jane clipped an article about Native American casinos from a popular magazine which she shared in a small group discussion. Her group listened intently as she both read excerpts and used them to support her argument in favor of the casinos. This discussion and article provided Jane with her response paper topic and the intertextual references that allowed her and her peer conference partner, as critical language analysts in sustained interactions, to critically examine the relationships between subject positions, social and political contexts, and text interpretation.

In this fourth transcript, Jane has finished reading her response paper, "A Business of Success," to her peer conference partner, Kristine, who is responding in writing and orally to the peer conference sheet items. This transcript excerpt is taken from an audio tape of the two girls conferencing in the library conference corner, as previously arranged by me. The following line-by-line microanalysis of Transcript Four provides a description and interpretation of the specific linguistic resources used by peer conference partners to create and sustain the critical language analyst subject position as they wrestle with subject positions, social and political contexts, and text interpretation.

Transcript #4: January 13, 1998

Kristine and Jane

1. KR: Imagine if you weren't a white girl.
2. You might be offended by your paper.
3. But since you and I are white girls,
4. I don't know if I can really see any prejudice.
5. JA: Maybe since,
6. Think if you were a European person who lived in Europe
7. and you read this.
8. You might not agree with me at all
9. because you haven't learned about the Indians,
10. the Native Americans,
11. having their land taken away from them.
12. Like,
13. I think
14. You and I kinda both understand what they're going through
15. and why they're doing what they're doing.
16. KR: Yea.=
17. JA: =Someone from another country might not
18. KR: I can see your point there.
19. So I guess,
20. Maybe you need to ask yourself
21. what does your readers know about Native Americans. . .
22. JA: I guess I'll have to come back to it.





In lines 1 and 2 ("Imagine if you weren't a white girl/ You might be offended by your paper") Kristine is responding directly to a peer conference item which asks the responder to identify any subject positions from which the responder may offer prejudiced responses. She takes up the critical language analyst subject position in order to explain to her conference partner, Jane, that as a "white girl" she may not identify prejudicial remarks in Jane's paper. She uses CLA and discrimination discourses, corresponding ideologies, and intertextual references to the peer conference sheet in order to take up this critical positioning to suggest that "white girl" is a specific subject position pertinent to the discussion about Jane's paper. Kristine sustains her position by extending the ideology in line 3 ("But since you and I are white girls") with a counter statement and completing the rationale for the ideology in line 4. ("I don't know if I can really see any prejudice") Through this position she suggests the following ideologies: there are multiple ways to interpret a text, depending on the subject position of the interpreter; and there is a dialectical (two-way) relationship between subject position and language. Both of these ideologies are basic premises to a critical language awareness.

Jane informs Kristine of her desire to state an opinion through the hedge in line 5 ("Maybe since,") and then introduces a new ideology based on social and political context rather than on race in lines 6 and 7. ("Think if you were a European person who lived in Europe/ and you read this") In doing so, Jane takes up the critical language analyst position through CLA discourse

as she suggests in line 6 that a "European person" is a specific and different subject position compared to the "white girls" in Kristine's example. In order to continue a comparison between interpreters in line 6, which she understands as dependent on ethnicity as well as geographical location when she says, "who lived in Europe," she draws on an example from the text of her response paper in line 7. ("and you read this") The example allows her to build on her new ideology for understanding text and subject positions in line 8 ("You might not agree with me at all. . .") which suggests that there are multiple ways to interpret a text, depending on the subject positions of the interpreters. This interpretation based on social and political context is similar to the "outsider" subject position from the brief critical language analyst interaction from the previous section. This may also be an intertextual reference to a lesson on the European point of view regarding Native people.

Jane continues to sustain the critical language analyst subject position in line 9 ("because you haven't learned about the Indians") when she provides additional rationale for her ideology, which is in intertextual reference to the history and English curricula in the eighth grade. Jane recognizes that cultural knowledge "about the Indians" positions interpreters differently than those who may have different social and/or political knowledge bases.

Line 10 represents a correction in which Jane is trying to avoid language from an old common sense idea about Native people with which

she no longer chooses to identify. Rather than use the word "Indians" to describe Native people as in line 9 above, she corrects herself in line 10 substituting the term "Native Americans." Jane employs intertextuality here to sustain her critical language subject position by employing this term from class discussions on respect and naming Native people. This is an important step in becoming critically aware of how not to disempower others, and, hence, is a core element of a CLA.

Still sustaining the critical language analyst position, in line 11 ("having their land taken away from them") Jane provides Kristine with the historical example she needs in order to complete the ideology that there is a dialectical (two-way) relationship between historical context, language, subject positions and, consequently, cultural understanding. She sustains her position through the CLA discourse and by employing a specific example, which is a text type from the exposition genre. In lines 12-15 ("Like/ I think/ You and I kinda both understand what they're going through/ and why they're doing what they're doing") Jane employs both discourses to further substantiate the ideology that learning about a culture's history can influence the interpretation of a text. She positions Kristine and herself as both historically knowledgeable, and therefore possessing a different set of interpretive tools than the previously mentioned European person in line 6. Kristine expresses her agreement in line 16 with an interruption of Jane's comparative statement. Jane completes her comparative statement in line 17

(lines 16 and 17, "Yea./ = Someone from another country might not") which reinforces the aforementioned ideologies.

Kristine expresses her agreement again in line 18 ("I can see your point there") and positions herself as a critical language analyst. She continues this positioning move as critical language analyst in lines 20-21 ("maybe you need to ask yourself/ what does your readers know about Native Americans. . .") and as she gives advice to Jane, the writer. She sets up a suggestion and delivers the suggestion through the peer conference and CLA discourse in line 21 by summarizing the ideologies originating in Kristine's comments in lines 1-4 and extending these ideologies in Jane's comparison with the European person. These ideologies suggest that there is a dialectical relationship between the text and the subject positions of the writer and interpreter. Furthermore, Kristine supports these ideologies as she suggests in line 20 that writers need to pose questions to themselves when assessing how language positions others in their writing. Jane's final line ("I guess I'll have to come back to it") supports this ideology as she suggests that it is important for writers to consider the relationship between text and the subject positions of the interpreters which informs Kristine of a possible revision. Both writer and responder take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position in this peer conference as they critically examine the relationship between language and the subject positions of the writer and interpreter, and the social and political context in which the text is produced and interpreted.

This transcript also demonstrates how students took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position and, at least partially, shifted power and authority to include the kind being offered to them within the CLA discourse. Students accomplished this by transcending the simple initiation-response-feedback exchange structure found in the brief instances of critical language awareness. For example, Kristine begins by initiating with an agenda item from the peer conference sheet, "Imagine if you weren't a white girl./ You might be offended by your paper./ But since you and I are white girls, I don't know if I can really see any prejudice" (lines 1-4). Jane's response as a critical language analyst begins with a hedge, "Maybe since"(line 5) and continues with an elaborate response that begins with a conditional statement, "Think if you were a European person who lived in Europe" (line 6). From here Jane offers specific details and examples before ending with a counter statement, "You and I kinda both understand what they're going through" (line 14), in which Jane implies to Kristine that she can identify prejudice. Next Kristine provide feedback to Jane's response, "Yea" (line 16). Although the general exchange seemingly conforms to the initiation-response-feedback structure indicative of the brief instances of CLA, unlike the simple exchange structure of the brief critical language analyst instance there is complex topic elaboration, a counter statement, and a sincere investment in the CLA discourse which indicates that students are taking up the power and authority being offered to them through the CLA discourse.

In the final lines of this transcript, Kristine takes up both the peer conference discourse and the CLA discourse, "Maybe you need to ask yourself/ what does your reader know about native Americans. . ." (lines 20 and 21), which references their conversation. This demonstrates that the exchange structure isn't always clearly differentiated by the discourses taken up. Furthermore, these lines demonstrate that although power and authority may have shifted based on student investment in CLA discourse, the teacher's peer conference agenda is the ultimate authority.

The transcript demonstrates how students wrestled with understanding the complex relationships between subject positions, social and political contexts, and the interpretation of texts. For example, they raised issues about social justice in relation to a particular Native American subject position as a casino owner, and the possibility of different interpretations of this subject position based on the interpreter's knowledge and understanding of Native Americans based on social and political contexts. Their discussion demonstrated a critical language awareness in that they examined and challenged the social and political contexts in which the reader interpreted the subject position of the Native American casino owner and ideologies of "appropriateness" associated with Native American ownership and operation of casinos in general. The students critically examined the language that supports this position in Jane's response paper.

Additionally, this transcript demonstrates how students used several intertextual references from interdisciplinary curricula, as well as CLA

curriculum in order to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position, and to come to understandings about the relationships between subject positions, social and political contexts, and text interpretation. For example, in order to take up this critical positioning to suggest that "white girl" is a specific subject position pertinent to the discussion about Jane's paper, students reference CLA peer conference sheet. These girls frequently referred to history and English curricula on European points of view toward Native Americans which may have assisted them in recognizing that cultural knowledge "about the Indians" positions interpreters differently depending on social and/or political contexts. Finally, Jane corrects herself by employing the term "Native Americans" rather than "Indians" which strongly suggests an intertextual reference to the vocabulary and naming discussions that took place as part of the Language and Diversity Unit.

#### Summary of Transcripts One Through Four

These transcripts demonstrate that students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position extended the traditional peer conference positions by taking up critical language analyst subject positions, discourses, ideologies. When students transcended the peer conference subject position, and nearly relinquished the process writing discourse and traditional peer conference agenda, students took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position. Many of the sustained critical language analyst position moves were initiated through peer conference discourse

from the peer conference sheet, and were concluded when students returned to the traditional peer conference discourse and peer conference agenda.

The microanalysis demonstrates that the sustained critical language analyst subject positions were distinctly different than any other positioning moves in this data. They were characterized by extended critical language interactions between peer conference partners, realized through: CLA discourse and discrimination discourse; CLA and discrimination ideologies; a variety of text types including those discourse types representative in argumentation, exposition, personal narrative, and character monologue genres; intertextual references from CLA curriculum, peer conference intervention, and interdisciplinary curricula; and more complex exchange structures. Sustained critical language analyst subject positions were also associated with the social justice issues explicitly embedded in the response paper assignment, as opposed to the more subtle social awareness associated with the Pocumtuck story assignment.

Transcript One demonstrates how critical language analysts weighed the risks and benefits of challenging discursal choices and the systems of justice involved in speaking against the dominant culture. In this case, students raised issues about the social significance of a Native American joke in the context of school and discussed the value of challenging this school sanctioned discourse. They examined the ideologies of "appropriateness" associated with "dominant white school culture" and the language and communication styles that support this culture. This peer conference talk

was an extension of the traditional "Elbowian" peer conference because, in addition to exploring the topic of Karen's paper, critical language analysts viewed ethnicity, language and power as topics of social significance when weighing the risks and benefits of challenging oppressive texts.

Critical language analysts in Transcript Two demonstrated their understanding of the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers, especially unsuspecting children. They discussed their responsibility to uncover oppressive language that may perpetuate harmful images and misunderstandings of Native people and specifically refer to "Injun Jo." Tony raised issues about the danger of exposing children to racist representations of Native people on television in "Injun Jo" cartoons as, he explains, children are not equipped with the tools necessary to uncover and analyze these complex subject positions. Critical language analysts drew from intertextual references from personal experiences with racist acts and cartoon clips from the language and diversity curriculum. This discussion of Tony's paper, "TV Stereotypes," was an extension of the traditional peer conference as ideologies about language and power were at the core of their discussion. These critical language analysts examined the ideologies of "appropriateness" associated with television stereotypes and their potential danger to children.

In Transcript Three, both boys took up the critical language analyst subject positions, but Brad did not sustain the position as he was more invested in an authoritative position. Brad's struggle with power and authority may have prevented him from taking up the critical language

analyst subject position more often or for extended moments. Additionally, Brad's struggle with authoritative positioning might have been embedded in his apparent difficulty with Bob's subject position as an African-American. However, it was Brad's persistence in sustaining the critical language analyst subject position that enabled both boys to unravel the language and power issues regarding the use of the word "Redskin" in Bob's response paper.

This rather contentious peer conference also demonstrated the possibility that CLA might have given each boy new weapons in their struggle for supremacy. Bob used CLA to challenge Brad's racism in authorized ways, but Brad used sarcasm and the final peer conference position to regain his authoritative position and suggested that he hadn't really changed his views about using the word "Redskin" to describe Native people out of the context of sports. Although the boys in this peer conference unraveled the language and power issues in Brad's text via CLA, critical language awareness may also have provided them with new tools that may have assisted them in supporting authoritative positions which may not be helpful in peer conferences.

The final transcript demonstrated how students wrestled with the complex relationships between subject positions, social and political context, and text interpretation. The girls in this transcript discussed issues about social justice in relation to a specific subject position, a Native American casino owner, and the possibility of different interpretations of this subject positions based on the interpreter's knowledge and understandings about

Native Americans. Ethnicity relating to geographical location and political affiliation was brought up as influencing knowledge of Native Americans and, hence, as influencing the interpretation of the Native American casino subject position and the ideologies associated with the operations of casinos. The students critically examined the language that supports this subject position in Jane's response paper.

Finally, these transcripts demonstrate how students used several intertextual references from interdisciplinary curricula, CLA curriculum and peer conferencing in order to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position. Furthermore, students who took up and sustained this position also took up more complex exchange structures that demonstrate investment in the CLA discourse and that may have assisted them in take up the kind of power and authority being offered to them within the discourse. Although the shift in power and authority may be understood as partial, the shift may indicate student investment in CLA discourse that is unique to the critical language analyst subject position in sustained interactions.

#### Thematic Analysis of CLA Ideologies and Related Intertextual References in Transcripts One Through Four

In the following section I provide a thematic analysis of the critical language awareness ideologies students took up in sustained interactions as critical language analysts in Transcripts One through Four discussed above. I identify and categorize the ideologies these students took up and suggest how those ideologies and probable intertextual references to instructional practices might be related to CLA instruction via intertextual references to specific

lessons and class discussions. Finally, I categorize the intertextual references into those seemingly related to the Language and Diversity Unit, students' personal experiences, and interdisciplinary curriculum.

A thematic analysis of the CLA ideologies students took up in sustained interactions as critical language analysts, revealed five broad ideological categories: (1) language, power and struggle; (2) multiple interpretations; (3) resisting discourses; (4) responsibilities of peer responders and writers; (5) and identifying subject positions. The categories must be understood as fluid as many of the ideologies may be applicable to more than one category. The purpose of categorizing the ideologies was to provide a comprehensible analysis and discussion that made sense of the potential relationships between ideologies and intertextual references. In my discussion of each category I define the category, offer examples of ideologies from the transcripts, and discuss the instructional practices that may have prompted students to make the intertextual references through which they took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position. I do not discuss every ideology in each category as doing so would be too cumbersome for the reader. Rather, I offer discussion on the ideologies that occurred most frequently, and/or those ideologies that were more complex, and/or those ideologies that I deemed pertinent to the interpretation and implications of the data. I also assume that the reader can interpret the meanings of the more simple ideologies following discussions of more complex ideologies in the same category.

Category #1: Language, power, and struggle. The most frequent and fundamental ideological aspect that students took up as sustained critical language analysts in the four representative transcripts was their ideological understanding of language as a site of power and struggle. From this broader category, two ideological subcategories emerged: ideologies pertaining to language, power and problems; and ideologies pertaining to language and social positioning. The ideologies from each subcategory are listed below.

Ideologies pertaining to language, power and problems:

It is through language and discourse that students' problems are created and resolved.

There is a dialectical relationship between language and power.

Ideologies pertaining to language and social positioning:

Language positions others.

People should think about how language positions others and not just how language positions themselves.

The first subcategory of ideologies that students took up in the process of understanding language as a site of power and struggle included those ideologies specifically pertaining to language, power and problems. Through these ideologies students recognized language as a powerful tool that functions both intentionally and inadvertently to create problems and to resolve them. For example, in line 15 of Transcript One, Mary exclaims to Karen that the Native American boy who resisted the Native American joke

"barely told them what his problem was!" Mary recognizes here that the boy's seemingly inadequate explanation of his problem with the Native American joke functioned to create an even deeper problem than the original joke itself. In this way Mary recognizes language as a powerful tool that the boy used inadvertently to create more problems rather than to resolve them. She implies that if the Native American boy had used language to explain his problem to a fuller extent without threatening people and jumping around, he might have resolved the problem. Furthermore, she recognizes the problems that the racist joke has created in line 22 "they shouldn't have had it (the joke) in the first place."

Mary's taking up of the ideology "it is through language and discourse that problems are created and resolved," is intertextuality linked to Karen's remarks in lines 11-14 as she offers an oral CLA strategy for identifying, contesting, and possibly changing the school's understanding of racist text. (lines 11-14, "I'd appreciate it/ if you'd get the boy or person who wrote the joke/ so I could talk to them.") This is the same strategy that is implied in Mary's remark regarding the importance of oral language to resolving problems. This strategy was introduced in the Language and Diversity Unit in a role playing exercise in which students were asked to take up a variety of identities: those who may be positioned by racist text; those who position others with racist text; those who passively observe racist text; and/or those who actively promote social change. During this workshop, students created and experimented with strategies through which they could contest racist

texts and promote social change. Students generated a list of these strategies and then practiced the strategies with situation cards created by myself. Each situation card included a probable subject position, an oppressive text, and the social context in which the incident took place. Students then tested their strategies for identifying the oppressive text and for challenging the text through role playing exercises set up by myself.

Throughout this lesson, students placed great importance on a strategy they called "pointing out and explaining" the exact language that they deemed offensive and why. Interestingly, one of their strategies included "politeness" as a way of gaining attention and "serious response" from adults in positions of power. Karen suggests that there are "school ways" to resist oppressive school discourse and offers an example with a politeness ritual. She begins her textual challenge with the expression, "I'd appreciate it. . ."

Throughout the lesson on contesting racist text, students spoke about ways of interacting with adults (usually teachers) in order to be taken seriously, and they decided that certain politeness rituals and expressions were necessary in order to take up and sustain positions with adults in which an inequitable balance of power usually exists. Both of these intertextual references may be attributable to this workshop from the Language and Diversity Unit.

Another possible intertextual reference that may contribute to students taking up the ideology, "It is through language and discourse that problems are created and resolved," occurs in lines 31 and 32, ("But is was an Indian joke / in a dominant white school"). In these lines Karen uses the word

"dominant" to describe a white school. This term was part of a vocabulary list from the Language and Diversity Unit and was frequently found in articles, and often used by myself to describe subject positions within particular contexts. Students commonly used this term, as well as many other terms, to identify potential problems, as Karen does in this example, and to describe the dialectical relationship between language and power. The "Indian joke in a dominant white school" describes the power relationship between the language, in this case an "Indian joke," and those in power, the "dominant white." The CLA terminology assisted students in identifying and discussing a problem created by and through language.

Another ideology students took up in this sub-category of ideologies pertaining to language, power and problems was "there is a dialectical relationship between language and power," which assisted students in taking up a related ideology, "language positions others." The recognition of the dialectical relationship between language and power, specifically racist language in the example that follows, assists Matt in understanding how the racist language positions his friend. For example, in lines 20-24 of Transcript Two, Matt's personal narrative reveals racist language that positions his African-American friend as less powerful than the white "kid" who delivers the racist remark ("a nigger/ and he really got mad/ and it wound up that,/ ah,/ my friend got a stick through his ear"). Matt suggests that the word "nigger" has a powerful impact on his friend who ends up with a "stick through his ear" in a tussle between his African-American friend and the

white “kid.” This example points to the powerful nature of oppressive language, and by virtue of its inclusion in Matt’s personal narrative, the powerful impression his friend’s experience had in shaping Matt’s understanding of this conflict via examination of the dialectical relationship between language and power. Matt seems to suggest here that this example provides him with “new eyes” with which to examine language and its effect on others and himself.

The second sub-category of ideologies students took up in their process of understanding language as a site of power and struggle included those ideologies specifically pertaining to language and social positioning. For example, Lori and Karen take up the ideology, “people should think about how language positions others and not just how language positions themselves” in lines 29 and 30 in Transcript One. Lori explains that “if it was a joke about white people there would be like a HUGE apology,” with which Karen readily agrees. In this example, Lori and Karen suggest that it is important to consider how a joke positions all of its audience members, and not just the dominant members.

Both of the above examples of students taking up the ideologies “there is a dialectical relationship between language and power” and “people should think about how language positions others and not just how language positions themselves” may be intertextually linked to a comparative film lesson introduced in the Language and Diversity Unit. In this lesson, students watched film excerpts in order to wrestle with how people from

different social classes, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and religions might respond to the text. (We used a broad definition of text to include body movement, script, and other visual messages.) Students employed the word "dominant," as modeled by me, to describe powerful subject positions within particular contexts and frequently discussed how the film excerpts might position audience members. Students often pointed to the power of film to perpetuate harmful "messages" and their potential as sites for reproducing oppressive and discriminatory practices. These examples point to the potential critical language awareness has for assisting students in developing language skills that may promote social awareness and equity.

Category #2: Multiple interpretations. The next most prevalent ideological aspect that students took up in the representative four transcripts as sustained critical language analysts was their ideological understanding that any text can have multiple interpretations. From this broader category, three ideological subcategories emerged: ideologies pertaining to multiple interpretations based on the subject positions of the reader and writer of the text; ideologies pertaining to multiple interpretations based on the personal experiences of the reader and the writer of the text; and ideologies pertaining to multiple interpretations based on reader and writer knowledge about history and culture represented in the text. The ideologies from each subcategory are listed below.

Multiple interpretations based on the subject positions of the reader and writer of the text:

There are multiple ways to interpret a text.

There are multiple ways to interpret a text, depending on the subject positions within the text created by the writer.

There are multiple ways to interpret a text, depending on the subject positions represented within the text and the reader.

There is a dialectical relationship between the text, and the subject positions of the writer and interpreter/reader.

Multiple interpretations based on the personal experiences of the reader and writer of the text:

Personal experience affects text interpretation.

Personal experience can substantiate ideologies.

Multiple interpretations based on the reader's and writer's knowledge about history and culture represented in the text:

Learning about a culture/history can influence interpretation of text.

Cultural knowledge can position interpreters.

There is a dialectical relationship between historical context, language and cultural understanding.

The first subcategory of ideologies students took up in their process of understanding the concept of multiple interpretations included those ideologies based on the subject positions of the reader and writer of the text. For example, in lines 6 and 7 of Transcript Four, Jane asks Kristine to consider how "a European person/ who lived in Europe" might interpret Jane's response paper regarding Native Americans. Jane suggests that a European

person "might not agree" with her interpretation and analysis of Jane's paper because a European person might understand the Native American subject position differently. Jane introduces the ideology of multiple interpretations depending on the subject position of the reader who may not have the same understanding of Native Americans as the writer which, she recognizes, may result in multiple interpretations of her text. This suggests that the writer must think about the multiple interpretations of her text and how they depend on the social and political context of the reader, as well as her own social and political subject positions represented in the text.

The second subcategory of ideologies students took up in their process of understanding the concept of multiple interpretations included those ideologies based on the personal experiences of the reader and writer of the text. For example, in lines 11-20 of Transcript Two, Matt shares with Tony his experience seeing his African-American friend get a "stick through his ear" as a result of a racist name-calling incident. Although the boys in this transcript do not discuss a specific example from Tony's paper that may have multiple interpretations, their discussion about racism and the possibility that Matt's "identity as a white person/ may have prejudiced" his thinking about Tony's paper, together with Matt's personal narrative, strongly suggest the boys recognize their limitations as white boys to identify oppressive language and, hence, to interpret Tony's text about racism. The boys recognize the value of their personal experiences and the personal experiences of others that may assist them in seeing their texts from multiple perspectives.

The third subcategory of ideologies students took up in their process of understanding the concept of multiple interpretations included those ideologies based on the reader's and writer's knowledge about history and culture represented in the text. For example, in lines 9-11 of Transcript Four, Jane explains to Kristine that a European person may not have "learned about the Indians...having their land taken away from them," and, therefore, may have a different interpretation of Jane's paper. Jane suggests that the reader's and writer's knowledge about Native American history shapes interpretation. Kristine also takes up this ideology about multiple interpretations based on the reader's and writer's knowledge about history, when she suggests to Jane in lines 20 and 21, "maybe you need to ask yourself/ what does your readers {sic} know about Native Americans. . . ."

Each of the above examples may have intertextual references to the Native American history and interdisciplinary curriculum taught by myself and the history teacher. Films, textbooks, and lessons focused on the oppressive acts committed by the United States government against Native peoples in order to secure land across the North American continent. Students were also exposed to an article about the European fascination with Native American culture by the history teacher. This article may have contributed to Jane's choice of an alternative reader's interpretation, "a European person who lived in Europe." She seems to recognize the possibility of interpretive differences based on European understandings of Native American culture.

The peer conference sheet embedded in the language and diversity curriculum also addresses the possibility of multiple interpretations by asking students to reflect on how their identities may have prejudiced their thinking about their peer conference partner's writing. This item seems to have initiated the section of the peer conference transcript where Kristine and Jane discuss the possibility of multiple interpretations based on subject positions and on the historical and cultural knowledge of the reader and writer. It is the unique combination of the students' historical knowledge and awareness of possible multiple interpretations that may have assisted students in taking up and sustaining these ideologies as critical language analysts in sustained interactions.

Category #3: Resisting discourses. Another ideological aspect that students took up as sustained critical language analysts in the representative four transcripts was their ideological understanding that culturally accepted discourses can be resisted. From this broader category, three ideological subcategories emerged: ideologies pertaining to the potential benefits and risks of resisting oppressive texts; ideologies pertaining to strategies for resisting oppressive texts; and ideologies pertaining to responsibility for resistance to oppressive texts. The ideologies from each subcategory are listed below. These ideologies are largely derived from Transcripts One and Four, but were found in other data not included in the microanalysis for this study.

Ideologies pertaining to the potential benefits and risks of resisting oppressive texts:

There are benefits for resisting culturally accepted discourses.

The benefits of resisting culturally accepted oppressive discourses may be minimal.

Students should not be punished for resisting school approved text.

There are risks for resisting culturally accepted discourses.

If awareness and understanding of oppression and language is only momentary, it may not be beneficial.

There can be negative consequences for resisting oppressive language/racism.

Passive observance of racist texts is dangerous.

Ideologies pertaining to strategies for resisting oppressive texts:

Students have knowledge about resisting school sanctioned oppressive discourse in culturally appropriate ways.

Politeness is necessary when resisting school sanctioned oppressive discourse.

Initiating a discourse between those oppressed by language and their oppressors is a culturally appropriate way to resist school sanctioned oppressive texts.

Oppressive language can be selectively resisted.

Ideologies pertaining to responsibility and resistance:

Individuals are responsible for creating (and resisting?) oppressive school discourse rather than the institution itself.

Those who are targets of oppressive language are responsible for initiating resisting discourse with initiators of oppressive language.

The first subcategory of ideologies that critical language analysts took up in the process of understanding that culturally accepted discourses can be resisted, included those ideologies specifically pertaining to the potential benefits and risks of resisting oppressive texts. Through these ideologies students recognized the possible outcomes of resisting racist texts within the institution of school. The following example shows students' understanding of both benefits and risks associated with such resistance. Transcript One details a discussion concerning the racist joke that upset the Native American boy who was suspended allegedly for resisting the joke. Lori explains in line 2, "And now they don't have it." Mary responds, "I think they shouldn't have jokes," and Lori responds, "I don't think he should have gotten suspended." In this example, Lori points out the benefit and the risk to resisting an oppressive, racist text. According to Lori, the fact that the joke no longer exists as part of the morning ritual at the high school is the benefit for resisting an oppressive text. The risk, however, was that the boy was suspended. She explains in line four, "I don't think he should have been suspended." The girls recognize, however, that the boy failed to use school sanctioned ways in order to resist the oppressive text and, furthermore, that the use of these nonsanctioned ways might have been a major factor in his suspension. As explained by Mary in line 16, "He just got up on the desk and started threatening people." The girls' discussion demonstrates their

understanding of the risks and, in this case, benefits and undesirable outcomes of resisting oppressive texts.

Additionally, a second example found in Transcript Two demonstrates students' understanding of the societal risks of failing to identify and resist oppressive texts. The following lines from Tony are in response to Matt's blatant example of his friend who ended up with a stick in his ear for resisting racist comments. In lines 32-40, Tony explains to Matt that he thinks "it's just as dangerous to watch shows that have it (racism) in it... cause you can't always see it/ right away,/ especially if you're just a kid...even adults,/can't always see it (racism)." Tony understands that children are at risk to take up, without identification and critical examination, the racist ideologies they see on television. Tony also recognizes that even adults may fail to identify and resist racist texts as, he seems to suggest, adulthood does not guarantee identification and resistance. Tony seems to be suggesting here that there are special awareness tools that are necessary in order to identify and resist oppressive texts and that, somehow, children must be equipped with these tools in order to stop the perpetuation of racist texts in our culture.

The above examples may be intertextually linked to the previously described situation cards I introduced as part of the Language and Diversity Unit. Additionally, a lesson regarding Native Americans as portrayed in Saturday morning cartoons may be specifically linked to Tony's taking up of the ideology, "passive observance of racist texts is dangerous." This lesson involved students' examination of an "Injun Jo" cartoon I taped off the

Warner Brother's cartoon hour on a Saturday morning. In this cartoon, Injun Jo is portrayed as mean, rebellious, uneducated, and violent. After several weeks of discussing and learning about Native American history and literature, students were shocked to see this oppressive text still aired on television in the 90's. Furthermore, students were very concerned that children would "pick-up these prejudices of Native Americans and then spend their whole adult lives unlearning what they learned" as explained by Tony during a class discussion. He added, "It just seems stupid to me." It is highly probable that this particular ideological understanding regarding the passive observance of racist texts may be intertextually linked with the "Injun Jo" lesson, especially because it provided oppressive texts that astonished many students, especially Tony, who referred to the cartoon text in other writings throughout the year.

The second subcategory of ideologies that critical language analysts took up in the process of understanding that culturally accepted discourses can be resisted included those ideologies specifically pertaining to the strategies available to students for resisting oppressive texts. Through these ideologies students identified their knowledge and experiences with specific resources that may be intertextually linked to the CLA curriculum. These strategies and resources included using politeness rituals, initiating mediation discourse, and carefully selecting those texts and situations in which resistance may be most beneficial. The following examples provide detailed explanations of

these strategies, after which follows a discussion of the intertextual references to curricular components.

In Transcript One, all three girls either take up and/or support the ideology: "politeness is necessary when resisting oppressive discourse." In this transcript the girls are discussing the suspension of the boy who resisted the racist Native American joke, as described in the example above. Karen gives a detailed example of a polite phrase the boy might have used in order to take up a more favorable position with the administration. She suggests in line 11 that the boy could have begun his explanation with, "I'd appreciate it." The implication is that if he employed culturally acceptable politeness rituals when speaking to administration, his resistance might have been more beneficial for the school and for himself, as he most likely would not have been suspended. The girls' taking up of the ideology, "politeness is necessary when resisting oppressive discourse," demonstrates their understanding of the dialectical relationship between power and language and the parameters of resisting oppressive school-sanctioned texts in an institutional setting.

Transcript One also provides an example of students' taking up the ideology, "Initiating a discourse between those oppressed by language and their oppressors is a culturally appropriate way to resist school-sanctioned oppressive texts." After Karen offers a politeness ritual that she suggests might have been beneficial for the Native American boy's resistance to the racist joke, she further suggests in lines 12-14 that the boy might have said, "if you'd get the boy or person who wrote the joke/ so I could talk to them," and

then adds, "They could work it out or something." Karen understands mediation between the oppressors and the oppressed to be a culturally appropriate way to resist school-sanctioned oppressive discourse. She implies an understanding of the benefits to such resistance for the Native American student and the broader school community. This implication is further reinforced in later sections of the transcript and in other taped peer conferences and conversations within and outside of their group discussion.

A third ideology pertaining to strategies for resisting oppressive texts was identified in Transcript Three as "Oppressive language can be selectively resisted." In lines 13 and 14, Bob criticizes Brad's use of the word "redskin" in his story. Bob explains to Brad that "You can't use the 'redskin' word/ when you're not talking about the team." Bob suggests in this example and in an interview that careful selection and use of marginally racist terms is critical and must be a contextual decision based on the "kind of writing and audience." Bob agreed in an interview that the team name "Redskins" is racist, but explained "It's not that clear cut. To most people the Redskins name means a great football team." Bob's comments further suggest that not only can oppressive language be selectively resisted, but there are certain cultural rules of appropriateness for sanctioning seemingly racist terms that guide him in offering peer conference responses to his partner.

Each of the three ideologies pertaining to strategies for resisting oppressive texts discussed above may have intertextual references to the critical language components of the Language and Diversity Unit. The

ideology "Politeness is necessary when resisting school-sanctioned oppressive discourse" may be linked to a resisting strategies lesson which began with a student brainstorm of "strategies to consider" when resisting school sanctioned discourse to those in power. The list included the following politeness rituals: make an appointment; use words like "thank you" and "please"; use examples that you can comfortably talk about; and don't use real names if you can help it. Another strategy students discovered after experimenting with resisting oppressive texts included "role play it out with someone before you actually do it." Karen's example may be linked to both of these strategies as she seems to suggest some polite language that the Native American boy could have employed as part of his resistance, "I'd appreciate it." She also demonstrates a similar kind of role play exercise that was modeled in this lesson. These examples appear to be intertextually connected to the critical language components of the Language and Diversity Unit as their content closely matches these lessons introduced in this curriculum.

Category #4: Reconception of peer conference responsibilities. As sustained critical language analysts in the four representative transcripts, students took up ideological aspects about peer conferencing that focused on the critical responsibilities of the peer responder and the writer. These ideologies demonstrated a reconceptualization of traditional peer conferences to include partners and writers as responsible for the identification and rewriting of oppressive texts. In this category, two ideologies emerged: peer responders should point out disrespectful language to writers; and writers

need to pose questions to themselves when assessing oppressive language in their writing. As there were only two different ideologies that emerged, it was not necessary to subcategorize them in order to analyze the data. These ideologies are derived from Transcripts Three and Four, but were found in other data not included in this particular microanalysis. I will discuss each of the two ideologies and their possible intertextual references to CLA curricula.

Critical language analysts took up the ideology "peer responders should point out disrespectful language to writers" in Transcript Three, but it is important to note that nearly all students took up this ideology in their peer conferences. This is partially due to the peer conference item that asks them to point out potentially disrespectful language; however, this does not deem the existence of this ideology as unimportant or insignificant. After all, students could have skipped this item or not given it the serious consideration that they did in many of their peer conferences. On the contrary, I suggest that critical language analysts who took up this ideology recognized themselves as potential agents of change and, therefore, as essential in a critical process of writing and responding. The following example demonstrates the peer responder's taking responsibility for the identification and rewriting of oppressive texts. As already discussed above in Transcript Three, Bob takes very seriously his responsibility to point out oppressive language to his peer conference partner. He states in lines 10 and 11, "I think redskins is OK,/ but you need to show more respect to the Native Americans." Bob goes on to suggest that "Redskins" is OK to use as a team

name, but not to directly refer to a Native person outside of the sports team context. The initial "I think redskins is OK" may be a little deceiving, but as discussed earlier in this chapter, Bob is hedging a bit here as he and Brad have had a rather angry exchange in this peer conference. However, Bob continues with an identification of an oppressive term and a fervent suggestion to use more respectful language. As a critical language analyst, Bob takes up the ideology "peer responders should point out disrespectful language to writers" and bears it out, even under circumstances in which he fears rejection or the wrath of his partner.

Another ideology that students took up as sustained critical language analysts that demonstrates their reconceptualization of peer conference partners and writers as responsible for the identification and rewriting of oppressive texts is: "writers need to pose questions to themselves when assessing how language positions others in their writing." In Transcript Three, after Jane has discussed the possibility of multiple reader positionings based on the geographical location of the potential readers of her paper, Kristine suggests to Jane in lines 20 and 21 that "maybe you need to ask yourself/ what does your readers know about Native Americans..."

Although Jane is the one who lays the groundwork for this suggestion from Kristine, it is Kristine who articulates the writer's responsibility to pose theoretical questions in order to assess how the language in Jane's paper may position a European reader who may have a different understanding of the Native American experience.

Both of the examples above may be intertextually linked to the peer conference sheet introduced as part of the Language and Diversity Unit. The peer conference item that asks peer responders to identify potential sources of prejudiced language and subject positions may be intertextually linked to both examples as they each involve the responsibilities of peer conference responders and writers to identify and rewrite oppressive texts. In Transcript Three, Bob, the peer responder, identifies oppressive language, "redskin," and encourages Brad, the writer, to use more respectful language. In Transcript Four, Jane and Kristine work together to formulate a writer's strategy for assessing how the language in Jane's paper may position a European reader who may have a different understanding of the Native American experience. Each of these examples may be intertextually linked to the peer conference sheet, although the Transcript Four example may also be intertextually linked with the history curriculum discussed in earlier sections of this chapter.

Category #5: Identifying subject positions. The final ideological aspect that students took up as sustained critical language analysts in the representative four transcripts was their ideological understanding of the dialectical nature of subject positions in relation to peer conferencing, written texts, and power. This section was particularly difficult to separate into categories because the sustained critical language analysts seldom separated the relationships between subject positions, peer conferencing, written texts, and power. Therefore, any attempt to subcategorize these ideologies did not facilitate discussion of the ideologies or the plausible intertextual references.

The ideologies in this category are mostly derived from Transcripts One, Two, and Four but it is important to acknowledge that ideologies loosely pertaining to subject positions are laced throughout the transcripts and are mentioned in many sections of the analysis. As already stated in the introduction to this section, the categories must be understood as fluid as many of the ideologies may be applicable to more than one category.

Ideologies pertaining to subject positions and peer conferencing, texts, and power:

Subject positions are important to consider during peer conferencing.

There is a dialectical relationship between text and the subject positions of the writer and responder.

There is a dialectical relationship between subject positions and language.

There is a dialectical relationship between language, subject positions, and power.

A "white girl" is a specific subject position.

A "European person" is a specific subject position.

There are benefits to powerful subject positions as interpreters and writers of the text.

The most frequent ideology that sustained critical language analysts took up in the process of understanding the dialectical nature of subject positions included those ideologies specifically pertaining to peer conferencing. The recurrence of this ideology may be directly related to the

peer conference sheet item that asks peer responders to identify potential subject positions that may be sources of prejudice. For example, in Transcript Two, Matt initiates this segment of the peer conference with the aforementioned peer conference item. In lines one and two he says, "My identity as a white person/ may have prejudiced my thinking about Tony's paper." Although this example may be directly connected to the peer conference item which was part of the peer responder agenda, Matt and other students who followed the peer conference format could have skipped the item or could have dealt with the item in a perfunctory way. Instead, the item initiates a critical discussion in which Matt explores the ways in which his subject position as a "white person" might affect his understanding of Tony's paper. Matt goes on to suggest in line 3 and states on his conference sheet, that because he hasn't "really faced that much racism," he may not be able to give Tony helpful responses. As Tony's paper is about racist television shows, this may be somewhat true. At the very least, Matt realizes that his subject position as a "white person" should be considered as a factor when offering peer feedback.

This example demonstrates Matt's understanding that subject positions are important to consider during peer conferencing. A plausible implication is that it may be helpful to expose the possible limitations and expertise of the peer responder's ability to give meaningful responses. Furthermore, this example also demonstrates Matt's understanding of the dialectical relationship between text and the subject positions of the writer and

responder. Matt points out that his "white person" identity may not be helpful when offering Tony suggestions, which he bases on his limited experiences with racism. The complex relationships between oppressive texts and the subject positions of both responder and writer are demonstrated in this example.

Another ideology that sustained critical language analysts took up in the process of understanding the dialectical nature of subject positions and texts included those ideologies specifically pertaining to the benefits of powerful subject positions as interpreters and writers of the text. In the initial lines of Transcript One, Lori suggests to Karen, who had just finished reading her paper about a racist joke read at the high school and the consequences of resisting the oppressive text, "And you can put this in it./ Now as a result they don't have it." Although resisting oppressive texts in ways that are not sanctioned by school culture may have negative consequences, as the boy is suspended for standing on a desk, "threatening people/ and jumping around," in this example and throughout the transcript, Lori and her peers recognize that resisting the oppressive text was beneficial. The joke tradition was dropped as the administration realized that there are few jokes that are both funny and respectful of all kinds of people. The girls agreed that the joke was oppressive towards Native Americans and that dropping the joke tradition was a positive step for the school. This incident served as an extraordinary opportunity for these girls to recognize the benefits and risks of resisting a school-sanctioned oppressive text from a less powerful subject

position (a Native American boy in a dominant white school), as well as the benefits of being positioned as interpreters and writers of the text that provided the class with an interpretation of the incident.

The ideologies pertaining to the dialectical (two-way) nature of subject positions and peer conferencing texts discussed above may have intertextual references to the CLA components of the Language and Diversity Unit. As already mentioned, the ideology "subject positions are important to consider during peer conferencing" may be intertextually linked to the peer conference item which asks peer responders to contemplate how their subject positions may affect their interpretation of their partner's text. Another possible intertextual reference may be to the "identity charts" students created early in the Language and Diversity Unit. (Please note that I used the word "identity" rather than "subjectivity" as I deemed this term too difficult for middle school students to understand and employ as part of their critical language discourse.) Students were asked to create a cluster of all the subject positions they take up in their lives. For example, Matt listed the following in his cluster, "Jewish, son, white, student in Hebrew class, student in Ms. Cheevers' English class, grandson," etc. During the process of writing each paper, students were asked to reflect upon these "identity charts" and to contemplate from which of these "identities" they felt comfortable writing in English class, and from which of these "identities" they wrote specific papers. Students were also asked to write about why they wrote from specific "identities" when writing in English class. Matt may be drawing from this exercise as he

contemplates the relevance of his subject position as a "white person" during his peer conference with Tony and, possibly, when he contemplates the dialectical relationship between Tony's text and the "white" subject positions of Tony as the writer and himself as the responder.

Finally, the ideology "there are benefits to powerful subject positions as interpreters and writers of the text" has almost indisputable intertextual references to a class discussion and impromptu lesson concerning oppressive texts in which students, of their own volition, brought in newspaper articles detailing the Native American joke incident at the high school. Students instantly began a lively discussion relating the various interpretations, reactions, and responsibilities of the administration to deal with oppressive texts. The "appropriateness" of Native American jokes was discussed at length, as well as the various outcomes of the incident: the boy who resisted the oppressive text was suspended for threatening the administration; the joke telling event was dropped, and a formal apology from the administration was offered to the students, respectively. As Karen's paper topic was a synthesis of the issues involved in this incident, it is likely that this class discussion and impromptu lesson are intertextually linked to the taking up of the ideology, "there are benefits to powerful subject positions as interpreters and writers of the text."

#### Summary of Microanalysis of Transcripts One Through Four: CLA Ideologies and Intertextual References

Transcripts One through Four demonstrate the ideologies and related intertextual references students employed in peer conferences of response

papers when they took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position. In this summary I discuss how the critical language analyst subject position was supported by the response paper assignment. Next, I discuss the findings associated with each ideological category resulting from the peer conferences of these papers.

The critical language analyst subject position was supported through an assignment in which social justice issues drive the focus of the writing and thinking. The data suggests that when a member or members of the peer conferencing group or pair resisted a seemingly "naturalized" ideology, students were inspired to veer away from the peer conferencing discourse and format, and take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position for several minutes or multiple turns. This was unlike most of the recorded peer conferences in which students used the peer conference sheet questions as an exclusive guide for discussion, suggesting at least partial procedural displays (Bloome, 1987). In this way students invoked CLA discourse, and in some cases briefly took up the critical language analyst subject position. However, it was when students extended the peer conference structure and discussed the social, cultural and political issues of Native people and their linguistic representation that students more fully explored and applied their understandings about subject positioning, power, and language. These were the circumstances in which students took up critical language analyst subject positions for extended moments in peer conferences. The response paper assignment was directly tied to more blatant social, cultural, political issues of

Native people, and as a result, it was in these conferences where students veered from the CLA peer conference sheets and participated in extended moments where one or more students took up this critical position. The data suggests that a writing topic that asked them to focus directly on social justice issues assisted them in identifying the relevance of a critical language awareness. The response paper assignment also required students to state their own opinions and reactions which may also have provided some incentive for identifying the relevance of a critical language awareness. This may explain the prevalence of sustained critical language analyst interactions in the response paper peer conferences.

The microanalysis of Transcript One demonstrates how critical language analysts weighed the risks and benefits of challenging discursial choices and the systems of justice involved in speaking against the dominant culture. Students raised issues about the social significance of a Native American joke in the context of school and discussed the value of challenging this school sanctioned discourse.

In Transcript Two, the critical language analysts demonstrated their understanding of the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers, especially unsuspecting children. They discussed their responsibility to uncover oppressive language in a cartoon, "Injun Jo," that may perpetuate harmful images and misunderstandings of Native people.

The third transcript reveals a rather contentious struggle between two boys vying for authoritative positions. Both boys took up the critical language

analyst subject positions, but Brad did not sustain the position as he was more invested in an authoritative position. Brad's struggle with power and authority may have prevented him from taking up the critical language analyst subject position more often or for extended moments. It was Brad's persistence in sustaining the critical language analyst subject position that enabled both boys to unravel the language and power issued regarding the use of the word "redskin" in Bob's paper. Additionally, CLA may have provided each boy with new weapons in their struggle for supremacy. Bob used CLA to challenge Brad's racism in authorized ways, but Brad used sarcasm and the final peer conference position to regain his authoritative position.

The final transcript demonstrated how students wrestled with the complex relationships between subject positions, social and political context, and text interpretation. The girls in this transcript discussed issues about social justice in relation to a specific subject position, a Native American casino owner, and the possibility of different interpretations of this subject position based on the interpreter's knowledge and understandings about Native Americans.

The data suggests that critical language analysts drew from any combination of the following five ideological categories: (1) language, power and struggle; (2) multiple interpretations; (3) resisting discourses; (4) responsibilities of peer responders and writers; (5) and identifying subject positions. Additionally, critical language analysts drew from any

combination of the following intertextual reference categories: CLA curriculum from the Language and Diversity Unit; personal experiences; and/or interdisciplinary curricula.

Additionally, the preponderance of discrimination ideologies and discourse overlapping CLA ideologies and discourse in the transcripts was likely due to the peer conference form which was heavily focused on issues of race and ethnicity. Although there were items that asked students to think about gender, for example, gender did not become a discourse or ideological category identifiable as important to the study in relation to, for example, race and ethnicity. It is also not surprising that intertextual references to lessons concerning gender did not surface as there were few CLA lessons offered to students. Furthermore, the gender specific CLA lessons that students participated in were presented very early on in the study. This is an example of an underdeveloped area of CLA curriculum that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Nevertheless, this data suggests that students understood language as a meaning-making process and that they took responsibility for the meanings they constructed. They understood that they were either contributing to reproducing or to reshaping existing social relations. Students in this study were reshaping the way they thought about and talked about Native peoples, and challenged their readers to do the same. Students learned about language in conjunction with social issues, and hence, critical language awareness became a tool for unraveling oppressive discourse and taking social action

through writing and talking about writing. Language was the focus of change and also the agent of change as it became the tool for reshaping oppressive discourse.

#### Summary of Self-declared Subject Positions and Undeclared Subject Positions that Surfaced During Peer Conference Talk

This section has provided a thematic analysis and microanalysis of self-declared and undeclared subject positions that occurred during peer conferences, on their peer conference sheets, and in other conference related process writing in conjunction with students' Pocumtuck stories and response papers. Thematic analysis and microanalysis both reveal that students demonstrated a critical language awareness of their own subject positions as writers and responders and of the subject positions of those they wrote about or positioned in their writing.

The analysis provided evidence that students' considered their self-declared identities as white or non-Native-American, multi-racial, "outsiders," female, and student writer in their writing and responses in peer conferences. They identified their non-Native heritage as a deficit in writing and positioning Native people in their writing, and recognized how the dialectical relationship between subject positions and language influenced their writing and their thinking about a culture other than their own. Students who identified themselves as multi-racial or non-white expressed more comfort and safety in writing about Native people than their white peers. Students based interpretive differences on different ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, students identified their positions as "outsiders"

as slightly unsafe positions from which to write about issues of which they lacked first hand knowledge. Girls listed their subject position as female as both a safe and knowledgeable position from which to write, which contrasted with boys' rare identification of their male subject positions on conference sheets and in peer conferences. This may indicate that the safety associated with the male subject position was taken for granted or an invisible factor. Finally, student writer was an identity from which students felt both safe and unsafe writing depending on how students' framed the subject position: student achievement in comparison to other students, students' social relations with other students, or students' achievement in comparison to the teacher. The confidence of the writer surfaced with the student writer identity.

When students veered from the directives of the peer conference form and abandoned procedural displays of learning, students took up the critical language analyst subject position and sustained efforts to provide alternative frames in which to challenge seemingly "natural" ideologies within a text. Students in these sustained interactions were critically aware of the dialectical relationship between language, power, and positioning. These sustained efforts were marked by several minutes of critical discussion or by multiple talk turns elicited through those students who took up the critical language subject position in a peer conference group.

The microanalysis demonstrates that the sustained critical language analyst subject positions were distinctly different than any other positioning

moves in this data. They were characterized by extended critical language interactions between peer conference partners, realized through: CLA discourse and discrimination discourse; CLA and discrimination ideologies; a variety of text types including those discourse types representative in argumentation, exposition, personal narrative, and character monologue genres; intertextual references from CLA curriculum, peer conference, and interdisciplinary curricula; and more complicated exchange structures that demonstrate investment in CLA discourse and may have assisted students in taking up the kind of power and authority offered to them within the discourse. This may indicate a partial shift in power and authority because of students sincere investment in the discourse, although it is the teacher's agenda which is the ultimate authority. Sustained critical language analyst subject positions were also associated with the social justice issues explicitly embedded in the response paper assignment, as opposed to the more subtle social awareness associated with the Pocumtuck story assignment.

A microanalysis of the transcripts revealed how critical language analysts weighed the risks and benefits of challenging discursal choices and the systems of justice involved in speaking against the dominant culture; their understanding of the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers, especially unsuspecting children; that power and authority may have prevented students from taking up the critical language analyst subject position more often or for extended moments; that critical language analyst may have provided students with new weapons in their struggle for

supremacy; and how students wrestled with the complex relationships between subject positions, social and political context, and text interpretation.

The microanalysis of the undeclared subject positions includes noting the ideologies and intertextual references that students employed in order to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position. The thematic analysis revealed the five broad categories of ideologies critical language analysts took up: (1) language, power, and struggle; (2) multiple interpretations; (3) resisting discourses; (4) responsibilities of peer responders and writers; (5) and identifying subject positions. These categories provided a comprehensible analysis and discussion that made sense of the potential relationships between ideologies and intertextual references. Ideological subcategories emerged from some of the broader categories which assisted in providing a comprehensible analysis and discussion that made sense of the potential relationships between ideologies and intertextual references.

Students used intertextuality as a strategy to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position. Students drew from intertextual references from the Language and Diversity Unit, personal experiences, and interdisciplinary curricula. Students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position drew heavily from the information and resources presented in the Language and Diversity Unit.

Sustained critical language analyst interactions were also characterized by exchange structures that transcended the simple exchange structures identifies in the brief critical language analyst interactions. These more

complicated exchange structures demonstrate sincere investment in the CLA discourse, and may have assisted students in partially shifting power and authority to include the kind offered to them within the CLA discourse.

Both the thematic analysis of self-declared subject positions and the microanalysis of the undeclared subject positions demonstrate how a critical language awareness embedded in the peer conference, through either written responses and/or the talk elicited by these written responses, assisted students in sorting out the complex relationships between the texts they wrote and responded to, their subject positions as writers and responders, and the social responsibility involved in this critical understanding.

#### Discourses, Ideologies, and Intertextual References Employed by Critical Language Analysts in their Writing

In this section I present an analysis of the discourses, ideologies, and intertextual references that surfaced in the final drafts of students' response papers. Although most students employed CLA discourse and discrimination discourse with the corresponding ideologies in their papers, here I am interested in focusing on the pairs discussed in the previous section in order to more fully understand the critical language analyst subject position and how this position manifests itself in students writing. Furthermore, because of the social justice issues embedded in the response paper assignment and the strong presence of sustained critical language analyst subject positions in the corresponding peer conferences, the analysis

and discussion focuses solely on the response papers. This analysis allows me to show how critical language analysts who sustained this position employed CLA discourse, discrimination discourse, corresponding ideologies and intertextual references in their final drafts. This analysis assists me in understanding when and how students made revisions based on their ability to embed these discourses, ideologies, and intertextual references in their writing, as well as based on their critical interactions in their peer conferences, which I discuss in the final section of this chapter.

#### Discourses, Ideologies and Intertextuality in Response Papers

The charts below feature sample discourses, ideologies, and intertextual references from available response papers of those students selected for microanalysis in the previous section who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position in peer conferences: Lori, Kristine, Jane, Tony, Bob, and Matt. Since the major concern of this study is to examine students' peer conference talk about writing, this section of analysis will examine samples of ideologies and discourses that demonstrate categories meaningful to this study. It is not my intention to provide an exhaustive microanalysis for each piece of student writing. My purpose is solely to determine what CLA ideologies and related discourses were taken up in students' final drafts that might have resulted from peer conferences. Therefore, brief written samples and writers' background information are provided to exemplify representative ideologies and discourses. Interview comments are reported throughout the discussion in order to triangulate the

findings. Identified discourses include the same discourses found in peer conference interactions where one or more participants took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position through CLA and discrimination discourses. This is not to suggest that students took up only these discourses, but that these discourses represented in this particular set of papers constitute a category meaningful to this study.

By employing the same definition of a critical language analyst as one who provides an alternative frame in which to understand seemingly "naturalistic" idea(s) or ideology(ies) within a text, the data shows that these students also took up the critical language analyst subject position as writers of their response papers. Critical language analysts as writers challenged their readers to re-examine a particular idea or ideology, the only difference being that the critical interaction was, in a sense, "static," unless the reader sought out the writer for either written or spoken correspondence within the context of classroom interactions. There was always the possibility, and sometimes inevitability, of social action relating to students' writing and thinking outside of the context of the classroom.

The charts also feature ideologies corresponding to the identified discourses and the intertextual references that students likely employed in order to take up the critical language analyst subject position in their writing. Student interviews reveal how students came to write their papers and the sources meaningful to this study that inspired them to do so. When possible, I excerpt written samples that closely correspond to the microanalysis

transcripts in the previous section. This information assists in understanding the role intertextuality may have played in taking up the critical language analyst subject position as a writer, and how students implemented a critical language awareness in their writing.

The first table features samples taken from Lori's paper "A Response Paper Regarding the North Regional High School's Mascot." In this paper Lori argued that the Redskin logo is an offensive symbol that misrepresents Native Americans, reinforces negative stereotypes, and contributes to their oppression.

Lori chose to write about the controversy concerning the name "Redskins" for a sports team name and logo of a local school. She initially brought in the newspaper article that featured this topic and spoke vehemently about the connection between oppression and language. Lori stated that this article, a class discussion of a racist incident at the high school, and the readings and discussions concerning language, privilege, and identity contributed to her decision to write about this controversial topic. She explained that it was especially difficult because not all of her classmates agreed with her point of view, but said, "it's important to get your point of view out there—you never know—if you just get one person to think differently. . ."

In the above representative samples taken from her paper, "A Response Paper Regarding The North Regional High School's Mascot," Lori demonstrates her ability to employ CLA discourse and discrimination

discourse. In the first example, she acknowledges that depending on who you are, in this case Native American, the word "Redskin" is an offensive term. This example suggests the following ideology: there are multiple ways to interpret a text, depending on the subject

Table 4.5

Samples from Lori's Response Paper

Writer	Quotation from Response Paper	Discourse	Ideology	Manifest Intertextuality
Lori	"The Redskins' logo has been viewed to be offensive by some members of the community, especially to those who are Native Americans" (p. 1).	CLA and D	there are multiple ways to interpret a text, depending on the subject positions represented within the text and the reader's	newspaper articles read in class; class debate
Lori	"When looking at it (logo), it does not depict a helpful, friendly knowledgeable person. Rather it portrays a cruel, mean person. This is not true, for the American Indians are the people who helped the Europeans survive in the new world" (p. 2).	CLA and D	logos can be racist and misrepresent history	history text book, overhead of logo shared in class discussion
Lori	"When I used the grammar check...and it picked up the word "Redskin" I was surprised. The program gave me directions that stated, 'Avoid using this offensive term. Consider revising'" (p. 3).	CLA	language positions others; published positions on the relationship between language and oppression have power/ authority	Webster's School Dictionary and other assorted classroom dictionaries

positions represented within the text and the subject positions of the reader. This ideology and her interview comments reveal the following goals of critical language awareness: to make a conscious choice about language in the production of a text and to consider how it may position the people about whom she writes; to actively decide from what subject position to write; and to exercise social responsibility towards others, in this case Native people.

In the second example, Lori unravels the actual "Redskin" logo and concludes that the symbol is a racist image that bears no resemblance to her understanding of the Native American role in American history. While this example offers multiple opportunities to consider the subject positions of history textbook writers and other relevant issues, this example suggests the following ideology: logos/language can be racist and can misrepresent historical fact. This ideology concerning the reproduction of racism and oppression in our culture is complementary to CLA ideologies and goals stated above. In this way, the discrimination discourse works synergistically with CLA to assist Lori in unpacking the subtleties of language and oppression.

The third representative sample taken from Lori's paper reveals her astonishment over the discovery of an authoritative text that supported her views on the word "Redskin." She explained that she knew "right then and there I was on the right track. If the computer knew about this, like, why don't they just change it?" This example suggests the following ideologies: language positions others; and, published positions on the relationship

between language and oppression have power/authority. Although Lori did not weigh the power and authority of the grammar check author, she consciously recognized the dialectical relationship between subject positions and language, which is a goal of CLA, and was relieved to find an authoritative source that asked her directly to take social action, to "avoid" and "consider revising."

Lori's response paper reveals that she took up the critical language analyst subject position by employing the CLA discourse, discrimination discourse, overlapped these two discourses, and employed the corresponding ideologies. Lori also employed intertextuality as a tool to take up this position in her writing as she referred to newspaper articles, a class debate, and overhead notes drawn from the Language and Diversity Unit, as well as history text books and a school dictionary that provided her with examples from which she sustained her arguments.

The second chart features examples taken from Kristine's paper, "To Change or Not to Change." Kristine explored both sides of the argument regarding whether to change the Redskin logo. In doing so, however, her paper did not reach a firm conclusion and lacked clarity and the organizational features of the response paper.

Kristine chose to write about her confusion regarding the retention of the name "Redskins" for a sports team name and logo of the same local school that Lori referred to above. Kristine acknowledged that she wrote from a different position than her peer conference partner because her "mom

Table 4.6

Samples from Kristine's Response Paper

Writer	Quotation from Response Paper	Discourse	Ideology	Manifest Intertextuality
Kristine	"It was given to them as a nickname by some white people, but Native American(s) feel (it) has a racist statement in it and are very offended by it" (p. 1).	CLA and D	there is a dialectical relationship between language, power, and the subject positions of both the writer and interpreter/reader	newspaper and magazine articles
Kristine	"People in the town have a history with it...and they would hate to see it change" (p. 2)	CLA	there is a relationship between historical context and language meaning/interpretation	newspaper article

went to Frontier and has a history from it. It makes it hard to know what the right thing to do is." Her paper clearly waffled between changing and not changing with no clear resolve in the conclusion. However, her inconclusiveness revealed that she actively thought about the relationship between language and oppression. In the first example she acknowledges "Redskin" as a nickname that Native people find offensive. In an interview I asked her what she meant by a "nickname" and she replied, "Well, I guess I don't really mean a nickname, like, it's not really like that. How did they get the name?" My answers to her question led her to seriously reconsider her position on the whole topic, but she maintained that she

thought people like her mom would be reluctant to support changing the name and logo of the school. Our conversation combined with this example from her paper suggests the following ideologies: there is a dialectical (two-way) relationship between language and the subject positions of both the writer and interpreters. In this case both her mom and her classmates were writers and interpreters. An awareness of this dialectical relationship is a goal of critical language awareness. Her employment of the CLA discourse and discrimination discourse in combination with our conversation also assisted her in unraveling some of the complex social issues embedded in her final response paper. These two discourses combined with the additional conversational text worked together to assist the Kristine in grappling with the relationship between language and social positioning.

In the second representative example of Kristine's response paper, she discloses her mother's history with the logo and mascot. This sample reveals the following ideology: there is a relationship between historical context and language meaning/interpretation. This ideology is consistent with the goals of critical language awareness in that Kristine begins to weigh the risks of taking a social action regarding language and subject positions of those other than herself. In this case, Kristine's subject position as a daughter is powerful, and in her final draft she seemingly positions herself as gaining power through the disclosure of this subject position as she understands and empathizes with her mother and those who share a common history with

her mother. However, her paper represents much confusion concerning this Native American issue.

A key point about empowerment and the writer is exemplified in this example. Although Kristine included several examples of a critical language awareness in her response paper in which she appears to position herself as gaining power through the disclosure of this subject position, I suggest that CLA ultimately may not have empowered her as a writer. Rather, CLA appears to have disempowered her as she earned a lower grade than other students who demonstrated clear arguments and organization in their response papers. I suggest that Kristine was caught between the social, cultural, and political ideologies concerning Native people brought forth in the CLA curriculum and those ideologies concerning Native people that were generated in her home culture. Her subject position as a daughter seemed to collide with her subject position as a student writer and a student in this class. The result of these colliding ideologies is represented in her writing; contradictory points and examples, loose organization, and no clear resolve in the conclusion. The final result, unfortunately, is a low grade. As her teacher, I asked Kristine to examine contradictory ideologies, but failed to provide her with the means or support to express these contradictions and/or to sort them out in more detail. This topic will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5.

Nevertheless, Kristine's response paper reveals that she took up the critical language analyst subject position by employing CLA discourse,

discrimination discourse, and corresponding ideologies. Kristine also employed intertextuality as a tool to sustain this position in her writing as she referred to newspaper and magazine articles drawn from the Language and Diversity Unit that provided her with examples from which she sustained her arguments, despite her tendency to waffle between points of view within paragraphs.

Jane's response paper, "A Business of Success," argues that the Native American operation and ownership of casinos is a powerful tool for Native people to reposition themselves in American society. She wrote about the financial rewards, as well as the power and authority taken up by Native people involved in the political and legal aspects of the business.

Table 4.7

Samples from Jane's Response Paper

Writer	Quotation from Response Paper	Discourse	Ideology	Manifest Intertextuality
Jane	"Many tribes have exercised legal authority on their reservations. This means they write their own laws" (p.1).	CLA	there is a relationship between power, subject positions, and authorship; language can be a means to gaining power	magazine articles and internet
Jane	"Even though many people are against gambling, they might not think of the position the Native American people were in before they started this business" (p.3).	CLA	there is a relationship between subject positions and power	magazine articles and internet

Jane concerned herself with the subject positions of Native Americans in the broader culture, after reading a newspaper article about the possibility of Native people vying for property to build a gambling casino in a nearby city. Jane became interested because "so many people were against them (Native Americans)." In the first representative sample, Jane writes about the powerful subject positions Native people enjoy as a result of writing their own laws regarding the casino properties. This ideology recognizes the relationship between powerful subject positions, authorship, and language as a means to gain authority. This ideological stance on power is repeated in a second representative example where she attempts to unravel the moral/ethical issues of gambling in relation to power and social positioning. These ideologies are consistent with critical language awareness goals in that she considers the production of the Native text (their own laws) and how the act of writing them and the texts themselves position the Native people about whom she writes. She identifies the location of power in text, in the production of texts, and in the human beings who write them. Thus, Jane suggests that social action may be located in text production and consumption which demonstrates a critical language awareness.

By employing CLA discourse and ideologies, Jane took up the critical language analyst subject position in her paper. Jane also employed intertextuality as a tool to take up this position in her writing as she referred to magazine articles we read during the Language and Diversity Unit which provided her with examples to sustain her arguments.

The next chart features samples taken from Tony's response paper, "TV Stereotypes," in which he responded to a variety of children's television shows that include racist representations of Native people.

Table 4.8

Samples from Tony's Response Paper

Writer	Quotation from Response Paper	Discourse	Ideology	Manifest Intertextuality
Tony	"I became interested in this issue because of all the television shows that disrespect cultures and make it look OK to do so" (p. 1).	CLA and D	racism can be subtle; television shows can be deceptively racist	cartoon shown in class
Tony	"Racism is a common tool used in comedy."	D	racism is a strategy used for entertainment	
Tony	"Injun Joe...the name says it all. The character was based on a stereotype of a culture that has been taunted and pushed aside for hundreds of years" (p.1).	CLA and D	there is a dialectical relationship between language, power and oppression	discussion of cartoon shown in class
Tony	"Southerners are often target of stereotypes because of the way they talk...with a funny accent and put up with being called a redneck" (p. 2).	CLA	people are judged by the way they talk; social positioning is directly related to language and power	film "American Tongues"

Tony's response paper focuses on the more subtle forms of racism in television and in the media. His paper includes discussion and examples about Native Americans as portrayed in cartoons, African-Americans and Native Americans portrayed in sitcoms and comedy routines, and stereotypical notions of people from the southern United States. Tony's paper is rich with CLA discourse and discrimination discourse. Tony's interest in this issue was sparked by a short cartoon example played in class. He was shocked to see and hear how Native people are represented to children. "Saturday morning should be sacred, like, everything should be good for kids to see." The ideology in Tony's first and second examples focuses on racism as a subtle and seemingly "naturalistic" socially accepted institution. The key words here are "and make it look OK to do so" and "common" which position the media as deceptive, uncaring, and powerful.

In a third example, Tony identifies "Injun Joe" as an unacceptable name for a cartoon character who is rendered powerless through both his name and the stereotypical assumptions about his character. This example shows CLA and discrimination discourses as powerful tools to unravel the dialectical relationship between oppression, language and subject position, an ideology important to critical language awareness.

As a final example, Tony's ideas concerning southern dialects and stereotypes are influenced by the film "American Tongues" shown in class. The ideologies suggested by this example are: people are judged by the way they talk; and social positioning is directly related to language and power.

Both ideologies are consistent with a critical language awareness, although Tony doesn't quite see that the phrase "with a funny accent" is rather judgmental. This example demonstrates that unraveling the subtitles of language and the social representations of people other than oneself is a complex and ongoing process that doesn't necessarily end with the final draft. Rather it is an continual reflective practice between the writer and all interpreters, including the teacher.

These samples from Tony's response paper demonstrate that the CLA discourse, discrimination discourse, and corresponding ideologies support Tony as a critical language analyst. Tony also employed intertextuality as a strategy to take up this position in his writing as he referred to the cartoon shown in class, a class discussion about the cartoon, and "American Tongues," a film also shown in class. Additionally, all of these references were drawn from the Language and Diversity Unit, which indicates that this curriculum may have assisted students in generating a critical language awareness.

The next chart features examples taken from Bob's paper, "Washington Redskins Issue." Bob argued that the Washington Redskins' logo is an acceptable logo, regardless of Native American opposition to it.

Bob chose to write about his approval of the "Washington Redskins" name and logo for the national sports team. Bob researched his topic on the internet and by reading a variety of magazine articles from sports magazines. When I asked him if he thought *Sports Illustrated* might offer a biased

opinion because of the magazine's focus and audience, Bob said, "Well, actually, I think you might have a good point about that. I hadn't really thought about that. But. . .I do have some Indians, um, Native Americans, in my paper who are for it. The quotes are in there." This conversation and

Table 4.9

Samples from Bob's Response Paper

Writer	Quotation from Response Paper	Discourse	Ideology	Manifest Intertextuality
Bob	"'Redskins' isn't offensive if it's the name of the team...it shows pride and dedication...but the word shouldn't be used to call someone a 'Redskin'" (p. 2).	CLA	language is context bound	newspaper articles
Bob	"The Washington Redskins try not to abuse the name Redskins, or try not to use it to hurt anyone" (p. 3).	CLA and D	language is context bound	newspaper articles

Bob's response paper demonstrate the ideological tensions under which Bob constructs his writing. Our conversation and his paper demonstrate his understanding that there are multiple ways to interpret a text and those interpretations may not be consistent throughout a single culture. This understanding is consistent with critical language awareness goals.

Additionally, reflecting on Bob's comments, I see a missing link in the critical language instruction; it may be helpful to include more critical reading opportunities and specific critical reading strategies students can practice prior

to and in conjunction with written assignments, especially those assignments that ask students to frame an opinion from written materials.

In the first example, Bob employs a CLA discourse and acknowledges that the word "Redskin" takes on an offensive meaning when it is used out of context, which he considers to mean derogatory name calling. Likewise, in the second example, Bob suggests that the team is careful to use the team name respectfully and without any racist intent. Combining discourses about discrimination and critical language awareness, Bob acknowledges again that language is context-bound and dependent on the language user's intent. These examples suggest the following ideology: language is context-bound, which is consistent with critical language awareness.

Bob's response paper reveals that he took up the critical language analyst subject position by employing the CLA discourse, discrimination discourse, and the corresponding ideologies. Bob also employed intertextuality as a tool to take up this position in his writing as he refers to the newspaper articles drawn from the Language and Diversity Unit that provided him with examples from which he presented his arguments, even as the arguments need further refining.

The last chart features Matt's response paper, "Adoption" which is a response to the main character in the novel, *The Light in the Forest*. In his paper Matt argued that a suitable adoptive family should demonstrate tolerance and understanding of diverse cultures because this provides a positive model for children.

Table 4.10

## Samples from Matt's Response Paper

Writer	Quotation from Response Paper	Discourse	Ideology	Manifest Intertextuality
Matt	"His white family is full of prejudice, much more than his (Native) family" (p. 1)	R/D	dominant cultures may be more prejudiced	<i>The Light in the Forest</i>
Matt	"He (Trueson) was put into a more suitable family when he was abducted...This quote from Trueson's white uncle proved my point. 'Look at him now. Standing there cold-blooded as any redskin' p. 41" (p. 1).	CLA and D	language is a means to identify prejudice; a prejudiced adult is not a suitable mentor for a child	<i>The Light in the Forest</i>
Matt	"He (Trueson) is now trapped between two worlds, one English speaking and the other Algonquin speaking..."	CLA	language defines the context in which one lives, one's social positioning, and power	<i>The Light in the Forest</i>

Matt's response paper focused on issues of prejudice and adoption in *The Light in the Forest*, a book read and studied as part of the Native American unit. Matt's fascination with the perceived differences between Native and early American cultures and assumptions based on what he termed "prejudice and inaccuracy" moved him to write about which family, the "white" or Native American, he felt was better suited for a young, impressionable boy, Trueson, the protagonist of the story. Matt offers several quotes in his paper that show Trueson's "white" family as having more harmful prejudices than Trueson's Native family. Matt explained, "When

you think of it, it's kind of interesting that the author is white and he writes about whites in kind of a bad way. He shows them as more racist. . ." Later in our conversation we discussed what risks the author, Conrad Ritche, took as a white man writing sympathetically about Native Americans for a primarily white audience. "I wonder if Ritche was really popular after he wrote that book. Did people really like the message in his book?" Matt asked in our conversation. This was a perfect opportunity to extend Matt's understanding of the dialectical relationship between subject position, text, and power. I see the possibility of increasing the frequency and quality of CLA moments if more explicit instruction in critical reading is implemented.

Employing discrimination discourse in the first representative example, Matt discusses the high incidence of discriminatory incidents in Trueson's "white" family which suggests the following ideology: dominant cultures may be more prejudiced. In a second example, Matt offers a quotation from Trueson's white Uncle to substantiate his point that Trueson is better off with a family who, in his opinion, is less prejudiced. The ideology suggested by the overlapping of CLA discourse and discrimination discourse is: language is a means to identify prejudice. In this case the words "redskin and cold-blooded" mark prejudice; and a prejudiced adult is not a suitable mentor for a child. The first ideology is consistent with the goals of critical language awareness, the relationship between language, interpretation, and power. The second ideology concerning suitable mentors for children is representative of discrimination discourse and may have

provided an opportunity for a deeper level of critical language awareness, social action, if we had discussed this excerpt.

In the last example, Matt acknowledges Trueson's dilemma, marked not only by the rejection of both families, but by two languages. Here Matt suggests the following ideology: language defines the context in which one lives, one's social positioning, and power. Matt understands the dialectical nature of language, social positioning, and power in this example as he points to how Trueson's knowledge of both English and Algonquin languages work to shape his subject position which is consistent with critical language awareness goals.

These samples taken from Matt's response paper reveal that he took up the critical language analyst subject position by employing the CLA discourse and discrimination discourse and took up the corresponding ideologies. Matt also employed intertextuality as a tool to take up this position in his writing as he used quotes and examples from *The Light in the Forest*, which is a novel included in both the Language and Diversity Unit and the Native American Unit. He drew on these examples in order to sustain his arguments in his response paper.

Summary of Response Papers: Discourses, Ideologies,  
and Intertextual References

Throughout all of the participants' response papers there were two discourses and corresponding ideological categories meaningful to this study that comprised a majority of the text: CLA discourse and discrimination discourse and the corresponding ideologies. Frequently the two discourses and corresponding ideologies were so embedded within one another, it was difficult or impossible to identify one without the other, which is why they are often described as overlapping. Clearly the two are complementary to one another, and may be contingent on each other in order to reach the deepest levels of critical language awareness, at least in this particular context, and essentially, to move participants to social action. Although not an official or primary focus of this study, it seems apparent that discourse about race, oppression, and discrimination was a primary focus in many of the peer conferences that led to the topics presented in these response papers. It is important to note that CLA discourse embedded within peer conferences may have created the space in which discrimination discourse was enacted. Consequently, it was not surprising that students' response papers were also comprised of the same discourses and corresponding ideologies. The two discourses worked symbiotically, assisting students in identifying oppressive sources, in this case mostly language, and in working against oppressive language as authors of works who wish to respect a multi-cultural audience,

and as authors who care deeply about how cultures, in this case Native Americans, are represented in text and in the context of the broader culture.

Finally, a key stimulus in the vast amount of CLA discourse in their papers may have been provided by the texts, both written and spoken, that students drew on and recorded in this study as intertextual references. The following intertextual references likely provided a basis from which students framed their critical language awareness: audio-visuals, such as overhead cartoons, films, and advertisements; readings, such as newspaper articles, magazine articles, internet articles, and whole class novels; and copious small group and whole class discussions and debates.

#### Revising Writing Through A Critical Language Awareness

In this final section, I present an analysis of the selected students' revisions as a result of sustained critical language analysis in the response paper peer conferences. I specifically examine those drafts corresponding to and/or written immediately following the peer conferences microanalyzed in previous sections of this chapter. This analysis allows me to show how students, as critical language analysts and as critical language analysis participants, revised their writing after having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their corresponding drafts.

Included in the major sections of analysis are those students from the same group who actually made revisions based on a critical language awareness resulting from students' taking up and sustaining the critical

language analyst subject position during peer conferences. Therefore, the limiting factors for selection here are the revisions. Not all students in this select group made revisions in their writing in response to the critical language analyst interactions. This is not to suggest that those interactions that do not end in written revisions are simply "wasted." Rather, I suggest that students' texts as both written and spoken in the context of the peer conference accomplish the same goal, only through different media. As the goal of both oral and written interactions in this curriculum is for students to develop a critical language awareness and, possibly, a social action linked to this awareness, whether they accomplish this through oral or written texts is immaterial.

Additionally, although not the focus of this study, it is important to note that students made several changes in non-critical language areas, such as basic comprehension, character development, plot development, and in more fundamental areas of writing: adjective, adverb, and lively verb additions or substitutions. Students also revised their response papers to include all of the required genre conventions. For example, peer responders paid special attention to the structural statement embedded in the thesis or "the map" as referred to by Matt, and writers listened and revised accordingly. This data demonstrates that students took the peer conferences seriously and followed through with changes suggested by their partners.

As discussed above, sustained CLA interactions may or may not have a direct effect on the revisions students make in their writing. In some cases

the discussion alone achieves the goal of a critical language awareness and social action is embedded in the peer conference conversation. This is the case with Matt and Kristine, who are not included in this analysis as their sustained critical language analyst interactions did not result in any identifiable revisions in their response papers. However, Tony, Bob, Jane, and Lori each revised their papers seemingly as a result of the sustained critical language analysis interactions in their peer conferences. In the examples below I demonstrate the revisions from subsequent drafts that correspond to the sustained critical language analyst subject interactions in the peer conference transcripts discussed in the previous microanalysis section. I present specific examples from their response paper drafts and discuss the critical language awareness components resulting from the peer conference that may have contributed to these revisions.

#### Tony: Alternative Genre and the Power of Language

Tony's paper began with a one-paragraph broad statement about racism: "In this paper I will state my opinions and facts about racism toward ethnic group, cultures and different ways of life" (*TV Stereotypes*, draft 1, p. 1).

Following his peer conference with Matt, who suggested that Tony follow the conventions of a response paper and "add the map," or the structural statement that foregrounds the focus and organization of the paper, Tony became aware of his non-conventional style and organization. After weighing the risks of not complying with conventions and experimenting

with various structures of his own, Tony reworked his paper to closely, but not completely, resemble the response paper genre introduced by the teacher. He employed an alternative genre that purposely avoids the discoursal conventions of summary statements in paragraphs and in the conclusion. He writes in a "stream of consciousness" style and successfully develops his thoughts with specific examples in the typical response paper genre. His revised opening read as follows:

One Saturday morning I did what I usually do, I watch the Warner cartoons with my brother. I usually watch them without thinking too much. My brother and I laugh and eat our cereal. But this Saturday morning was different. This is the conversation I had with myself...I can't believe this Injun Joe. He's mean and angry. He looks mentally crazy. And my brother is laughing. Wow. This is not OK. This is stereotyping and it isn't OK (*TV Stereotypes*, draft 2, p. 1).

In this way Tony identified the dominant genre, challenged the discoursal conventions, and wrote a final draft that he felt "represents my way of doing things," which is an amalgamation of discoursal conventions other than those of the response paper. This is consistent with a critical language awareness; the social action results from the awareness of Tony's weighing the risks and benefits of complying with discoursal conventions with alternatives that make the paper uniquely his.

Another result of the peer conference with Matt lies in the construction of the last two paragraphs of Tony's third draft of his response paper written on the same day as the conference:

But the characters that bother me the most are the Native American stereotypical cartoons. These range from football logos to loonytoons most of the time with a discriminative name. You would think that now a day(s) humanity is civilized enough to realize what's bad and what hurts people.

I think it all needs to be stopped and the discriminators would give a formal apology to the races they hurt. Remember, the pen is mightier than the sword and a weapon so powerful should not be used to hurt people (*TV Stereotypes*, draft 2, p. 3).

Prior to his conference with Matt, Tony's paper was filled with general statements about racism and discrimination, but did not include any details about television cartoons or football logos. The conference with Matt regarding subtle and blatant forms of racism and discrimination promoted new possibilities for Tony, who entered the conference with a half-page of scribbled writing torn from a small notebook. In the subsequent draft written on the same day, Tony also suggested a social action, "a formal apology to the races they hurt," and recognized the power of language to both hurt and repair such relations, which may have stemmed from Matt's personal narrative about his friend who received a stick in his ear for challenging racist

discourse. These examples may be attributable to the CLA components of the conference and to the curricular influence of a critical language awareness regarding the relationship between language, power, and subject positions. The sustained critical language analyst interactions appear to have contributed significantly to Tony's revisions in this draft and in the final.

### Bob: Moving Beyond a Single Truth

Bob's response paper began as a series of what his partner identified as "hasty generalizations" concerning the Washington Redskins' name and logo.

The Washington Redskins wear the Chief Wahoo logo with pride and without disrespect. I don't think its offensive because they wear the logo with pride and without disrespect. They don't have anything that makes the logo look offensive (*Washington Redskins Issue*, draft 2, p. 1).

During Bob's conference, Brad underlined and labeled the above first paragraph with the phrase "hasty generalizations" in bright purple marker, which he drew from the propaganda techniques taught during the first phase of this study. Although this process of identifying illogical thinking patterns in their conference partner's writing was not identified as one of the steps in peer conferencing for this paper, nor was it included in any peer conference modeling in class in association with this particular paper, Brad accurately identified and labeled these "hasty generalizations" in Bob's paper.

Another interesting aspect of this critical language analyst positioning move is that it allowed Brad to take up the authoritative position, actually holding his partner's paper which is not the instructed procedure in our peer conferencing model. As discussed in other examples, Brad insisted on this authoritative positioning in order to participate as either the reader or interpreter in a peer conference with Bob. Regardless of the authoritative messages, both Brad and Bob are alerted to judgmental language lacking examples and explanations to substantiate the claims. This identification and awareness of what I call "fuzzy language" demonstrates that both students, especially Brad initially, are aware of the dialectical relationship between language, meaning, and power. This demonstrates a social responsibility towards the people we write to. Brad and Bob, in subsequent drafts, are aware that writers can use language to impose their points of view on the people they are speaking to as in Bob's case he represented his view as if it was the only truth with no detailed examples or explanations. In subsequent drafts he recognized not only his own views about the Washington Redskins, but acknowledged the Native American view as well, albeit in a limited way. This example is from his third draft:

'We support the Indians. We Love 'em. To think we're against them is crazy!' This was quoted from Mark Edwards, a Native American fan. . ." (*Washington Redskins Issue*, draft 2, p. 2).

This example and others like it were added to the second draft and incorporated into a final draft in order to dissolve the "hasty generalizations"

identified by his partner in a sustained critical language analyst interaction as documented in my field notes. While the addition of this single Native American quote by no means represents the sole Native American point of view on this issue, Bob demonstrated a critical language awareness of language, power, and subject positioning by virtue of this revision. He acknowledged a subject position other than his own and the power this quotation brought to his paper. As his teacher, had I suggested that Bob re-examine his quotes, examples, and logic, he may have been more aware of the potential manipulation of his audience through these examples. More specifically, I read the article from which this quote came and found this quote combined with others from Jack Cooke, the Washington Redskins' owner, and John Cooke, his son. This brings up a similar issue as elsewhere in this study, a need for more critical reading strategies, of which the study of propaganda techniques is but one aspect. This is yet another example that substantiates the need to combine intensive critical language awareness in reading as well as writing.

#### Jane: Rethinking Audience

Jane's second draft of her response paper was identified, through the sustained critical language analyst interactions with her peer conference partner, Kristine, as making too many assumptions about the audience's knowledge of Native American culture and history. Her second draft began as a broad justification for Native American gambling casinos.

The Native Americans were very smart to do what they have built the casinos. Although they wouldn't be my choice of high entertainment. . .now they have become rich successful, people with almost everything they could possibly want (*A Business of Success*, draft 1, p. 1).

However, subsequent drafts demonstrate that Kristine's suggestion, ". . . maybe you need to ask yourself, what does your readers know about Native Americans. . .," was influential in Jane's revisions. In the following example taken from Jane's final draft of her response paper, she repositions her reader as someone who possibly does not have the historical background knowledge to understand her point of view.

Native American casinos are excellent because they give the Native Americans power, they put them in a high level of the US's economics, and the Native Americans are getting something back for the land that was stolen from them (*A Business of Success*, final draft, p. 1).

This revision demonstrates a responsibility towards the people Jane writes to, a multi-cultural community in which members may or may not have the historical background to make sense of the gambling issue she presents in her paper. With this in mind, Jane adds the essential historical information that Native Americans have had land stolen from them. Thus, Jane demonstrates a critical language awareness regarding the dialectical relationship between language, power, and subject positioning as she strives

to give her reader the necessary tools, in this case, historical background, in order to inform her readers.

### Lori: Power and Authority Through Others

Later in the peer conference which was microanalyzed in an earlier section of this chapter (see Transcript One), Lori's conference partners Mary and Karen, recognize a key relationship between power, language, and subject positions. Together they construct the following ideology: people in powerful positions control the language that names and defines, in this case, a school. Karen asks, "How did they get that name?" referring to the sports teams of their own school. Lori explains, "The superintendent and the school committee named the school." Mary replies, "Well North Catholic, they are now the Blue Angels, so they changed it. The Catholics are a strong organization." This sustained critical language analysis led to Lori's revision on her final draft. She explained in an interview that "adding the school committee's vote was a good idea. They will really take my paper seriously now. The school committee is powerful...everyone pays attention to what they say, cause they make the rules." Lori's understanding of the relationship between power, language, and subject positions is exemplified in this addition to her paper:

Now that you have read my thought on the issue I think that I should discuss the outcome of the December 9, 1997 school committee vote. It was decided in a five to four decision that a new mascot will

be in effect in June 1998, though the Redskins replacement has not yet been decided (*A Response Paper Regarding, North Regional High School's Mascot*, draft 2, p. 3).

She recognizes the need to include those whose subject positions are authoritative in relation to her own in order to establish herself and her writing as credible. She also "borrows quotes" from the local newspaper, specifically from a Native American woman who spoke against the continuation of the mascot, in order to "include some concrete opinions from others in this paper" she explained in an interview. Her use of the word "concrete" to describe others' opinions further supports her understanding of authority and her self-assigned subordinate subject position in relation to those who have public authority or published points of view, and in relation to those who are directly positioned by the language, Native people. Here Lori does not rely on her own authority to construct her final draft. Rather, she includes the language of others and in doing so gains power and authority through the quotes, demonstrates responsibility towards the Native people she writes about, and demonstrates a responsibility towards the people she writes to, her classmates and the American Indian Movement. This sensitivity and critical language awareness of the relationship between language, power and subject positions are likely attributable to the sustained critical language analysis from the peer conference and to the critical language awareness components of the curriculum.

### Summary of Revisions of Critical Language Analysts

In the detailed examples above, sustained critical language interactions likely affected students' revisions in their response papers. In this thematic analysis of the response paper revisions, students who made revisions demonstrated their attention to a critical language awareness resulting from the sustained critical language analyst interactions during their peer conferences. Students' revisions attributable to the sustained critical language interactions focused on the following: employing alternative genre; recognizing the power of language to both damage and repair social relations; revising cultural generalizations; rethinking audience, demonstrating a responsibility towards the people we write to; and re-positioning oneself through the power and authority invested in the language of others. The sustained critical language analyst interactions of the corresponding peer conferences assisted students in making revisions that demonstrate responsibly towards the people we write to, by being aware of how language positions oneself and others, especially Native Americans.

This section has also provided a thematic analysis of students' revisions after having considered the social, cultural and political aspects of language in their response paper drafts and in the corresponding peer conferences. In this analysis of revisions, students who made revisions demonstrated their attention to a critical language awareness that may have resulted from sustained critical language analyst interactions of their peer conferences. Students' revisions attributable to the sustained critical language

interactions focused on the following: employing alternative genre; recognizing the power of language to both damage and repair social relations; revising cultural generalizations; rethinking audience, demonstrating a responsibility towards the people we write to; and re-positioning oneself through the power and authority invested in the language of others.

However, sustained critical language analyst interactions may not necessarily lead students to revise their papers. Sometimes the CLA discourse embedded in the peer conference alone may create a critical language awareness and contributes to social action resulting in the revision of a paper, but it is not an inevitable result of CLA. All of these actions demonstrate students' investment with a critical language awareness in their writing and thinking about the social, cultural and political positions of others and themselves in the context of the classroom and beyond.

Additionally, this analysis demonstrated findings about perceived teacher authority in terms of complying with the genre imposed by the teacher. Generally, students complied with the response paper genre when making their revisions. Tony was an exception to this compliance as he experimented with combining a variety of genres other than the response paper.

The findings also suggest that students participated in peer conferences earnestly and followed through with changes not related to CLA as suggested by their partners. Furthermore, students' abilities to both give and receive helpful feedback in peer conferences may be attributable to students' prior

experiences with peer conferencing, teacher modeling, and activities focusing on CLA revisions in their own writing.

Teacher-introduced resources and curriculum also may have contributed to students' revisions based on the critical language interactions embedded in their peer conferences. Propaganda devices taught in conjunction with the Language and Diversity Unit may have assisted students in identifying cultural assumptions and repositioning their points of view based on a critical examination of these assumptions. Interdisciplinary curricula focusing on the spiritual beliefs of Native Americans may also have provided students with knowledge to show responsibility towards the people they wrote about. Finally, providing students with a variety of readings that demonstrate different authoritative positionings may have assisted students in locating their own positions and the social, cultural and political assumptions embedded in these positions.

### Summary of Findings

The findings presented in this chapter, based on thematic and critical discourse analysis show how a critical language awareness was enacted in peer conferencing and student writing in a suburban middle school English classroom. The findings are summarized by the following categories which correspond to the four research questions: (1) How students addressed and challenged the social, cultural and political aspects of language in peer conferences. This category includes findings about language conventions and

strategies students employed to avoid discourse which did not disempower others. (2) What subject positions, ideologies, and discourses surfaced during peer conferences. This category includes: findings about how writers and peer responders identified and understood the risks and benefits associated with writing and responding from a variety of subject positions; the self-declared and undeclared subject positions students took up in peer conferences; the discourses, ideologies, and intertextual references that students drew on when taking up a critical language analyst subject position; and the complex exchange structures that characterize the critical language analyst subject position. (3) Ideologies and discourses in students' final drafts. This category includes findings about the intertextual references students drew on when taking up a critical language analyst subject position in their writing. (4) How students revised their writing after having considered the social, cultural and political aspects of language in their drafts. This category includes students' revisions that may be attributable to the critical language analyst subject position, as well as the intertextual references students drew on when taking up this position.

#### How Students Addressed and Challenged the Social, Cultural and Political Aspects of Language in Peer Conferences

A thematic analysis of representative peer conference responses was provided in order to describe and interpret peer writers' and responders' interactions as they addressed and challenged the social, cultural and political aspects of language in their talk about their writing. The analysis shows that

students may employ alternative genres under multiple conditions. However, given the complexity of conditions, few students in this study experimented with alternative genres. Even when encouraged by the teacher to experiment with alternative narrative styles, most students adhered to conventional story forms as they showed a concern about academic achievement, which they understood as writing in a conventional form for both Pocumtuck stories and response papers. This trend was consistent in both papers, despite my attempt to teach alternative narrative styles and encouragement to experiment with these styles in conjunction with the Pocumtuck story assignment.

Students who did experiment utilized the following in order to support employing alternative genres in their writing: intertextual references to instruction on alternatives from which to experiment; encouragement to experiment with alternative genres by the teacher; support from peer conference partners; a critical language awareness of the benefits and risks of employing alternative genres; and perhaps strong social positioning in the class among peers and, maybe, even the teacher.

The analysis also shows how students used a critical language awareness in order to employ discourse which did not disempower others and how students challenged their peer conference partners to do the same. Students demonstrated concern about historical accuracy, Algonquin language, Pocumtuck spiritual beliefs, and naming practices in their Pocumtuck stories. Students also challenged others to use language that did

not disempower Pocumtuck people by identifying instances where specific words or phrases contributed to a discriminatory view of Native Americans in both Pocumtuck stories and response papers. Also, by using Algonquin language in their stories, students demonstrated their willingness to learn, value, and use a language with which Native people may identify.

The analysis of intertextual references demonstrates that students appeared to take up specific aspects of CLA instruction in framing their own texts. Students identified alternative narrative forms which elicited critical peer conference responses concerning writing conventions and their social, cultural and political implications, and to somewhat of a lesser degree, students experimented with these alternative genres in subsequent and final drafts. This critical language awareness of the political and institutional issues embedded in written conventions and traditional forms appeared to assist students in understanding the broader implications of their writing. This information also may have increased the likelihood of students' sharing their honest thoughts and feelings about employing the conventions, which also was conducive to a critical language awareness. Students appeared to take up specific aspects of instruction, such as incorporating vocabulary, history, interdisciplinary research, and communication styles of cultures that were represented in their writing, that showed concern and social responsibility in representing a culture other than their own. Finally, specific magazine articles, newspaper articles, and lessons that were introduced earlier in the year through the Language and Diversity Unit, such as propaganda

techniques used in advertising and response journals in which students recorded significant facts and personal responses to articles, field trips, etc., were likely intertextual references students made when framing their own texts and on peer conference sheets, further demonstrating a critical language awareness.

An important finding in this category is that a critical language awareness challenge may not be accepted by the writer. Even though the responder may have created an awareness of a linguistic inequity that otherwise wouldn't have existed for the writer, the challenge may be completely or partially rejected by the writer in the peer conference itself, or ignored when revising the paper. These critical language analyst interactions were most likely not empowering to the writer or responder. However, I suggest that critical language analyst moments that were not accepted in the peer conference talk nor reflected in written revisions still may be meaningful classroom discourse. Rather, the CLA involved in challenging a "naturalized" view may be meaningful regardless of whether or not it ends with written revisions.

#### Subject Positions, Ideologies, and Discourses That Surfaced During Peer Conferences

This study discloses two categories of subject positions that surfaced in peer conferences. Self-declared subject positions resulted from students identifying the subject positions in their writing and indicating possible influence on their peer responses. This category of subject positions is directly

tied to the peer conference sheet items students responded to before, during, and after the peer conference. The second category of subject positions, undeclared subject positions, resulted from unreported subject positions taken up between peer conference partners during their conferences and were indicative of the power relations between and among writers and responders in peer conferences. Therefore, these two categories of subject positions are not presumed to be parallel. Rather, each category allowed for different kinds of data analysis in order to understand how CLA may have influenced students' peer conferences and writing resulting from these conferences. Identifying the self-declared subject positions allowed me to incorporate students' understandings of how their subject positions (referred to as identities with students) might have influenced their writing and their peer responses. Identifying the undeclared subject positions allowed me to determine how power and positioning may have influenced peer conferences and how power relations might have been involved with critical language awareness.

As stated above, self-declared subject positions from peer conference talk included talk elicited directly by the peer conference sheet. Students rarely strayed from the direct content of peer conference questions. Much of this talk could be classified as, at least partially, procedural display. However, the data demonstrated that there was some degree of learning in play, as students offered a variety of responses that required some level of understanding of the relationship between subject positions and texts.

Self-declared subject positions include the following categories of subject positions that students identified as influencing their writing and/or responses during peer conferences: ethnicity/race, gender, and student writer.

Students identified subject positions as white of European decent or non-Native American as slightly unsafe positions from which to write about Native people in both Pocumtuck stories and response papers. They identified their non-Native heritage as deficits in writing and in positioning Native people in their writing, and recognized how the dialectical (two-way) relationship between subject positions and language influenced their writing and their thinking about a culture other than their own.

Overwhelmingly, girls listed their subject position as female as both a safe and knowledgeable position from which to write, which was a sharp contrast to boys, of whom only two even mentioned their gender on conference sheets and in peer conferences. I suggest that the boys took their subject positions as boys for granted, and, hence, this subject position was invisible.

Student writer was an identity that students felt both safe and unsafe writing from. Furthermore, the student writer subject position was framed in different ways depending on students' focus on student achievement in comparison to other students, students' social relations with other students, or on students' achievement in comparison to the teacher. Writer confidence influenced this category.

Writers and responders took up a variety of unreported subject positions during peer conferences; hence, I have categorized these subject positions as undeclared. Some of these positions were constituted by the peer conference sheet and others by the process writing discourse sponsored by the teacher and by students.

However, the most provocative of all subject positions taken up by students in peer conferences were not those directly constituted by the peer conference form and characterized as partial procedural displays as discussed above, nor were they positions that necessarily resulted in harmonious outcomes or non-conflictual peer conference talk. Rather, these undeclared subject positions writers and responders took up fully or partially occurred during moments of contestation or conflict, and/or during moments of seemingly off task-talk that veered from the directives of CLA peer conference question and answer format. Through an analysis of subject positions, ideologies, discourses, and exchange structures I determined that these more complex and sustained interactions resulted in students' critically examining the language of the text, and of the writer and responder subject positions. It was when a student became a critical language analyst, one who provided an alternative frame in which to understand seemingly "naturalistic" ideologies within a text, that students were critically aware of the dialectical relationship between language, power, and positioning, and hence, demonstrated a critical language awareness. The critical language analyst position was represented in audio and video taped peer conferences in conjunction with peer conferences

from both the Pocumtuck stories and response papers, but the longer more complex segments were associated with the response paper peer conferences due to the more blatant social, cultural and political nature of the response paper assignment.

A microanalysis of four transcripts revealed that students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position veered from the directives of the peer conference agenda and/or extended the process writing discourse during these interactions. Extended critical language interactions between peer conference partners were realized through CLA discourse and discrimination discourse; CLA and discrimination ideologies; a variety of text types including those text types representative in argumentation, exposition, personal narrative, and character monologue genres; intertextual references from CLA curriculum, peer conference, and interdisciplinary curricula; and more complex exchange structures that demonstrate student investment in the CLA discourse and, may have assisted students in partially shifting power and authority to include the kind offered to them within the discourse. Sustained critical language analyst subject positions were also associated with the social justice issues explicitly embedded in the response paper assignment, as opposed to the more subtle social awareness associated with the Pocumtuck story assignment.

Transcript One demonstrates how critical language analysts weighed the risks and benefits of challenging discursal choices and the systems of justice involved in speaking against the dominant culture. Peer conference

partners examined the ideologies of "appropriateness" associated with "dominant white school culture" and the language and communication styles that support this culture.

Critical language analysts in Transcript Two demonstrated their understanding of the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers, especially unsuspecting children. They discussed their responsibility to uncover oppressive language that may perpetuate harmful images and misunderstandings of Native people and specifically refer to "Injun Jo." These critical language analysts drew from intertextual references to personal experiences with racist acts and cartoon clips from the language and diversity curriculum.

In Transcript Three, both boys took up the critical language analyst subject position, but Brad did not sustain the position as he was more invested in an authoritative position. Brad's struggle with power and authority may have prevented him from taking up the critical language analyst subject position more often or for extended moments. Furthermore, this rather contentious peer conference also demonstrated the possibility that CLA might have given each boy new weapons in their struggle for supremacy as Bob used CLA to challenge Brad's racism in authorized ways.

The final transcript demonstrated how students wrestled with the complex relationships between subject positions, social and political context, and text interpretation. The girls in this transcript discussed issues about social justice in relation to a specific subject position, a Native American

casino owner, and the possibility of different interpretations of this subject position based on the interpreter's knowledge and understandings about Native Americans.

Finally, these transcripts demonstrate how students used several intertextual references from interdisciplinary curricula, as well as CLA curriculum and peer conferencing in order to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position. Furthermore, the transcripts demonstrate that sustained critical language analyst interactions were characterized by more complex exchange structures that transcended the simple exchange structure, initiation-response-feedback, identified in brief critical language analyst interactions. These more complex interactions included counter statements, elaborated responses, and appear to have partially shifted power and authority to include the kind offered within CLA discourse.

Critical language analysts employed critical language ideologies from five broad categories: (1) language, power, and struggle; (2) multiple interpretations; (3) resisting discourses; (4) responsibilities of peer responders and writers; (5) and identifying subject positions. These categories provided a comprehensible analysis and discussion that made sense of the potential relationships between ideologies and intertextual references. Ideological subcategories emerged from some of the broader categories which assisted in providing a comprehensible analysis and discussion that made sense of the potential relationships between ideologies and intertextual references.

Students used intertextual references when they took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position. Students drew heavily from the information and resources presented in the Language and Diversity Unit, as well as personal experiences, and interdisciplinary curricula.

The findings show that through the sustained critical language analyst interactions students sorted out the complex relationships among the texts they wrote and responded to, their subject positions as writers and responders, and the social responsibility involved in these critical understandings. Also, the preponderance of ideologies about race and discrimination suggest that in addition to offering students a process and a discourse for unraveling language, power, and positioning issues, critical language awareness also offered students a tool with which they began to grapple with racism in ways that positioned students as potential social activists, rather than passive receptors of information about racism and discrimination.

Discourses, and Ideologies of Critical Language Analysts'  
Response Paper Final Drafts

Those students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position in peer conferences took up the same position in their papers, drawing from the two major discourses, CLA discourse and discrimination discourse, and from the corresponding ideologies. Students also drew from a variety of intertextual references to written and spoken texts provided by the teacher and by their peers. These discourses and intertextual references

assisted students in identifying sources of oppression, in this case mostly language, and to write against them as authors who wished to respect a multi-cultural audience, and as authors who cared deeply about how cultures, in this case Native Americans, were represented in their texts.

#### How Students Revised Their Writing After Having Considered the Social, Cultural and Political Aspects of Language in Their Drafts

The findings from this study show sustained critical language interactions likely influenced some revisions students made in their response papers. In many cases the peer conference discussion included a critical language awareness, but there was no evidence of CLA directly attributable to the conference in the corresponding response paper. However, four out of the six critical language analysts whose papers were available for analysis, may have revised their papers as a result of the sustained critical language analyst interactions in their peer conferences. Therefore, this data suggests that sustained critical language analysts' interactions may have assisted students in employing a critical language awareness in some of their revisions.

Students' revisions attributable to the sustained critical language interactions focused on the following: employing alternative genre; recognizing the power of language to both damage and repair social relations; revising cultural generalizations; rethinking audience, demonstrating a responsibility towards the people we write to; and re-positioning oneself through the power and authority invested in the language of others. The

sustained critical language analyst interactions of the corresponding peer conferences may have assisted students in making revisions that demonstrate responsibility towards the people we write to, by creating an awareness of how language positions oneself and others, especially Native Americans.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND EDUCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### Overview of the Chapter

This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section is an overview of the study. In this section I present the research questions and summaries of findings that address the research questions. The second section discusses understandings and educational considerations derived from the study about critical language awareness and peer conferencing useful in school and other settings.

#### Overview of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop understandings about relationships between a critical language awareness and peer conferencing. Developed by Fairclough (1992) and others, critical language awareness is based on critical language study which supports a critical view of education and a critical awareness of the world with special attention to the language used to describe it. Adopting a critical view of language necessitates questioning, doubting, and investigating the world through the language used to describe it. Critical language study highlights how language conventions and practices are invested with power relations and ideologies which people are usually unaware of. Critical language awareness, which includes social change, is the goal of critical language study. In order for social change to take place, students need to understand the social, cultural, and political differences in written and spoken texts and have the tools to weigh the alternatives.

This dissertation explores the integration of CLA with peer conferencing practices based on Elbow's (1973) model of sharing and responding. A critical language awareness writing theory and practice that offers students the opportunity to learn to identify and weigh their social, cultural, and political perspectives, possibilities and alternatives may create an equitable and socially just learning environment in which students may have opportunities to be empowered, and/or to empower those who may be oppressed. Such a theory and practice may assist in preparing students for active citizenship in a socially just democratic society (Fairclough, 1992).

Previous research on peer conferences that included critical and qualitative perspectives (Jennings, 1994; Lee, 1995; Lensmire, 1994; and Ludlam, 1992) assisted me in designing this study in which I included an analysis of student voices and concepts of power and authority.

This was a sociolinguistic ethnographic study which allowed me to understand the peer conference events in a specific classroom based on actively participating with and observing students. I invited eighth graders from one of my English classes to participate by sharing their writing and thinking throughout the semester. The main focus was on the peer conferences embedded in both a critical language awareness curriculum and a Native American unit of study. The actual talk that occurred during these peer conferences and the conference sheets on which writers and peer responders recorded their content-related feedback constituted the bulk of the data. Additionally, the study included an in-depth analysis of two student writing assignments: an historical fiction story based on the Pocumtucks, a local Native American culture; and a

formal response paper based on a reaction to a contemporary Native American issue of interest to students.

I examined twenty audiotaped and videotaped peer conferences by conducting a thematic analysis of the corpus of data and a textual analysis of written artifacts generated by the students. Most importantly, I conducted a critical discourse microanalysis of key audio and videotaped peer conference interactions, focusing on discourses, subject positionings, ideologies, and intertextual references found therein (Fairclough, 1995).

I paid particular attention to those intertextual references likely to be derived from the critical language awareness curriculum. I began by employing Fairclough's (1992) and Willett, Solsken, and Wilson Keenan's (1996) coding categories, adapting them to the theoretical issues in this study. This analysis is represented in Chapter Four by four excerpts of peer conference talk and five examples of written revisions.

As presented in Chapter 1, the research questions were:

How does a diverse group of eighth grade students respond to the critical language components of peer conferencing in which they are asked to consider the social, cultural, and political aspects of language?

How do students address the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in peer conference talk about their writing?

What subject positions, ideologies, and discourses surface during the peer conference talk?

What ideologies and discourses surface in their final drafts?

How do students revise their writing after having considered the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in their drafts?

## Findings About Addressing and Challenging the Social, Cultural, and Political Aspects of Language in Peer Conference Talk About Writing

One of the understandings derived from this study concerns the factors that may contribute to students' employment of alternative genres in order to challenge what Fairclough refers to as "naturalized" genres sanctioned by the teacher and/or the school. When considering whether to take up alternative genres in their writing, students utilized: intertextual references from alternative genre instruction; teacher encouragement to experiment with these alternative genres; support from peer conference partners; a critical language awareness of the benefits and risks of employing alternative genres; and perhaps authoritative social positioning in the class between peers and, maybe, even the teacher.

A second key finding demonstrates students' care and concern about positioning Native people respectfully in their papers, as well as their willingness to challenge others to do the same.

Another important finding in this category is that a critical language awareness challenge may not be accepted by the writer/peer conference partner. However, my data suggests that critical language analyst interactions that did not end in partial or complete rejection of challenges in the peer conference talk or in written revisions, still may have been meaningful and powerful facets of classroom discourse.

Finally, students addressed and challenged the social, cultural and political aspects of language in peer conferences through those intertextual references drawn from the critical language awareness curriculum, and interdisciplinary lessons and materials from history and language arts.

### Findings About Subject Positions, Ideologies, and Discourses in Peer Conference Talk

This study discloses two categories of subject positions that surfaced in peer conferences: self-declared and undeclared. Self-declared subject positions, which resulted from students identifying the subject positions in their writing and their possible influence on their peer responses, were disclosed through an analysis of peer conference sheets.

The second category of subject positions, undeclared subject positions, was disclosed through microanalysis. They resulted from unconscious or partially conscious subject positions taken up by peer conference partners during their peer conferences and were indicative of the power relations between and among writers and responders in peer conferences.

Self-declared subject positions from peer conference talk included talk elicited directly from the peer conference sheet. Students rarely strayed from the direct content of peer conference questions. Much of this talk could be classified as, at least partially, procedural display. However, the data demonstrated that there was some degree of learning in play, as students offered a variety of responses that required some understanding of the relationship between subject positions and texts.

Self-declared subject positions also included the following categories of subject positions that students identified as influencing their writing and/or responses during peer conferences: ethnicity/race, gender, and student writer.

Writers and responders were seen to take up a variety of subject positions during peer conferences; hence, I have categorized these subject positions as undeclared. Some of these positions were constituted by the peer conference

sheet and others by the process writing discourse sponsored by the teacher and by students.

However, the most fascinating of all subject positions taken up by students in peer conferences were those that writers and responders took up fully or partially during moments of contestation or conflict, and/or during moments of seemingly off task talk that veered from the directives of the CLA peer conference question and answer format. Through an analysis of transcripts that focused on subject positions, ideologies, discourses, and exchange structures, I determined that these more complex and sustained interactions resulted in students critically examining the language of the text, and of the writer and responder subject positions. It was when one or more students became critical language analysts, who provided an alternative frame in which to understand seemingly "naturalistic" ideologies within a text, that students demonstrated critical awareness of the dialectical relationships among language, power, and positioning, and hence, a critical language awareness. The longer more complex segments of critical language analyst interactions were associated with the response paper peer conferences and seemed to be due to the more blatant social, cultural and political nature of the response paper assignment.

A microanalysis of four transcripts of students' response paper conferences revealed that students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position veered from the directives of the peer conference agenda and/or extended the process writing discourse during these interactions. They were characterized by extended critical language interactions between peer conference partners, realized through: CLA discourse and discrimination discourse; critical language awareness and discrimination

ideologies; a variety of text types including those text types representative in argumentation, exposition, personal narrative, and character monologue genres; intertextual references from critical language awareness curriculum, peer conference, and interdisciplinary curricula; and complex exchange structures that appeared to assist students in shifting the power and authority to include more student controlled agendas.

Each of the transcripts disclosed key components of critical language awareness in the context of the peer conference. Transcript One demonstrated how critical language analysts weighed the risks and benefits of challenging discursal choices and the systems of justice involved in speaking against the dominant culture. Critical language analysts in Transcript Two demonstrated their understanding of the potentially dangerous relationship between texts and consumers, especially unsuspecting children. In Transcript Three, a student's struggle with power and authority may have prevented him from taking up the critical language analyst subject position more often or for extended moments. Furthermore, this transcript also demonstrated the possibility that CLA might be used as an authorized weapon to take up authoritative subject positions. The final transcript demonstrated how students wrestled with the complex relationships between subject positions, social and political context, and text interpretation.

Critical language analysts in sustained interactions employed critical language ideologies from five broad categories: (1) language, power, and struggle; (2) multiple interpretations; (3) resisting discourses; (4) responsibilities of peer responders and writers; and (5) identifying subject positions. These categories provided a comprehensible analysis and discussion that made sense of

the potential relationships between ideologies and intertextual references. The intertextual references students used when they took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position drew heavily from the information and resources presented in the Language and Diversity Unit, as well as personal experiences and interdisciplinary curricula.

#### Findings About Discourses, Ideologies and Intertextual References in Final Drafts of Critical Language Analysts' Response Papers

Those students who took up and sustained the critical language analyst subject position in peer conferences took up the same position in their papers drawing from two major discourses, CLA discourse and discrimination discourse, and from the corresponding ideologies. Students also drew from a variety of intertextual references to written and spoken texts provided by the teacher and by their peers. These discourses and intertextual references assisted students in identifying sources of oppression, in this case mostly language, and in writing against them as authors who wished to respect a multi-cultural audience, and as authors who cared deeply about how Native Americans were represented in their texts.

#### Findings About How Students Revised Their Writing After Having Considered the Social, Cultural and Political Aspects of Language in Their Drafts

The findings from this study show evidence of a critical language awareness based on sustained critical language interactions in some response paper revisions. Students' revisions likely attributable to the sustained critical language interactions focused on the following: employing alternative genres; recognizing the power of language to both damage and repair social relations; revising cultural generalizations; rethinking audience, demonstrating a

responsibility towards the people we write to; and re-positioning oneself through the power and authority invested in the language of others. The sustained critical language analyst interactions of the corresponding peer conferences may have assisted students in making revisions that demonstrate responsibility towards the people we write to, by creating an awareness of how language positions oneself and especially Native Americans.

### Educational Considerations: Critical Language Awareness and Peer Conferencing

Traditional peer conference practices assume a neutral understanding of language and communication, and, therefore, do not offer the resources that may assist students in critically examining their written and/or spoken language. Traditional peer conference practices, while intended to empower student writers, don't offer students the opportunity to learn to identify and weigh their social and cultural perspectives, political possibilities and opportunities in linguistic exchanges. A peer conference pedagogy that does not address the critical aspects of language does not adequately prepare students for active citizenship in a socially just democratic society. As consumers and participants in their communities, students will be bombarded with conflicting messages in diverse and overlapping discourses. Their ability to discuss, control, and manipulate these messages will be highly dependent on their abilities to identify and weigh the social, cultural, and political perspectives contained in these messages and in the social interactions in which these messages may be located (Fairclough, 1992). A peer conference theory embedded in a critical language awareness may contribute to students' abilities to identify and weigh the social, cultural, and political perspectives contained in spoken and written language,

which may lay the foundation for the ability to construct, control, and manipulate texts in the broader context of our democratic society.

However, the translation of Fairclough's critical language awareness theory into classroom pedagogy for eighth graders was not an easy task. His broad theory pertains to the democratization of society as a whole. His examples are mostly drawn from medical interviews and other professions quite unrelated to adolescents, classrooms, and peer conferencing in particular. Nonetheless, the urge to translate his broad theory concerning the exposure of power and positioning through language spoke to me as a potentially useful component of literacy education. Every day my students are bombarded with conflicting messages through school texts alone, such as student writing, literature, textbooks, and conversations with peers and adults in the school. This project grew out of my belief that Fairclough's basic theoretical premise might assist writing instructors in teaching students how to identify and think critically about these conflicting messages, as well as provide instructors with the tools to examine students' understandings.

In the remainder of this section I discuss the unique elements of this study and how the study may contribute to what is already known about peer conferencing and pedagogical theory, the process of doing critical discourse analysis in the context of CLA peer conferencing, and the implications of embedding CLA in peer conferences. Directions for further research are discussed throughout. My purpose is to discuss the significance of developing a critical language awareness in the context of peer conferencing beyond this particular inquiry.

## Possible Contributions to Knowledge about CLA Peer Conferencing and Pedagogical Theory

Most of the literature including critical discourse analysis focuses on researchers employing it as a tool to analyze those texts collected by researchers as artifacts from the research site in order to learn about their students (Bloome and Egan-Robertson, 1993; Willett, Solsken, and Wilson Keenan, 1996). Other studies report on CLA pedagogical strategies, including how the strategies can be organized and implemented (Ivanic, 1994; Ivanic, and Simpson, 1992; Wallace, 1992; Clark, 1992; Stubbs, 1992; McKenzie, 1992; Clarke and Smith, 1992; Lancaster and Taylor, 1992; and Bhatt and Martin-Jones, 1992). However, this study reports on how students took up the CLA pedagogy by offering students themselves the tools to analyze texts as potential sources of oppression and privilege. Furthermore, this study also includes a critical discourse analysis of students who are using the tools. To my knowledge, there are no other studies with the purpose of giving students the resources to do it themselves and/or that combine a critical discourse analysis with the CLA pedagogical approach.

Additionally, Ivanic, whose research and pedagogy influenced the design of this study, employed CLA with individual students rather than student groups. In contrast, my study involved employing CLA with a class of 18 middle school students. In addition to adapting CLA for middle school students, creating CLA curriculum for a group of students as opposed to individuals was especially challenging and risky. When working through material with an individual student, it is much easier to give immediate response and to adjust and/or clarify the material or the approach. This lessens potential risks implicit within a critical examination of the world, such as the taking up of racist or

oppressive discourses that could do emotional harm or escalate to physical violence. In my study immediate response and clarification were not always possible given the "limitations" of doing CLA with an entire class. The stakes were high. There were interactions between students that I could not always monitor. However, because of its unique features, this study may offer valuable information about CLA, peer conferencing, and the possibilities of employing such an approach with real students in classroom situations that are more typical of public school education throughout the United States.

This study explores how students interacted as critical language analysts as they critically examined their world through the language used to represent it. An examination of the critical language analyst subject position, in conjunction with the sociolinguistic elements that characterize this subject position, may assist us in understanding the relationships between and among the elements of instruction, the discourses and ideologies drawn upon, and the social context.

The figure below demonstrates that the critical language analyst subject position may be taken up during peer conferences through particular discourses, ideologies, and intertextual references within a particular social context. Because the social context of any literacy event is directly related to the subject positions students may or may not take up, as in this study, issues of gender, culture, and class may be some of the variables that may affect the taking up of any subject position, including the critical language analyst subject position. Additionally, the figure suggests that the critical language analyst subject position may be shaped by the discourses, ideologies, and the intertextual references encouraged by the writing assignment genre and topic. The figure also suggests that the intertextual references critical language analysts draw upon may be, at least

partially, contingent upon the specific aspects of CLA and interdisciplinary curricula provided by the teacher(s). Furthermore, the figure suggests that intertextual references categorized as students' personal experiences may be a contributing factor in students taking up the critical language analyst subject position. As personal experiences are so variable and unpredictable, it is important to conceptualize this intertextual reference category as representative of a range of possibilities due to differing abilities to interpret and draw meaning from those experiences as critical language analysts.

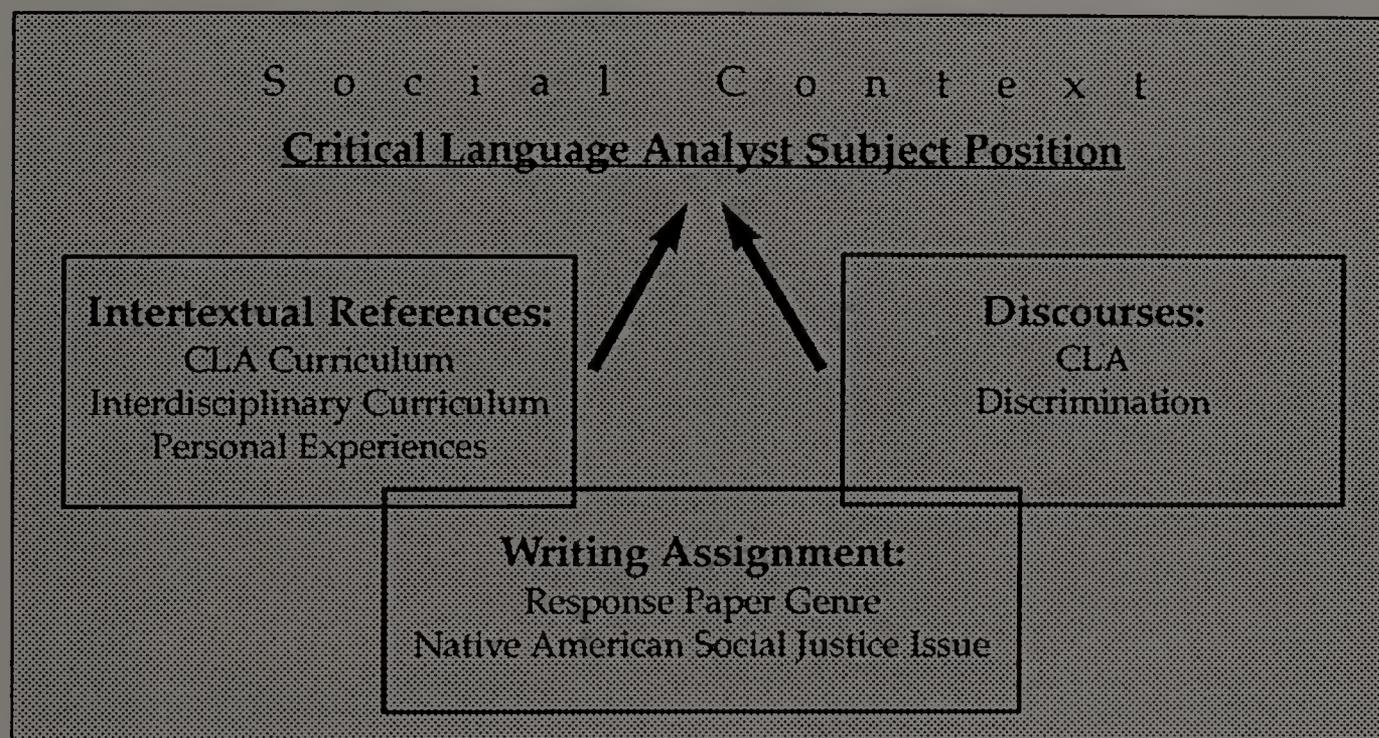


Figure: 5.1

A Pedagogical Model of CLA Peer Conference Theory

The figure, however, does not represent a finite set of factors which definitively contribute to students taking up the critical language analyst subject position. Rather, the figure postulates that these elements may provide students the resources from which to draw upon when taking up the critical language

analyst subject position within the particular social context of their peer conferences and classroom situation. This pedagogical model represents how the critical language analysts took up this position in this particular study. Because of the variability of social context from classroom to classroom, it would be misleading to suggest that this figure represents a finite pedagogical model for CLA and peer conferencing. However, the model suggests important relationships between and among these elements of instruction that may be useful when thinking about CLA and peer conferencing.

Important relationships to identify are the relationships between the writing assignment and the intertextual references and the discourses and ideologies students drew from when taking up and sustaining the critical language analyst subject position. The diagram suggests that the writing assignment frame, the formal response paper genre (a five paragraph essay), together with the writing topic, Native American social justice issues, shaped the kinds of intertextual references, discourses, and ideologies from which students drew. While this frame may have assisted students in taking up the critical language analyst subject position by focusing the possibilities, the diagram suggests that the frame may also have limited the discourses, ideologies, and/or intertextual references from which students may have drawn. For example, a majority of the discrimination discourse from which students drew focused on Native American issues, which is not at all surprising considering the assignment. But the opportunity to draw from other discrimination discourse topics was limited, which may have discouraged some students from taking up the critical language analyst subject position completely or for an extended period of time. This pedagogical model suggests that the framing of the writing

assignment may be related to who takes up the critical language analyst subject position based on the intertextual references, discourses, and ideologies critical language analysts have to draw upon.

### Critical Discourse Analysis in the Context of CLA Peer Conferencing

Fairclough, whose critical discourse analysis theory drives the microanalysis in this study, offers a rather imprecise, unsystematic process for doing critical discourse analysis. Fairclough offers, for example, several interpretations and explanations of critical discourse analysis, but the actual mechanisms and process for doing analysis are not explicit in his literature (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). The absence of a definitive process for critical discourse analysis within the context of a sociolinguistic ethnography made it especially challenging to construct a process for a critical discourse analysis of peer conference talk and student writing.

Bloome and Egan-Robertson's (1993), Willett, Solsken, and Wilson Keenan's (1996), and Egan-Robertson's (1994) critical discourse analyses assisted me in constructing a microanalysis process that merged Fairclough's analysis of texts with the social context of literacy learning. The most difficult aspect of constructing this process was identifying the text types, as Fairclough refers to them, which is not a definitive category. This prompted me to isolate those parts of discourses into two categories. One category I refer to as form, as these message units more closely resembled speech acts. The second category seemed to be parts of discourses that could be attributed to one or more genres and/or discourses. The difficulty resided in isolating these into meaningful categories that assisted me in understanding the ideologies and subject positions taken up

in peer conference talk. My hope is that this critical discourse analysis model as an adaptation of Fairclough, Willett, Solsken, and Wilson Keenan, Egan-Robertson, and Bloome and Egan-Robertson may provide one model for researchers seeking ways to do critical discourse analysis and may illustrate how the study of discourses, ideologies, and subject positions contribute to our understanding of literacy events.

This study also contributes a unique understanding of literacy events in which students are given the tools to do critical discourse analysis for themselves. In this light, the research model is two fold: a microanalysis of students conducting a microanalysis. Although the eighth graders in this study are not capable of conducting critical discourse analysis on the same level as the teacher-researcher, the study offers evidence that eighth graders are fully capable of taking up the critical language analyst subject position and of conducting critical discourse analysis in the forms discussed throughout this dissertation. However, as this study included a small section of eighth graders conducting CLA peer conferencing in the context of a single English class, the study falls short in offering explanations as to how and if students took up CLA practices in other social contexts. To enhance this research that focuses on critical language awareness as both a researcher's tool and as an analytical tool for students, researchers might collect and examine data from several social contexts and curricular areas within a school practicing writing across the curriculum. For example, a study that included the teacher-researcher conducting a critical discourse analysis of students CLA peer conferencing in history and English classes, as well as the students conducting CLA peer conferencing in both classes might reveal if students take up the critical language analyst subject position and

how students might negotiate discourses and ideologies in different social contexts.

Possible Contributions to Knowledge About Peer Conferencing  
and the Implications of Embedding CLA in Traditional  
Peer Conference Models

Next, I revisit the studies reviewed in Chapter Two and discuss how my study may contribute to what is known about peer conferencing and the implications of embedding CLA in a traditional peer conferencing model. I discuss four possible contributions that my study may offer in providing new understandings about: a broader socio-cultural view of peer conferencing; teacher involvement in peer conference agendas; negotiating and reconstructing subject positions and writer empowerment; and peer conference pedagogy and alternative genres.

A Broader Socio-cultural View of Peer Conferencing

Unlike other studies concerning peer conferencing that include a narrow socio-cultural view of participants, consider only those interactions between participants that are non-argumentative, merely quantify the instances of off-task discussions between peer conference partners, and do not critically analyze students' spoken and/or written texts, (Gere and Stevens, 1985; Gere and Abbot, 1985; Nystrand, 1986; Freedman, 1985) this study included: a broad socio-cultural view of participants across cultures, genders, and socio-economic classes; a variety of contentious and non-contentious interactions; a qualitative analysis of seemingly off-task peer conference talk that showed evidence of students taking up practices related to CLA goals; a critical understanding of

social positioning; and a non-neutral understanding of language which may contribute to more useful knowledge of peer conferencing.

By analyzing the actual language of conference partners during the writing process, although in the absence of a microanalysis with a socio-cultural framework, Gere and Abbot (1985) found that when teachers used highly structured oral or written response methods, conference partners inform the author in two ways: offering an evaluative response which provided reinforcement for the writer; and providing a collaborative response in which group members share intellectual resources to assist one writer with an idea or find a better way to approach a question. As with Gere and Abbot, in this study, students offered evaluative responses which provided reinforcement for the writer, but, more importantly, students also challenged each other and questioned the specific use of language and language conventions. In this way, this study extends what we already know about the kinds of talk that take place in peer conferences.

One type of challenge employed in student talk was the counter statement, which is connected to argumentation genres and worked together with subject positions within the CLA interactions. The presence of counter statements, for example, in CLA interactions represents one of the many discourse types associated with such contentious peer conferences. Unlike Gere and Abbot's study, the analysis of talk in these peer conferences demonstrated evidence suggesting that students' disagreements categorized through counter statements, for example, and seemingly off-task talk may be deeply meaningful and powerful linguistic exchanges. The critical discourse analysis of student talk assisted me in understanding how students took up subject positions and the

genres they employed when doing so. Because of the narrow selection of peer conference talk included in their study, Gere and Abbot's analysis omits opportunities to understand such challenging interactions.

Unlike Gere and Abbot's study, the critical language awareness embedded in the peer conference in this study may offer students opportunities to identify and understand the relationships between language, subject positions, and ideologies as discussed throughout this dissertation. However, the disclosure of these understandings and the social interactions involved in this process may not always contribute to positive, cheerful interactions between peer conference partners. For example, in Transcript #3 when Bob took up the critical language analyst subject position and challenged Brad's use of the word "Redskin" to describe a Native person, Brad was by no means thankful for his partner's excellent critical language skills. Rather, this challenge was met with tremendous hostility and sarcasm. The transcript revealed that both boys took up the critical language analyst subject position, but they were not able to sustain it because they struggled with power and authoritative positioning. This example demonstrated that CLA could be used to take up and sustain authoritative positions that were not helpful in peer conferences. Bob was able to use CLA to challenge Brad's racism in authorized ways, but Brad retaliated with sarcastic remarks and the peer conference position to regain his authoritative position. This suggested that he hadn't really changed his views. As critical language analysts, Bob and Brad unraveled the language and power issues in Brad's text, but used CLA to support authoritative positions which worked against them as peer conference partners. In addition to the potential for productive contentious interactions between peer conference partners, CLA may

support authoritative positioning which may not facilitate equitable peer conferences.

This finding, however, does not suggest that all contentious interactions between peer conference partners are unhelpful and/or do not lead to productive critical language awareness interactions. On the contrary, in some of the contentious moments in the transcripts from this study, the taking up of the critical language analyst subject position appeared to assist students in identifying and understanding the dialectical relationships between language and power. For example, all three girls in Transcript #1 disagree with one another throughout their discussion regarding the suspension of the Native American boy. However, in their discussion, these critical language analysts disclose, for example, the importance of clear communication when challenging oppressive discourses. In this case the oppressive discourse was determined to be a joke about Native Americans. These critical language analysts determined that in order to take up and sustain an authoritative position, it is necessary to clearly state the issue. Conversely, clear communication is necessary to taking up authoritative positions. Thus, the taking up of the critical language analyst subject position appeared to assist these students in identifying and understanding the dialectical (two-way) relationship between language and power.

While gender was a not a primary focus of this study, similar to Jennings' (1994) findings, the findings of this study indicated that girls showed concern about being careful of the other person's feelings while they gave suggestions. Additionally, girls did not immediately and automatically make the suggested changes in their writing. Furthermore, this study suggests that critical language

awareness instruction must also include more disclosure of the relationships between gender and culture in order to prepare critical language analysts for their interactions in peer conferences. The girls in this study made several assumptions in their peer conferences about Native American girls based on their own subject positions as girls. While there may be some cultural similarities based on gender, critical language awareness concerns itself with the critical examination of such broad assumptions concerning social, cultural, and/or political aspects of language and subject positions. One of the goals of critical language instruction should be to prepare students to identify and critically examine cultural variations within specific subject positions. Critical language analysts must have the tools to disclose these subtle variations in order to reach the more complex levels of critical language analysis.

Lensmire suggests that the opportunity for children to peer conference with each other may have positive and negative results (Lensmire, 1994). This study echoes his conclusions that students evaluated and excluded each other by gender and by race. Although this was not a study concerned with or designed to examine how students chose peer conference partners, this study did focus on the talk and interactions between peer conference partners engaged in the writing process. Interestingly, in this study all students chose same sex partners for peer conferences. Girls specifically stated that they preferred to conference with girls because they felt they could relate to and understand each other's subject positions, whereas conferencing with boys was deemed not helpful because they were deemed unable to relate to girls' writing. This study underlines the value and need for broader socio-cultural frames in research, so

that hidden agendas, such as gender issues, for example, can be uncovered and understood.

### Teacher Involvement in Peer Conference Agendas

Like Freedman's study (1985), this study provides evidence that demonstrates how a peer conference agenda set forth by the teacher can assist students in searching for deeper meanings in their writing and in discussing the particulars of a paper's genre. It also provides evidence to support Freedman's finding that successful peer conferencing rests in the teacher's ability to model feedback procedures and clarify the rules of behavior. However, based on a microanalysis of the data this study points to the limitations of teacher controlled peer conferencing and the potential risks of teacher modeling.

Although the evidence demonstrates that the peer conference sheet may have assisted students in taking up CLA practices in their conferences and writings, it may also have limited the CLA discourses that they took up. As most of the CLA discourses students took up in peer conferences were thematically tied to CLA and discrimination discourses, gender, class, and other discourses were not taken up in these peer conferences, thereby contributing to a limited understanding of CLA and a limited focus to discussions about student writing. The narrow focus of the peer conference sheet may have contributed to students' omission of important topics related to the writing. To this end, this study reinforces Lee's (1995) research that suggests that teacher-directed conferences may inhibit students from saying what they need to say about a writer's piece. In this study students may have wanted to take up discourses not encouraged by the peer conference sheet, such as discourses about gender or social class, but

were not inspired to do so by virtue of the narrow focus of the peer conference sheet.

The peer conference sheet set forth by the teacher also elicited procedural displays of learning, a majority of which were identified in the Pocumtuck historical fiction stories and in the peer conferences categorized as brief instances of critical language awareness. As students became more experienced with the new approach to peer conferencing and as I began to sift through data and reshape the format to include more open-ended questions, students began to take up and sustain the critical language analyst subject position more frequently. It would have been interesting to see how and if critical language analysts continued to work within the peer conference agenda or if they would have abandoned it completely. This could be a focus for future studies.

Despite the CLA curriculum and theory driving the study that included a variety of discourses and ideologies, including gender and social class, students did not significantly take up these discourses and ideologies in the context of CLA peer conferencing. This suggests that the assignment that drove the peer conference, which focused on the Native American subject position, together with the narrow focus of the peer conference sheet, as discussed above, may have limited students' opportunities to take up discourses and ideologies in addition to discrimination and CLA. Gender and social class discourses are also essential discourses that students must be able to take up within peer conferences, otherwise students' understandings of CLA are narrow, and, perhaps, through the process of omission, may reinforce those discourses that support the status quo. In order for CLA theory and practice to achieve its goal, which is to offer students the tools to recognize covert mechanisms of control to discover,

interpret, and participate in written communication as informed citizens, students must be articulate in a variety of discourses to describe and challenge these mechanisms of control. By articulate I mean that students must be able to identify, understand, and employ the language and ideologies unique to the particular discourse. Future studies concerning CLA and peer conferencing that emphasize and encourage the use of a variety of discourses, in addition to discrimination discourse, might offer a broader understanding of how students respond to those critical language components of peer conferencing in which they are asked to consider the social, cultural, and political aspects of language.

Furthermore, the social justice issues embedded in talking and writing about Native Americans represented a relatively safe topic for students to critically analyze the social, cultural, and political aspects of language and power. There were only two students in the study who identified as Native American, and their connection with this identity was weak. This suggests that because most of the students did not identify as Native American, students might have been able to delve into critical language awareness about Native Americans, despite some of the discomfort they acknowledged in their peer conference sheets. In comparison to gender, for example, Native American topics and discrimination discourse associated with Native Americans may not have threatened students' investments in their own identities/subject positions. Further curriculum experimentation and research that would expand the topic choices for students to include a variety of topics is also necessary in order to understand more fully the relationship of the assignment to the discourses students take up as critical language analysts.

Unlike Freedman's (1985) and Gere and Abbott's (1985) studies which do not include an analysis of subject positioning, the findings from this study also provide evidence of the complexities involved between teacher and student subject positions during well-intentioned teacher peer conference modeling. The critical discourse analysis of subject positions demonstrated that the modeling feedback procedures in this study did not always facilitate peer conferencing. In one case, for example, the writing sample I employed during my model conference served to position Amy as a poor writer when she compared her writing to mine. This affected her ability to move forward in the writing process, and unfortunately, may have disempowered her. Although this study demonstrates many instances of students taking up the CLA practices modeled by the teacher, the analysis of subject positions revealed that these practices did not always empower the writer.

Like Lensmire's (1994) ethnographic study of what children actually do when they write, with peer conferencing as one aspect of this process, this study may also offer insight into the social and individual risks of the peer conference. Most importantly, Lensmire's study suggests how to act effectively and responsibly in response to writers' writing and sharing, which includes the teacher's active involvement in determining student agendas. My findings also underline the importance of teacher involvement with students' agendas. For example, had I critically examined the interactions between Brad and Bob's peer conferences while actively teaching, I might have unveiled Brad's difficulty in negotiating Bob's ethnicity and I may have been able to assist them in negotiating subject positions and critical language awareness practices in their peer conferences.

Another example of how ongoing teacher analysis might have assisted me in dealing effectively and responsibly in response to writers' writing and sharing, includes Kristine's struggle with Native American ideologies. Had I read her peer conference sheet and microanalysed the data while actively teaching, discussed her paper with her rather than just given her written feedback with the assumption that she didn't follow the response paper format, I might have disclosed the ideological struggles that prevented her from writing a clear response paper or suggested an alternative format that would have allowed her to express her confusions in a safe and teacher-sanctioned format. I might also have reconsidered the grade.

Furthermore, Lensmire found that process pedagogy overestimates the extent to which teachers can resolve peer conflicts with teacher modeling of response and behavioral rules. This study echoes this finding, but also finds that students took up many strategies from the CLA curriculum that allowed students themselves to both challenge and resolve peer conflicts when they revolved around the reproduction of oppressive language. In many cases these strategies were born from student brainstorming sessions when students were responsible for the creation of strategies to challenge potentially oppressive language. For example, students listed politeness rituals as an important strategy to employ when initiating a challenge with peers and, especially, adults. In this way my study of peer conferencing demonstrates that CLA can offer students the tools to challenge and resolve conflicts that revolve around language, power and positioning, which is lacking in traditional peer conferencing pedagogues.

## Negotiating and Reconstructing Subject Positions and Writer Empowerment

This study also demonstrates that peer conference talk was being used for more than the accomplishment of the assigned task; it was used to define the individual subject positions of the peer group members. This finding is consistent with Ludlam's (1992) study that also suggests that the process of negotiating and reconstructing subject positions included: raising one's own status; raising another's status; lowering one's own status; lowering another's status; and gaining admission to the writing group (Ludlam, 1992). However, the analysis of subject positions as in a binary opposition, "raising or lowering," may constitute a narrow analysis of the power and positioning moves students take up in peer conferences, especially in the absence of critical discourse analysis. As Ludlam's study demonstrates, there were several instances of students "raising or lowering" status, but critical discourse analysis, which yields a finer analysis of language and subject positions, uncovered the complexities of those moves which involved more than merely "lowering and raising" status. For example, Brad and Bob's peer conference demonstrates authoritative positioning that may interrupt helpful feedback concerning Brad's writing. A finer microanalysis of the language in this peer conference demonstrates evidence that, although both boys take up authoritative positions, only one of those positions is sanctioned by the teacher as a critical language analyst subject position. This study suggests that understandings about subject positions are far more complex. In this case, the teacher may have provided a new tool from which the boys could take up authoritative positions. Unfortunately using the tool in this way may have interrupted the critical language analysis process in their peer conference.

Other possible examples of critical discourse analysis which may have uncovered the complexities of authoritative moves that involved more than merely "lowering and raising" status, may be demonstrated in the prevalence of the subject position stated as "positions self as equal to other." This middle ground subject position was prevalent in the interactions, which suggests that students weren't always vying for an authoritative "top dog" position, as suggested by Ludlam's study. In fact, the girls worked hard to avoid inequitable status with peer partners, which may have been just as damaging to full communication. This suggests that students may have been invested in more than status issues during peer conferences, which provides a more complicated understanding of status and positioning moves in peer conferences.

This study was designed with Ivanic's (1994) study of adult students engaged in critical language awareness in mind, suggesting that traditional approaches to writing either disregard writer identity or focus on the self as author, which negates the inevitability of writing as a social practice. Like Ivanic's study, this study provides evidence that CLA can be helpful in uncovering the discursual construction of writer identities and, hence, social positioning (Ivanic, 1994). As in Ivanic's study, writers were positioned by the act of writing and during the peer conference. In both cases subject positions were constructed, not only through what they had written but also through the discourses they drew on in their writing. This was not a matter of free choice among a freely available set of alternative genres. Rather students understood their discursual choices, in most cases, as limited to the specific genres, discourses, and ideologies encouraged by and through the critical language awareness practices and the institutionally sanctioned genres, discourses, and

ideologies of school. Changes within the writer's draft may have been the result of approval, disapproval, or other responses which challenged the writer's identity(ies) and/or social positioning.

In her study, Lee (1995) concludes that peer conferencing may not necessarily leave the writer empowered. Just as her findings demonstrate, this study also recognizes the cultural constructions students bring to the writing conference which sometimes work inadvertently to reinforce privilege rather than to level it, thereby leaving some writers unempowered. As discussed in the analysis of Kristine's response paper, "To Change or Not to Change," Kristine was caught between the ideologies representative of her home culture and those ideologies representative of her peers, many of the texts distributed by both her teacher and her peers, and those ideologies reinforced by her teacher. Although Kristine included several examples of a critical language awareness in her response paper in which she appears to position herself as gaining power through the disclosure of this subject position, I suggest that CLA ultimately may not have empowered her as a writer. Rather, CLA appears to have disempowered her as she earned a lower grade than other students who demonstrated clear arguments and organization in their response papers. As her teacher, I asked Kristine to examine contradictory ideologies, but failed to provide her with the means or support to express those contradictions and/or to sort them out in more detail.

The identification and analysis of contradictory ideologies as they pertain to students' opportunities for successful writing experiences is crucial in the early stages of implementing CLA peer conferencing. I suggest that students be given opportunities to identify and explore ideological differences or "problems"

in a relatively safe and risk free environment supported by the teacher. This means that while actively teaching, teachers must implement their own critical language awareness to assist them in disclosing social interactions in which students may be at a risk for implementing ideologies and/or taking up subject positions that may not be sanctioned by their peers and/or their families. Teachers must also extend this critical language awareness to the ideological confusions and/or riskier subject positions that may be embedded in students' writing. Students should not be penalized for demonstrating ideological confusions in their writing when they are asked to consider the social, cultural, and/or political aspects of language. Teachers must provide the strategies and resources to assist students in sorting out these complexities in order to responsibly implement a critical language awareness within the peer conference.

#### Peer Conference Pedagogy and Alternative Genres

This study also included Ivanic's (1994) second recommendation for a conference pedagogy embedded in a CLA approach which involved a critical discussion during conferences of discursal choices and the way they position the writer. The data from this study demonstrates that students took up CLA ideologies about why some genres are preferred over others, how to employ the less preferred ones if desired, and the inevitable consequences resulting from this social action. For example, the first transcript and microanalysis details students' understandings about the appropriateness of a Native American joke as a school sanctioned genre, and the consequences of the Native American boy's challenge of this genre. There were several examples of students contemplating less preferred genres and the inevitable consequences resulting from this social

action. According to Ivanic, this awareness of genre forms can lead to action or "emancipatory discourse" as referred to by Fairclough in his later work.

However, many students showed concerns about academic achievement and their term grade, for example, when contemplating experimentation with Native American narrative form. Furthermore, students who challenged the westernized story format (beginning, middle, and end) were those students who ranked themselves with a relatively high status in the class, were encouraged by their peer conference partners, enjoyed good relationships with the teacher, and were confident writers. Ivanic insists that CLA can liberate writers from socially privileged discursal forms, helping them to recognize that they do not have to accommodate to them. However, in the larger institutional context of this study in which I was required to at least partially adhere to the scope and sequence of the writing curriculum, in addition to students' understanding and taking up of this educational ideology throughout the school experience, it was a rare occurrence for students to take up alternative genres and by doing so, challenge the status quo. This study suggests that students may require far more encouragement, perhaps from several teachers, and a variety of alternative genres from which to draw upon in order to take up alternative genres and challenge the status quo of the response paper or the westernized story format. Accommodating some socially privileged discursal forms may be unavoidable, but doing so with "eyes open" assists students in understanding how and why these accommodations are made.

Furthermore, this study suggests that taking up emancipatory discourses in the form of alternative genres may be a complex process as teachers are required to teach the dominant discursal formats, and the consequences of

teaching alternative genres may be too risky. For example, if I failed to teach the response paper, otherwise known as the five paragraph essay, my students may not have been prepared for the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) long essay. They might have fared poorly on the test, and consequently, I might have received a reprimand. This is a reality as principals can tie test scores to a specific teacher, grade, and class. In this way, my subject positions as teacher and teacher-researcher were in constant conflict. This constant conflict made the negotiation of existing curriculum, the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, CLA and alternative genres difficult and, at times, nearly impossible. In most cases, just as with my students, accountability in relation to my subject position as employee prevailed. And, of course, I was deeply concerned that my students have a good experience with the first MCAS tests to be given to eighth graders in the state. I was concerned about their subject positions as writers in relation to this test and to those who would be assessing this institutionally sanctioned text. As students weighed the alternatives of socially privileged discursal forms, I too did so while engaging students in a dialogue about these choices. In this way we learned that we were accommodating, but with our "eyes open," which may assist students in understanding how and why these accommodations are made.

In order to understand more about how students might take up alternative genres and other discursal forms, a subsequent study might include experimentation with alternative discursal forms from a variety of cultures. This study included only one opportunity and possibility for students' experimentation with alternative genres, the Native American narrative form. This study may suggest that students need a wider assortment of alternative

genres from which to draw. Additionally, students experienced this alternative genre only orally. They listened to Joseph Bruchec's stories but did not read them. Perhaps, students needed to see the stories in print as this would have made them more closely resemble a westernized story. Additionally, students may have associated more status and authority with a piece of writing as opposed to the oral rendition. The addition of a variety of genre alternatives to the curriculum for a subsequent study may assist us in understanding how students might take up alternative discursal forms, their order of preference, and the subject positions that students take up when doing so.

The CLA peer conferencing model for this study was loosely based on Lensmire's, Lee's, and Fox's recommendations for an adequate model of peer conferencing. The most important aspect of their recommendations included students reading their own texts as artifacts from a classist, racist, sexist society. This recommendation was implemented as CLA peer conferencing. This study extends what is known about implementing such a pedagogy and how students in a particular socio-cultural setting responded to the curriculum and pedagogical theory that asked them to respond to texts as non-neutral cultural artifacts.

However, a limitation of this CLA model of instruction was that the CLA curriculum did not focus enough on the critical reading of non-student generated texts. In fact, this study included only one critical reading practice: identifying the propaganda devices within argumentation and advertising genres. Although this practice appeared to be taken up by critical language analysts in peer conferences and in their writing, this sole strategy did not provide students with enough tools to disclose the social, cultural and political aspects of language in

other texts, specifically those texts that they read and responded to in relation to the research requirements of the response paper. For example, students cited the owners of the "Redskins" team as objective references when substantiating arguments for keeping the team name. A critical language awareness embedded in the reading process as well as in the writing process may assist students in disclosing the social, cultural, and political aspects of language in the texts that they both consume and produce (Fairclough, 1992).

### Conclusion

All of the studies referred to above discuss the outcome of a curriculum and pedagogy leading to a more democratic classroom. I suggest this goal may become increasingly difficult as teachers, students and administrators negotiate the dominant ideologies of standardized testing and curriculum frameworks based on narrow interpretations of knowledge and a blatant absence of critical thinking. The students in this study were the first to take the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) test and, consequently, they struggled with me as we sought to negotiate thinking process with the "what you have to know" aspects of the test. Our conversations and my difficulty negotiating the CLA curriculum with what some of my colleagues referred to as "the real curriculum," lead me to wonder what place CLA may have in the curriculum in the future.

This study demonstrates that CLA tools may be a key to creating more equitable and democratic classrooms, and to preparing students to recognize the texts that manipulate them or may be manipulated by them. CLA could even be a key tool in the development of more equitable and democratic state-wide

standards and tests, but it seems that the current wave of education is to dismantle attempts to demystify privilege and manipulation. For this reason it is essential that educators and researchers continue to explore and refine CLA as it relates to peer conferencing, process writing, and the myriad ways it can be connected to curricula from every discipline. Teachers and researchers must evaluate the risks and benefits of employing this theory and pedagogy in classes and in research. Negotiating these pathways is never simple, but there are rich opportunities and understandings to be gained for both individuals and society in sorting through the complexities of contradictory texts.

## APPENDIX A

### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PUBLISHED CURRICULUM MATERIALS

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Language and Cultural Diversity

English 8

Ms. Cheevers

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

English 8

Whether you realize it or not, you are a language expert. You know a lot more about language than you think you do! The purpose of the following questions is to help to "tease out" some of this knowledge. Later you will be asked to use this knowledge in your own research assignment about language.

Answer these questions thoughtfully using examples from your own experiences. WRITE IN COMPLETE SENTENCES. You will be evaluated on the quality of your responses including the specific examples you use to substantiate your statements.

1. Do you think there is one true language? Explain.

2. What is a dialect? Do you speak in a dialect? What experiences have you had either listening to or speaking in a dialect?

2. What is "standard English?" Do you speak "standard English?" Explain? Do you write "standard English?" Explain.

3. Do you use slang terms or expressions? When? With whom? Give some examples that would be appropriate to share in class. How did you decide which terms were appropriate?

4. What does it mean to be bilingual? Under what circumstances do you think bilingualism is an asset? Are there circumstances in which bilingualism is not an asset?

5. What is African-American English? How is it different than "standard English?"

6. What do you notice about the differences between the way you and your male and female friends communicate? (slang, distance between speakers, eye contact, politeness etc.)

7. Do you think the media (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines) use language to manipulate public opinion? Explain.

8. How has your literacy level (ability to read and write) effected your school experiences? Explain.

9. How does the language you speak, read, and write effected your school experiences? Explain.

10. What is the relationship between POWER and LANGUAGE? Explain. Who would you label as a powerful language user? Why?

You need to be alert to the techniques of the propagandist and avoid using them in your own writing. A variety of unethical persuasive tactics are often used by the propagandist in an effort to get others to accept his or her argument without examining the evidence.

### 1. Bandwagon Technique

Some people feel more comfortable going along with the majority (jumping on the bandwagon) than standing alone. This pressure to conform, often coupled with the drive to go with a winner, makes some readers susceptible to the bandwagon approach. Example:

The Pepsi ad tells us that we should "Get with it and join the Pepsi generation."

The implication is that everyone else is doing it, so you should too.

### 2. Transfer Technique

Through this technique, the propagandist tries to associate him/herself and his/her arguments with ideas or things that already have our respect or admiration thereby getting us to accept blindly his position. The transfer device frequently makes use of labels and symbols. Example:

Ford car and truck commercials often include a picture of the American flag waving in the distance.

The implication is that buying a Ford is a patriotic thing to do. The respect we feel for the flag is transferred to the purchase of a Ford vehicle.

### 3. Card Stacking

By selecting only the evidence supporting an argument, advertisers stack the deck in their favor. The evidence presented could consist of relevant and accurate facts, but those facts may represent only part of the picture, that part supporting the writer's view. Example:

The stock market today is in good shape. Some of the oil company stocks are up thirty percent. Some chemical companies have the highest profits ever.

Some oil company stocks may indeed be up thirty percent, but oil and chemical stocks don't make up the entire stock market. Selecting these stocks and omitting others that are not faring well stacks the deck. It is not accurate to say that the stock market is in good shape.

#### 4. Testimonial

The use of biased or incompetent authorities has become an increasingly popular sales tactic. Example:

"I'm not a real doctor, but I play one on TV." This good looking actor then proceeds to sell a cough medicine he really knows nothing about.

The medicinal company has attracted your attention with the sight of a famous personality, but unless he is a trained doctor, there is no good reason why the listener should buy the medicine being advertised.

#### 5 Glittering Generalities

Sometimes the propagandist uses general, abstract words in an advertisement. The consumer utilizes his/her own perception of the word and the product is sold. Example:

"If you use Maybelline make-up, you will be beautiful, too."

Every woman wants to be beautiful, so the product sells. "New" and "improved" are other favorite general, abstract words used in ads.

#### 6. Plain Folks

Sometimes the propagandist appeals to ordinary people simply by employing plain, everyday folks in ads. The idea is that plain folks can relate to plain folks. Example:

In a popular AT and T telephone commercial a college student receives a long distant call from his father who inquires about his semester grades. Naturally, the son tries to evade the question.

This commercial appeals to most ordinary folks, particularly middle class parents, because we share similar experiences of inquiring about grades.

#### 7. Name Calling

This technique is easily recognizable because the advertised product is compared with other well-known products. All products may perform the same functions, but the featured product promises more satisfaction. Example:

Carefree and Trident chewing gum have similar tastes, cost the same, and weigh the same, but the Trident commercial claims that "four out of five dentists surveyed..."

Both products mentioned in the ad are essentially the same, but Trident is "better."

Historical Fiction Story  
Last paragraph  
Ms. Cheevers  
English 8

The glass-paned window shook violently against the wooden dividers as Willow stared down at the deer nibbling the buds off the cherry trees. The unnatural tingling alarmed the deer and sent them into the thick, wild forest that surrounded the pasture. Willow pressed her head against the glass to watch the last deer slip into this other world; the world that provided a recluse for these beautiful creatures also had provided her with safety, shelter, and never-ending beauty. But that world belonged to the creatures now, and she was not among them. She belonged to the Nims family, to her new husband, to this settlement, and to God. Just as she began to withdraw herself from the window, she spied the bravest doe poking her head from the edge of the forest. The deer paused as if waiting for a signal, an answer. Willow breathed in the stuffy air of her new home and watched longingly as the doe slowly, thoughtfully turned to follow the others.

Language and Diversity Project  
Investigating Pocumtuck Native People: Blending Language, Culture, and  
Fiction  
English 8  
Ms. Cheevers

### Overview of the Project

This project requires you to be an historian, a linguistic geographer, and a creative writer. Your goal is to write a convincing short story or personal narrative based on the Pocumtucks who resided in the New England area. You will read, write, and inquire about the Pocumtucks who spoke Pocumtuck which is in the Algonquian family of languages. Your story will incorporate Algonquian language, vocabulary, and culture collected from your research.

### Why Dialects?

Writers commonly employ native languages in their stories to: 1) establish authenticity and setting; and 2) to develop character. Writers also include place names, animal names, food and plant names as part of establishing an authentic setting especially when the goal is to write historical fiction.

You will investigate the Algonquian/Pocumtuck language and culture as the basis for your character. Since this is a very esoteric topic, I will provide you with most of the pertinent research materials. Your responsibility is to read, respond, and choose the linguistic and cultural information from which to create a character.

**A word about native language:** After our discussions regarding this topic, it is important that you take care to use the language respectfully. This means that you should apply your knowledge about the syntactical arrangement of the Algonquian /Pocumtuck language which we will discuss in class. We want to portray native people respectfully and avoid stereotyping this or any ethnic group.

A key question to keep in mind throughout this project:

How do culture and language influence one another?

### Who is Our Audience?

Your audience may include other eighth graders in our school and a variety of native people inside or outside our school. I would like to put the stories together in an anthology and give them to the "Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association." I'm sure they will enjoy our creative endeavors!

Steps and Responsibilities: (Use this sheet as your checklist.)

\_\_\_ 1. Keep a dialectical journal with your research information and responses. You should focus on the following topics: language, spirituality, men's and women's roles, food gathering and planting, shelter, daily life, children's roles, relations with the Europeans, myths, legends, physical appearance, tools, and decorations. I will expect a very detailed journal.

\_\_\_ 2. As part of your dialectical journal, it is important that you keep an accurate bibliography. This will be used to create a final draft bibliography which will be part of your final paper.

\_\_\_ 3. Keep a word list with appropriate categories. Staple this together near the end of your project.

\_\_\_ 4. Create an illustrated Algonquian dictionary using your word lists from your research.

\_\_\_ 5. Write a first draft of your story.

\_\_\_ 6. Peer conference with your first draft.

\_\_\_ 7. Write a second draft.

\_\_\_ 8. Peer conference with your second draft.

\_\_\_ 9. Write a third draft.

\_\_\_ 10. Personally edit your third draft. Employ editing symbols.

\_\_\_ 11. Peer edit your third draft. Employ editing symbols.

\_\_\_ 12. Write a final draft if necessary.

\_\_\_ 13. Create an illustrated front cover for your story.

\_\_\_ 14. Assemble final draft with front cover, story, and bibliography. Use final draft checklist. Hand-in.

\_\_\_ 15. Assemble Algonquian dictionary. Hand-in.

\_\_\_ 16. Hand-in dialectical journal.

In case you're wondering:

Story: 100 points     Algonquian dictionary: 25 points

Dialectical journal: 50 points

Pocumtuck Language Questions  
Language and Diversity Unit  
English 8  
Ms. Cheevers

As you read, write, and research about the Pocumtucks, think about these questions regarding their language and culture:

1. How did the Pocumtuck culture influence their language? For example, how might their language have been influenced by their spirituality? Food preferences? Activities?
2. Why are there so few written examples of Pocumtuck language? Or any native language for that matter? (Think about authorship and point of view for starters.)
3. Why do you think the Pocumtuck people relied more on oral than written language? Do you think they still rely more on oral language?
4. What other ways of communication did the Pocumtuck people rely on?
5. If the Algonquian languages are all different languages in the same way that English and French are two distinct languages, how might have native people from different tribes communicate with each other? (I assume most native people today speak English.)
6. Why do you suppose there are so many Algonquian languages?
7. What role might natural barriers have had in creating distinct native languages?
8. What role might social factors (who you spend time working, playing, marrying, etc.) have had in creating distinct native languages?
9. How might have the colonists influenced the Pocumtuck language?
10. How might have the Pocumtucks influenced the colonists' language, English?

APPENDIX B

PEER CONFERENCE SHEETS

Peer Conference Sheet  
English 8  
Ms. Cheevers

Total points: \_\_\_\_\_

Fill out items one through seven **before** you meet with your conference partner.

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Conferencing partner: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Working title of piece: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Three questions I would like answered:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The identities I write from in this piece are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. I feel safe writing from these identities \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. I feel very/slightly (circle one) unsafe about writing from \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ identity because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

The peer responder will answer questions eight through seventeen. Peer responders may choose to write during and/or after the writer has read his/her piece two times.

8. I listened hard. (circle one) yes no

9. I told back what I heard. yes no

10. I would like to hear more about:

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11. I have the following suggestions:

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12. I especially liked:

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13. Your best "show" part is:

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14. The format of your story is/is not conventional. (If applicable...) I think you should/should not take the risk of writing in this unconventional format because

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15. My identity as \_\_\_\_\_ helped me to understand and respond to \_\_\_\_\_'s writing because \_\_\_\_\_

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16. My identity as \_\_\_\_\_ prejudiced my thinking about \_\_\_\_\_'s writing because \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Overall I feel this conference \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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The writer will answer these questions after the peer conference is complete.

1. I believe the authority of my conferencing partner is: \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_

2. I feel my peer conference partner did/did not (circle one) listen to me carefully.

3. The best suggestions my conference partner gave me were: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. I will/will not take the risk of writing in the unconventional format in this paper because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. My identity as \_\_\_\_\_ helped me to understand and respond to \_\_\_\_\_'s responses because \_\_\_\_\_

6. My identity as \_\_\_\_\_ prejudiced my thinking about \_\_\_\_\_'s responses because \_\_\_\_\_

7. Overall I feel this conference \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Peer Conference Sheet 2  
English 8  
Ms. Cheevers

Total points: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Conferencing partner's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Working title of piece: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Writers will fill-out the items 1 and 2 below before conducting the peer conference.

1. These are the changes I made in my second draft and the reasons I made the changes:

2. These are the questions I still have:

The questions below are to be filled-out by the conference partner during and after the conference.

1. I think your changes are...

2. The answers to your questions are...

3. I think the format of your story is/is not (circle one) "traditional." I think is works/ doesn't work (circle one) because...

4. I think the story is/is not (circle one) respectful to Native people because...

Process Paper Questions  
English 8  
Ms. Cheevers

Read and think about each question. Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Examine your identity chart. What identities do you see in this paper?
2. Why did you write in these identities? Explain.
3. Are there any risks in writing in these identities? Explain.
4. Did you follow the format of introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion? Explain.
5. Why did you make this choice (refer to #4)?
6. Who is the audience for your paper? Explain.
7. How did you conform your paper for this audience? Explain.
8. How did the fact that your paper was written as a school assignment influence the language you used? Explain.
9. Is part of your audience Native American? If so, how did the inclusion of a Native American audience influence the language in your story? Explain.

10. How did the possibility of a Native American audience influence the content of your paper? Explain.

11. How did your gender influence this paper? Explain.

12. How did your culture influence this story? Explain.

13. How do you feel about your final draft? Explain.

14. What is the strongest part of your paper? Explain.

15. What is the weakest part of your paper? Explain.

16. What did you learn about your writing as a result of the editing process?

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT LETTERS

September 21, 1997

Dear Parents,

I am writing to you in order to introduce myself as both your son/daughter's English teacher and as a doctoral student studying at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I am enrolled as a doctoral student in the Language, Literacy and Culture Program in the School of Education. I have been studying at UMASS for seven long years, have earned a Master's of Education in Reading and Writing, and look forward to completing a doctoral degree in the near future. My last requirement for this degree is the dissertation project.

My dissertation project will be a study conducted in my own classroom and will be aimed at language learning and the writing process. I am interested specifically in the conversations that students engage in regarding their writing (peer conferencing), and how they understand this process. I want to know if my strategies for teaching this process are helpful to my students. Since many of the studies on peer conferencing do not include the experiences of actual adolescent learners, I believe this will be an important study for our school and for the field of education. This study will also help me to determine if the eighth grade English curriculum is supporting the standards of the new Massachusetts Frameworks for English and Language Arts.

During my study I will need to take notes regarding student writing conferences, videotape/audiotape some lessons-especially those related to the teaching of peer conferencing and language learning, collect and xerox some writing assignments, and in some cases, I will video/audiotape student interviews about their experiences with writing and conferencing in our class. All of these techniques for collecting information will help me remember what has happened in our class sessions and will help me think about students' experiences with writing and language learning.

In the past students have enjoyed reviewing their own writing and thinking with me. These conversations are likely to be useful in that students will have a chance to reflect on their writing process and their experiences with peer conferences.

I will be writing up what I learn from this study for my dissertation, a paper which I must complete before I can receive my doctoral degree from the University of Massachusetts. I will also be sharing what I learn from this study with other people who are interested in the experiences of adolescent writers. This may involve speaking at a conference, writing articles, and/or speaking informally with other literacy educators in my doctoral program.

Real names are not generally used in dissertations, nor are they used in any other write-ups or presentations which might result from the research. I will withhold other

information, as well, which could be used to identify your son/daughter. For example, it is the custom not to use real place names when reports based on the study are written.

As in the past, some students who participate in projects like this one do want to have their real names used. If your son/daughter would like to be acknowledged for participating in the study and in conference papers and articles using your real name, I have provided an additional signature line for you to sign. If you choose to have your son/daughter's real name used, you should know ahead of time that at times I may quote extensively from a conversation or a classroom session audiotape transcript.

I am requesting your permission to have your son/daughter participate in this study. Please be assured that participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not require additional or different writing projects than would otherwise be assigned. Whether or not your son/daughter participates will in no way affect your son/daughter's progress in the class or in their grade. Students will have the option of withdrawing from part or all of the study at any time. Students will also be invited to share the material from this study with me by reading summaries and reviewing videotapes. I am asking your permission to gather information through taking notes on classroom sessions, to collect some of the work your son/daughter writes, and to video/audiotape some classroom sessions. I would also like your permission to audiotape my conversations with your son/daughter and to use these audio or videotapes in professional presentations. Please understand that anonymity cannot be protected in such uses and students have the option of refusing consent for such use.

I would sincerely appreciate your willingness to allow your son/daughter participate in this study. Please contact me if you have questions about the study. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Nancy A. Cheevers

\*\*\*\*\*

Please CIRCLE your response, sign, cut along the dotted line, and return. Please keep the top portion for yourself(ves). Thank you! Thank you!

• YES, I would like my son/daughter to participate in this study!  
Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

• Check this line if you would like to have your son/daughter's real name used in the final acknowledgments. \_\_\_\_  
Parrent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

• NO, I am not willing to allow my son/daughter participate in this study.  
Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

• Let's talk. I'd like more information. Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

September 21, 1997

Dear Students,

I am writing to you in order to introduce myself as both your English teacher and as a doctoral student studying at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I am enrolled as a doctoral student in the Language, Literacy and Culture Program in the School of Education. I have been studying at UMASS for seven long years, have earned a Master's of Education in Reading and Writing, and look forward to completing a doctoral degree in the near future. My last requirement for this degree is the dissertation project.

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As in the past, some students who participate in projects like this one do want to have their real names used. If you would like to be acknowledged for participating in the study and in conference papers and articles using your real name, I have provided an

additional signature line for you to sign. If you choose to have your real name used, you should know ahead of time that at times I may quote extensively from a conversation or a classroom session audiotape transcript.

I am requesting your permission to participate in this study. Please be assured that participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not require additional or different writing projects than would otherwise be assigned. Whether or not you participate will in no way affect your progress in the class or in the grade. Students will have the option of withdrawing from part or all of the study at any time. Students will also be invited to share the material from this study with me by reading summaries and reviewing videotapes. I am asking your permission to gather information through taking notes on classroom sessions, to collect some of the work you write, and to video/audiotape some classroom sessions. I would also like your permission to audiotape my conversations with you and to use these audio or videotapes in professional presentations. Please understand that anonymity cannot be protected in such uses and students have the option of refusing consent for such use.

I would sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. Please contact me after or before class if you have questions about the study. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Nancy A. Cheevers

\*\*\*\*\*

Please CIRCLE your response, sign, cut along the dotted line, and return. Please keep the top portion for yourself(ves). Thank you! Thank you!

- YES, I would like to participate in this study!

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

- Check this line if you would like to have your real name used in the final acknowledgments. \_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

- NO, I am not willing to participate in this study.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

- Let's talk. I'd like more information. Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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