

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE LIGHT CAST BY SOMEONE ELSE'S
LAMP: BECOMING ESOL TEACHERS.

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This study was an in-depth exploration of the year-long journey of four first-year ESOL teachers who were women. The researcher asked about meanings of knowledge, pedagogy, and identity in the context of becoming a language teacher and sought to understand how beginning teachers' ideologies interact with their contexts. The teachers' naming and shaping of their own transformative pedagogies were complicated by the ways in which power and privilege manifested themselves in their schools and the ways in which ESOL students, language learning, and pedagogy came to be institutionally constructed. The teachers chose to neither adhere rigidly to their liberatory ideologies nor to submit to socializing influences. Rather, an ethic of caring towards students compelled them to find ways to integrate their commitments to social justice with sustainable pedagogies that supported students' long-term needs.

This study was a critical feminist ethnography. Data sources included transcriptions of afternoon tea gatherings held every two or three weeks over the school year, classroom observations, interviews, and school and student artifacts.

Part I explores the development of the teachers' meanings of English language teaching in a world in which English dominates politically. The ways in which Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been interpreted are problematized, and the connections between grammar and social power are examined. Part II considers the teachers' negotiation of their roles in the shaping of their students' identities and positionalities, seeking to enrich understandings of how various dimensions of difference, particularly race, gender, and ethnicity, interact with a category that permeates all others in the realm of English language teaching, that is linguistic minority status. Part III examines the role the four teachers played in the discursive constructions of their professional identities and the ways in which they supported each others' critical consideration of socializing institutional forces.

Two central constructs, becoming and belonging, underpinned the teachers' pedagogical processes and identity construction. These two constructs posed a challenge to traditionally accepted understandings of three intertwined themes: pedagogy, identity, and transformation. The theoretical implications of this dissertation include a need for a redefinition of the ways in which power, identity, and transformation are conceptualized.

THE LIGHT CAST BY SOMEONE ELSE'S LAMP:
BECOMING ESOL TEACHERS

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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For Alexandra, whose complex and gutsy foregrounding of uncomfortable themes made
it impossible to ignore silences in which oppression is nurtured,
For Jane, who kept my attention on student success and access within in the long-term
project of transformative pedagogy,
For Katie, whose deep understandings of the fluidity of difference helped me to connect
to the epistemological hybridity of identity, and
For Margaret, whose profoundly philosophical stance highlighted the connections among
social justice, compassionate teaching, and ethical practice.

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In this country, an estimated 40 to 50 percent of students who begin Ph.D. programs never finish them (Smallwood, 2004). By some estimates, the Ph.D. attrition rate is three or four times higher for women than men (Kastens, 2001). I pause here to acknowledge that the fact that I am not in those statistics is almost solely a testament to my support network. Jeremy Price continued to meet with me every fortnight for the many months after the birth of my baby when I was not writing. Many advisors would have given up and moved on to support other advisees. These meetings with Jeremy kept me connected and ensured that my ideas continued to percolate. Shelley Wong, too, kept me professionally connected by running up her long-distance phone bills to engage me in discussions that brought my work back to the surface of my consciousness, sharing with me her own experiences of balancing her family with her brilliant scholarship, placing numerous opportunities for professional participation in my path, and inspiring me to keep writing. All of my committee members maintained contact with me and kept me thinking about my work. I mention the importance of their support here in the hope that other faculty will recognize my experiences in those of their own students and hear me when I acknowledge that without this mentorship I am convinced that I would not have completed this work.

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I thank the children, teachers, parents, and school staff who are not named in this study. I have used pseudonyms for all names, including those of schools and counties, with the exception of my own name. Identifying information has sometimes also been changed, including school faculty's subject matter expertise, teachers' and students' grade levels, and students' home countries and languages, in order to protect the multilingual children and the participants in this study.

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“The call for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing, a deconstruction of old epistemologies, and the concomitant demand that there be a transformation in our classrooms, in how we teach and what we teach, has been a necessary revolution—one that seeks to restore life to a corrupt and dying academy.”

bell hooks, 1994, p.30

Chapter 1: Introduction

A Deconstruction of Old Epistemologies

I see a lot of things I would want to see done differently in all the classes, but I'm just a wing-floater, a newcomer, a novice, an upstart. What do I really know about the realities of teaching?

Alexandra

I got the book "Counting in Korea." ... On the cover, there's a picture of a [boy in a] traditional Korean outfit. So all the kids looked at it and said [to Jin Dae], "He looks like you!" So he looked at it and said: "He's stinky! Stinky boy." And he pushed it away.

Margaret

"The first semester I taught, I'd go home and say what I did today. I had this façade. I didn't like myself at all as a teacher. I thought I was the worst teacher."

Katie

"The way I'm teaching now is nothing like the way I would teach if there were no tests. Absolutely not. But I want these kids to graduate! I mean, it's not fair of me to say I'm not going to do it that way. That's not fair to the kids!"

Jane

The processes of becoming a language teacher are filled with contradictions and tangles. The quotes above represent a glimpse into the different ways that Alexandra, Katie, Jane, and Margaret made sense of these challenges as they walked through the complicated and somewhat chaotic terrain of everyday life as a first-year teacher. The four teachers' naming and shaping of their own transformative pedagogies were complicated by the ways in which power and privilege manifested themselves in their schools and by the ways in which ESOL students, language learning, and pedagogy came

to be institutionally constructed. Developing language teacher identity that is consistent with the mores and conventions of public schools is an important part of becoming a language teacher, but there is an elusive space between competently developing expertise within the culture of schooling and becoming unwittingly indoctrinated into it. In Sinhalese, there is a phrase to describe the appropriation of knowledge that feels alien to the learner: අනුභව ඵලියෙන් පහත බලනවා, or “looking at the light cast by someone else’s lamp.” The metaphor is ambiguous and captures a tension within the process of learning to teach; it can refer to compliant and prescribed learning, in which teachers are forced to gaze upon knowledge that someone else wants them to see, for instance sterile knowledge generated in universities and disseminated to novice teachers in public schools. Or it can refer to teachers seeking light through someone else’s gentle support and scaffolding—mentors, students, each other. How can beginning teachers explore the third space between these two possible meanings and come to value their own experiences and voices, to embrace their own knowledge, to light their own lamps? What sources of light are meaningful in their lives?

As the beginning ESOL teachers in this study positioned themselves in relation to the various forms of knowledge in their new contexts, they faced a double-edged challenge: in addition to responding to expectations, responsibilities, and trials inherent to *being* a teacher, they were in the process of *becoming* teachers, learning to teach and develop professional identities within an arena that marginalizes both beginning teachers and ESOL professionals. The territory that Margaret, Jane, Katie, and Alexandra lived within sometimes seemed fraught with difficulties, and the four teachers turned to each other for support as they cautiously sought out secure stepping stones in the quagmire

they were journeying through. There were many interconnected threads inherent in their processes of becoming a language teacher: the struggle to develop professional voices that would accord them legitimacy within their institutional contexts, their commitments to attend to the cultural and social positionalities of their young students, their efforts to combine students' access to authentic and usable language with a need to pass high-stakes tests, and the evolution of their understandings about what it means to teach English in a world in which English dominates politically. In the context of their sense of caring and responsibility towards their students, their relationships with them, and their need to teach in a way that they felt good about, the four teachers sought to craft their practice.

(Re)Framing Knowledge and Representation in the Making of a Study

This study was about five women coming together to share experiences and support each other's educational practice. Four of the women, Margaret, Jane, Katie, and Alexandra, had recently graduated from a master's program in TESOL. I was the fifth, a PhD student hoping to learn from them as part of my dissertation study. Once every two or three weeks, we gathered together in my home after school to sip tea and share our ideas about what it means to teach English in the context of U.S. public schooling. As I walked alongside them, I asked the question: What are meanings of knowledge, pedagogy, and identity in the context of becoming a language teacher? In embarking on this study, I sought to problematize the fundamental tensions and shifts surrounding the optimal conditions in which the four teachers learned to teach.

At the beginning of the year, as the former coordinator of Jane, Alexandra, Katie, and Margaret's student teaching experiences, I thought that the problem was clear. While

the beginning teachers I had watched graduating from our program over the years were typically passionate, idealistic, and in search of social justice, they were often quickly ground down and became overwhelmed. They left the profession at what appeared to be a high rate, and they frequently became jaded. I perceived them as betrayed by a public schooling system that attempted to socialize them into compliance. I found the patterns I had observed in our graduates to be reflected in the historical and contemporary literature on beginning teaching (Waller, 1932; Merton, 1975; Veenman, 1984; Blase, 1985; Kettle and Sellars, 1986; Etheridge, 1988), and this was the struggle that I wanted to document as I developed the framework for this study.

However, what follows in this dissertation is not the story I set out to tell. As I listened to Jane, Katie, Margaret, and Alexandra, I began to see images emerging that were much more intricate and problematical than I'd anticipated. I saw teachers whose sense of ethical responsibility towards their students compelled them to find ways to integrate their investments in social justice with their need to develop sustainable pedagogies that supported their students' long-term success in a less-than-ideal world. As the school year closed, Alexandra summarized: "Pick your battles so you don't feel guilty, so you can go home at rest with yourself." (Afternoon Tea, 06.19). What Alexandra framed as being "at rest with yourself" is a concern for ethical practice.

I came to understand the various slices of beginning ESOL teachers' lived experiences—for instance, professional identity construction; language learning; grammatical proficiency; constructions of race, linguistic minority status, ethnicity, and gender; social and cultural identity—as represented in simplistic, limited ways in most of the literature. As I watched and listened to the teachers, the images of ESOL learning that

I had gleaned from the literature appeared to me as more and more superficial and disembodied from the institutional structure of schools. I had read work addressing what teachers, particularly ESOL teachers, need to know and do in order to teach well (Breen, 1987; Richards and Pennington, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Freeman and Johnson, 1998). I had also read work from transformative ideologies that raised critical issues, such as the gap between teacher preparation programs and teaching practice (Britzman, 1991), the marginalization of non-native English speakers (Braine, 1999) and ESOL students (Wong, 1999), the intersections of gender and language minority status (Vandrick, 1994; Frye, 1994), the ways in which schools reproduce inequities (Lin, 1999), and the reinforcement of and resistance to English language teaching as linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999). I perceived a gap between these two bodies of work, that is research on teacher knowledge and work on socially transformative pedagogy, and in particular noticed an absence of attention to the role that teacher-generated knowledge can play in integrating the two. Insufficient attention has been paid to the stories and lives of beginning ESOL teachers as they construct their practices and negotiate their versions of transformative praxis that were, for many, part of the impetus for their entering the profession.

Researcher Positionality

My desire to contribute to understandings of the connections between ESOL teachers' identities and their practices is rooted in my life. Our life histories and experiences, along with the emotions and investments that evolve from them, shape our thoughts and influence the ways in which we view the world. I take issue with those who perceive such subjectivity as weakening research. All researchers have personal leanings,

and it is important that we acknowledge these and make them transparent. I name my own here, as they are present and significant.

I am distressed by the ways in which the needs of different students in public schools are attended to unevenly and unjustly. I see the centrifugal effects that schools have on students' cultural identities, encouraging them towards a central core that seeks to stamp out languages other than English and ethnicities other than white¹. I am appalled by the Governor of this state, Robert Ehrlich, who announced this May that: "Once you get into this multicultural crap, this bunk, that some folks are teaching in our college campuses and other places, you run into a problem," and I am outraged by the state's former Governor Donald Schaefer, who claims: "I don't want to adjust to another language. This is the United States. I think they ought to adjust to us" (Mosk, 2004). I am offended by these words as an immigrant who did "adjust." I was born in Sri Lanka and immigrated at the age of 4 to Australia during the White Australia policy, which restricted "non-European" immigration but made exclusions for certain nonwhites, including my father and his "dependents." I shamefacedly admit that it wasn't long before I completely lost my Tamil and Singhalese (languages that had already been occupying a marginal and contested space in my family since the British colonization of Sri Lanka), identified as singularly "Australian" when people asked me where I came from, and agreeably consented to being called Sue instead of Suhanthie. This disconnection from my heritage served no valid purpose, and I am invested in halting the perpetuation of those conditions within school walls that attracted me to a white English-speaking identity. My experiences have influenced the ways in which I do research, for

¹ I choose to use lower-case initials when describing racial groups in order to avoid reifying social categories.

instance, no doubt affecting my receptivity to Korean-born Katie's revelation that when she was a girl in an American school, she wanted to look like "something else," "something White."

I am dismayed by the marginalized status of ESOL teachers within schools. As the coordinator of student teaching for ESOL teacher candidates, I saw ESOL teachers denied classrooms, told that magnet program students had priority over ESOL students in the computer lab, and excluded from the textbook budget. I hear ESOL teachers complaining that they are not accorded the same professional legitimacy as teachers of other content areas. I believe that ESOL teachers' difficulty in carving out a legitimate space within school culture is a refraction of the absence of a rightful place for their language minority students to occupy within the national social fabric. I would like to see this imbalance redressed.

I believe that the needs of new teachers are not being attended to adequately, not through deliberate disregard, but as the result of insufficient knowledge about how to do so and of a limited understanding of what it means to know. I would like this study to contribute towards the filling of that need.

I framed this study in part in reaction to the large number of studies of teaching in which teachers are condemned by researchers who enter their classrooms and criticize what they are doing. It was more relevant to and productive for my purposes to look at how Katie, Margaret, Jane, and Alexandra made sense of their worlds and developed their practice in their complicated and challenging political and institutional contexts. This work seeks to respond to Freire's (1998) call for *humanizing*, for practices made through relationships among students, teachers, and knowledge in the larger context of

their social histories and in relation to the ways in which they think about learning. Beyond the ideas and theories that teachers discover during their preservice experience and interactions with professional colleagues, they are their own biographies. Teachers are not merely neutral emissaries of the school system, but rather are complex beings embedded in personal histories (Carter and Doyle, 1996). Researchers of influences on teaching have painted beginning teachers as either captive (Lortie, 1975) or impervious (Zeichner, 1990) to the conceptualizations of teaching they internalized during their years as students. These representations of teaching ignore the role that teachers' social and cultural histories play in complexifying this terrain by contextualizing and interacting with the abstract information they are exposed to during their coursework. I seek to connect you the reader to the teachers in a way that is humanizing and mindful of their whole lives.

Epistemological Grounding

The concept of identity anchored this study. Understanding identity construction was a pivotal piece of understanding the processes of becoming an ESOL teacher and developing a practice of teaching ESOL students. The notion of identity was important in relation to several key themes that became important in this study: authenticity, relationship, agency and subjectivity, image, and Otherness. These will be theorized in greater detail later in this chapter.

Identity is complicated because it is situated within one's own life history, in the context of relationships with others in and out of school, and within structures that tend to privilege some meanings over others. The making of identity is therefore neither a smooth nor unidirectional process; it is complicated, multilayered, and always in process.

I began to recognize the complexity of these various layers in the making of identity only towards the end of the study, and it was then that the following exchange became significant to me. It captures what, for me, was the crux of what I learned during the year of my dissertation study. While sipping tea on my living room floor, Katie was explaining that although she was reluctant to teach grammar directly, she believed that doing so was necessary to her students' success in the world beyond her classroom. She saw a heavy focus on form and grammatical accuracy as contributing to the sustenance of an unjust status quo. However, she simultaneously connected grammatical proficiency to the ability of her students to construct identities that legitimated their participation in the U.S. workforce, schools, and society: "Because I think unconsciously, people associate intelligence with language." I wondered how she could reconcile these two seemingly disparate perspectives and asked her: "Is there a tension between teaching [students] what they need in the world and teaching them to conform?" Katie replied, unexpectedly: "I don't think there's a tension." As I considered this response in greater depth over time, I came to perceive Katie's ability to integrate these two polar extremes as representative of an evolved and fertile philosophy, one that opened doors that had been previously invisible to me. Katie went on to explain:

"There's a movement to broaden people's perspectives on language minority students, but it's a slow process. But in the meantime, you can give them knowledge of the culture, knowledge of the culture to help them advance and, once they do, they themselves can contribute to the process of broadening people's perspectives. So you're helping to empower them to change the system. They'll succeed in the system, but at the same time

they'll be able to change it because they'll know how to get inside. They say that the most effective way to change something is to get inside the structure and work from within."

Katie was talking about the tightrope walk between transformation ("chang[ing] the system) and access ("succeed[ing] in the system"). Pennycook (1999) has made reference to the conflict between transformation and access, that is between on one hand challenging practices that maintain social inequities (such as an arbitrary and meaningless focus on grammatical accuracy in ESOL classes) and on the other hand arming children with social tools of power (for instance, explicit knowledge about grammar) when these are not provided in the natural framework of their lives. In a similar vein, Delpit (1995) has described the tension between "skills" and "process" in writing, charging that as a result of an undue emphasis on writing process, educators have failed to equip minority students with necessary "skills" and with the codes and rules necessary for participation in a culture of power. The intellectual contribution that Katie offered in this conversation was a challenge to the dichotomy between access and transformation, between skills and process. What Katie, theorizing from her pedagogical practice, taught me was that access is a form of transformation, and transformation is a form of access. I failed to recognize this at the time, maintaining my conceptualization of the two as mutually exclusive:

Suhanthie: Audre Lorde says the master's tools will never destroy the master's house.

Katie: I think you need both. I think you need people on the inside and outside railing the system. I think the radicals will get people to notice and the people on the inside can further that process inside. I think that they're not mutually

exclusive ... One's not necessarily better than the other. As long as it's an ongoing process. (Afternoon Tea at Su's, 06.19)

Katie's contextualizing experience and long-term perspective allowed her to perceive socially transformative change as an ongoing process rather than a finite goal: "As long as it's an ongoing process." For Freire (1998), this "unfinishedness" is an essential ingredient of *conscientization*, or the development of consciousness that has the power to transform reality (Freire, 1970).

I had embarked on this study perceiving teaching towards conformity as preclusive of teaching towards transformation and, indeed, investing academically in the dichotomy between the two. I imagined that I would see my four study partners, all of whom were positioned in pursuit of social justice, trying to teach transformatively and then doing one of two things: succeeding or giving up. In numerous teacher socialization studies (Waller, 1932; Lortie, 1966; Merton, 1975; Veenman, 1984; Blase, 1985; Etheridge, 1988; and Kettle and Sellars, 1996) teachers were socialized into traditional pedagogies, framed as "reflexive conservatism" by Lortie (1975) and "rationalization" by Blase (1985). I feared that after a struggle to hold onto their ideas about teaching, Katie, Jane, Alexandra and Katie, like many teachers in these studies, would be discouraged and abandon the liberatory pedagogies that they had brought to their first year of teaching, in which case I hoped to focus on the factors that contributed to their becoming discouraged. However, I had also read Zeichner and Tabachnik (1985)'s data-based suggestion that passive conformity is not necessarily a part of new teacher induction and Power (1981) and Grossman's (1988) studies in which teachers clung on to the liberatory ideologies that they had embraced during their coursework, even in the face of heavily

socializing influences. These studies gave me hope, and indeed led me to expect, that Jane, Margaret, Alexandra, and Katie would find it possible to “teach against the grain” (Ng, 1995; Simon, 1992). If this were the case, I hoped to discover more about the factors that supported their ability to remain critical in the face of the conservative influences of public schooling. However, to my surprise, throughout the year of the study, I understood Katie and my other study partners, Alexandra, Jane, and Margaret, to slide towards neither end but rather to artfully and skillfully craft pedagogies that wove together these two elements that I had previously considered to be in conflict with each other: inciting social justice and responding to students’ need to meet societal expectations beyond school walls. In order to respond to the social and professional needs they envisioned in their students’ present and future lives, they felt bound to assist their young students in accessing the culture of power. However, they simultaneously saw themselves as engaged in a socially transformative project, and they pursued teaching practices that challenged oppression. Neither of these two intentions could be sublimated to the other, so Jane, Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie worked throughout the year to develop pedagogies that united the two. It is in the wide and messy space between the two extremities that this study is located. This dissertation is about four teachers figuring out what counts as responsible action and responsible teaching.

What I hadn’t accounted for was the power of ethical practice. The teachers didn’t use the words “ethics,” “morality,” or “integrity,” but they talked about their responsibilities towards their students, their caring for them, their relationships with them, and their need to teach in a way that they felt good about. During the year of the study, I saw four inspiring teachers who went into the public school system motivated by

a desire to improve their students' lives, to practice thoughtfully critical pedagogies, and to change the world. In examinations of how power is implicated in schools' constructions of knowledge, ethical practice is often left out of the discussion, as deplored by anthropologist Vine Deloria: "Western civilization, unfortunately, does not link knowledge and morality but rather, it connects knowledge and power and makes them equivalent." (Black Elk et al, 2003)

The teachers were marginalized by their positionality as first-year teachers, they sometimes deplored the absence of mentors they could turn to in their schools, some of them were isolated and struggled to find support. It could even be effectively argued that they were doomed to fail. They didn't fail. I explored the ways they made sense of their worlds and their practice, crafting pedagogies that allowed them to act in ways that were courageous and morally defensible. Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra's stories are not tales of wretched victims, and nor are they triumphant victory narratives. The teachers were expected to prepare their students for standardized tests, attend to their social development and psychological needs, maintain communication with their families, help them adapt to life in America, and carry out their administrative tasks. In addition to these responsibilities, the teachers had taken on the added pressure of being responsive to their students while making their schools and their world a better place. At the front of the teachers' minds were always the best interests of the children they taught.

It was this ethic of caring and responsibility that inspired the teachers to explore the lush spaces between dichotomous competing interests and to break down polarities. One intention of this study was to document the obstacles facing liberatory teachers and their triumphs in the face of such obstacles. What I found was that there was actually a

fertile middle ground between obstacles and triumphs—the teachers were able to identify and develop pedagogies around alternatives to “all” or “nothing,” to “resistance” or “compliance.” Bhabha (1994) writes of hybrid spaces, of the emergence of interstices—the overlap and displacement of dimensions of difference, “usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc. (p.2)”—asking: “How are subjects formed ‘in-between’, or in excess of, the sum of the ‘parts’ of difference (p. 2)” I extend this metaphor to apply to the spaces between not only cultural identities, but between ideologies: for instance conformity and compliance, success and failure, transformation and access, skills and process, English and linguistic Other, obstacles and triumphs, theoretical and practical, femininity and masculinity.

Bhabha writes of liminal spaces, stairwells connecting attics and basements. Liminal spaces are barely imperceptible spaces at the threshold of something exciting. Rather than appearing as narrow and rickety, as Bhabha sees them, these in-between spaces give me the impression, through the lens of this study, of cavernous abysses, and I see the spaces not as foreshadowing something exciting (Bhabha, 1994) but as actually being themselves exciting. Other theorists also direct researchers towards in-between spaces. Lather (2000) suggests that new concepts and understandings can be found in the “cracks,” created by the “loss of mastery of the old concepts” (p. 284). Cixous (1976) connects the breaking down of centrifugal and binary processes with feminist practice: “Woman un-thinks² the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield” (p. 252). Similarly, Pagano (1991) associates the social construction and maintenance of a tendency towards poles with

² Note that the French for “un-think,” *dé-pense*, when spelled without the hyphen (*dépenser*) means “to spend.”

human evolution in an androcentric reality. She suggests that dichotomizing is a gendered way of thinking that results from a traditionally male orientation and a patriarchal history.

However, criticizing oppositional binaries is not enough. Anzaldúa (1987) writes of “borderlands, *la frontera*” noting that in her experience, “borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them* ... a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (p. 25). She, like Bhabha, suggests that borders be conceptualized as “*los intersticios*,” the spaces between the different worlds humans inhabit. Often, what are thought of as sharply delineated lines are actually vague and muddled open spaces, “unnatural boundaries.” Meteorologists will report the exact moment of sunrise and sunset, but can you truly name the instant when day becomes night? Can you put your finger on the point in the sand where the earth ends and the ocean begins? Anzaldúa associates these spaces with the promise of the future. It is not enough to criticize dichotomies, to hold up a megaphone and shout at Western, patriarchal conventions. Rather, the task at hand is to explore alternatives by excavating these *intersticios*: “The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguities.” (p. 101). In terms that poignantly evoke Freire’s notion of “unfinishedness,” she says “there is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being ‘worked’ on.” (p. 38). This study is framed around contradictions, “cracks” and “*intersticios*.”

Why explore the contradictions and cracks? For Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra, an ethic of caring towards their students made the exploration not only relevant, but necessary. To embrace one or the other of the poles that were offered to

them—teaching for liberation and social transformation on one hand, teaching students to conform academically and blend in socially on the other—would do their students a disservice. Their investments represent a departure from the ideals of teaching they had aspired to before they started teaching, from pedagogical representations of teachers swooping through impoverished schools in *deus ex machina* fashion, defying angry bigoted principals, converting the world-weary faculty, and rescuing pitiable immigrant kids from the sorry fate society had dealt them. Jane, Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie had neither prophets' robes nor *machinas*, and they needed to teach in ways that would be supported in their contexts, respectful of their fellow-faculty and administrators, and sustainable over the duration of their careers. In relating teaching challenges, the four teachers spoke often not only of their political commitments, but of their relationships with students, the commitments they felt towards individuals. Noddings (1983) makes a distinction between the Kantian notion of fidelity to abstract principles (such as, in the instance of this study, social transformation) and fidelity to people. Jane's comment at the opening of this work makes me think of Noddings. She recognizes that teaching to standardized tests does not support students' acquisition of the language they need for their everyday lives and even contributes to the maintenance of an inequitable status quo (this dilemma is discussed in detail in Chapter 4), but she simultaneously recognizes that students will be at a disadvantage if they fail the tests. A keen sense of justice inspired her to find a middle ground: "...it's not fair of me to say I'm not going to do it that way. It's not fair to the kids!" She cares about her students and wants them to succeed. Kant believed that in order to be truly ethical, humans need to remain committed to their principles, even if their gut feelings changed in the context of a relationship. Noddings

diverged from Kant, proposing an alternative to his notion of fidelity to principle. She suggested that it is through our commitments to people that we develop an understanding of what it means to be ethical. There were times during the year of the study when I perceived that a blind commitment to large-scale social transformation would have required Jane, Katie, Margaret and Alexandra to be unresponsive to the immediacy of their students' needs, perhaps unethically so. Gilligan (1982), similarly, understands moral, "different voices" to speak a language of care, stressing relationships and responsibilities, rather than rights and rules. She connects morality with responding to others in ways that provide care and are supportive of relationships. It was in the context of this sense of responsibility and caring that Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret began to explore what makes ethical teaching possible and what sustains its practice. So in the framework of relationships and caring, I introduce them to you now. I include information about their lives because I believe that there is much to be learned from knowledge that is contextual and embedded in relational concerns (Belenky et al, 1986), knowledge that reductionist and positivistic orientations to research have neglected by constructing research participants as nothing more than a list of relevant characteristics.

Katie Bach, Margaret Foulkes Chan, Jane Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Deutsch Lau

"I Honor Myself": Alexandra Deutsch Lau

I met the first of the four participants in the summer of 1997, when Alexandra breezed into my office seeking advising in preparation for her M.Ed in TESOL. She was 34 then and 36 when our study began. A white American woman with a quietly self-assured manner, she surprised me with her ability to remain composed while juggling

many duties simultaneously. As I grew to know her better, her immutability remained constant, and to this day she remains arguably the most unflappable person I know.

She was a student in several classes that I taught throughout 1997 and 1998. I attended her wedding in May of 1998 and coordinated her student teaching experience during the fall of that year, conducting periodic observations and guiding biweekly meetings with the other student teachers. She worked exceedingly hard during all of the classroom experiences I shared with her, receiving As consistently and graduating in December of 1998. She was imperturbable in the face of many challenges: single motherhood of a young son with special needs, later a long-distance marriage to a pilot, and eventually care of a newborn daughter, all with a startlingly minimal disruption to her teaching schedule and academic pursuits. She projected an image of composure under the most chaotic of circumstances. The words used most often to describe Alexandra are “calm” and “consistent,” both used by her cooperating teachers during her student teaching, and “*so organized,*” according to a former professor.

Alexandra taught at Robert Fulton Middle School in a linguistically and racially diverse suburb. During the year of the study, her school was composed of 6th to 8th graders and had a total enrolment of 903 students. Ethnically, the county description of the students attending Alexandra’s school was: 3 “American Indian/Alaskan natives”, 141 “Asian/Pacific Islanders”, 375 “African American”, 227 “White (not of Hispanic origin)”, and 157 “Hispanic”. Of these, 37 percent received free or reduced meals, and 57 (or 6.3 percent) were identified as having “limited English proficiency.”

A notable characteristic of Alexandra’s pedagogical discourse and her classroom was a desire to validate her students’ respect for their own histories. The first time I

entered her classroom, at the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, she had her “classroom motto” displayed on posterboard on her wall:

“I honor my family.

I honor my history.

I honor myself.” (Field notes, 09.09)

Throughout the year, her lessons sought personal relevance, a link between the material and the students, and connection to students’ families and cultural histories. She nurtured students’ pride in their heritage and discouraged assimilation. She believed that it was important to draw on students background knowledge, including experiential knowledge: “They have to have some reason to talk, some reason to communicate, a reason to put words together” (05.21). Her classes were characterized by an unusual degree of student autonomy. During some periods, the students actually ran the classes, providing corrections to each other and guiding the interaction themselves. She recounted to me with wry amusement and a touch of pride the school computer technician’s exclamation that she was “the only teacher in the school who lets the kids teach the class.” (05.21)

Alexandra’s life had offered her multicultural resources. For instance, she had spent a year teaching English in Japan, an experience that had inspired reflection about racism and diversity and in particular about the complexities of multiple dimensions of social location, such as gender and national origin. She noted that minority status and marginalization are not synonymous, commenting that even though she was discriminated against in Japan, she “always wake[s] up white” (05.21) in a world that privileges whiteness. Shortly before this study began, she married Tac, a Vietnamese refugee and non-native English speaker. Being married to Tac heightened her awareness

of the perspective shifts associated with national difference: “ I think I got a very different perspective on life from listening to my husband. I got a different perspective on Vietnam than if I listened to Caucasian elders who only know of it from the war experience because he lived on the other side of it.” (05.21). She often connected her students’ ordeals to the experiences of her husband, expressing respect for the hardships that Tac had passed through during his life as a refugee seeking sanctuary and as an immigrant in the United States.

The daughter of educators, Alexandra was born in Texas and was “raised” (05.21) by her father, who was in graduate school until she was approaching school age, while her mother worked as an elementary school teacher. The family then moved to Ottawa, where her father taught on a Native American reserve. Her mother eventually became a special education teacher and is currently politically active in the state teacher’s association. Alexandra lived with her mother and son during her graduate education and her first year-and-a-half of teaching and referred frequently to her mother during her discussions of her educational ideologies. Like her mother, Alexandra was committed to political awareness. I found her unusually knowledgeable about the relationships between local politics and schools, about legislation affecting her students, and about propositions and pending laws. She earned an undergraduate degree in Soviet and East European Studies and then spent several years working in the Resident Life Departments of several small colleges on the east coast, including a “second-chance school, a school that accepted kids who didn’t have the sort of grades you normally need to get into college. That’s where I learned a lot about kids who are different and kids who don’t learn the same way I do.” (Interview, 05.21)

She returned to university and received a master's degree in educational administration. In 1996, she adopted her three-year-old biological nephew, Francis, who was seven at the time of the study. When I asked her: "What attracted you to teaching?" she responded instantly: "Francis. When I got Francis, I began interacting with teachers (who weren't my mother) and really enjoying what they were doing and seeing how they interacted with kids, or being critical of how they didn't interact with my son. And I thought, maybe that's what I want to do." (Interview, 05.21) She also related her decision to a desire for social change, noting that her current position in higher education administration wasn't allowing her to make an impact. I then asked: "And why ESOL?" She said: "It was either ESOL or special ed," citing as reasons that these were high need areas, required teachers to be experts, and provided the opportunity to help other people understand how to teach kids with special needs.

Alexandra's ideas about teaching ESOL pivoted on an acute awareness of difference, from both the perspective of the Other and, self-consciously, of the dominant culture. Her childhood memories include a familiarity with alienation, and she believed that the experience of being different helped her to connect with her ESOL students. In second grade, she would go to school with her hair unbrushed and would be held in at recess while her teacher combed her hair. She described it as "survival, just like it is for me and Francis. You know, 'You're not naked, get on the bus'" (laughing). Like many of her students, she went to school without eating breakfast: "Now that I'm a teacher, I know how important that is." (05.25) She felt set apart from other students by her physicality: "Being overweight made me different." She was teased by other students for her inattentiveness in class. Other factors contributed to her sense of detachment from her

peers, including a first-grade eye injury that kept her home from school for a large part of the school year and later caused her to be held in during recesses. Yet, while her intimacy with feelings of difference was an important influence on her teacher identity, she recognized that as a woman of European heritage, she held a position of social prestige. She sought a redistribution of power through students' exploration of their own identities because "...it is only by doing this that we may be able to fully grasp the plurality of our community and the great dynamic between the roles we all play. Our culture simply depends on the ability to look critically at ourselves and others (for better or worse) because we evolve from that dialogue ... if we do not encourage an understanding of identity and accept the new patterns that students will create, we will subject them to an "American" definition of identity that may or may not suit their reality. " (Webchat, 04.13.1998)

"Trying to Figure Out Where I Belong": Katie Bach

Katie Bach has written her own self-introduction, in which she connects her educational philosophy to her biography:

"As a Korean-American woman adopted by American parents of Irish and German descent, multiethnic/ multicultural issues have always been an important part of my life. My two older sisters were born biologically to my parents, and a year after I came, my parents adopted another Korean child who became my younger sister. The differences in race and ethnicity between my family and my sister Martina and I have always been pointed out. Some were humorous experiences of polite confusion. For example, in school, I had some of the same teachers as my older sisters. They would ask me in a tone of uncertainty, "You're not related to Rachel and Elizabeth Bach, are you?" I would

proudly reply, “Yes, they are my older sisters.” Other experiences were more difficult. In kindergarten I came home crying because another child had made fun of the shape of my eyes, and in middle school, I had been teased using racial slurs. These events gave me first hand experiences of racial and ethnic issues and helps me to understand the difficulties and experiences that many of my students face, even today. I continued my exploration of culture and ethnicity throughout my childhood. When I was in middle and high school, my family hosted several exchange students from Spain, the Netherlands, and Macedonia. I became quite close to my new “sisters,” and learned much about their home cultures and languages. I also became particularly interested in learning Spanish. I loved the flow of the language, and the ability to communicate in another language. I studied Spanish in middle and high school, and visited a friend in Spain one summer where I had to communicate entirely in Spanish. Spanish eventually became one of my majors in college, (biology was the other), and I was able to study more in depth not only the language, but Latin American countries and cultural issues as well. In college, I also studied a semester in Zimbabwe. Like my students today, I had to survive and learn a completely new language, culture, and way of life. It was an incredible experience and helps me empathize with the feelings and frustrations of many of my ESOL students of living in a new culture and learning a new language. All of these experiences initiated a profound interest in language, culture, ethnicity, and identity. (I focused on these issues in my honors thesis in college and have continued to study them in working with the children in my classroom.) These experiences originally prompted me to enter the field of education, and more specifically, in becoming an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)/LEP (Limited English Proficient) teacher. As I wanted to combine culture

and language with teaching children, I volunteered at an elementary ESOL class and went back to graduate school. I earned a Masters in Education degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and began teaching. Since then, I have thoroughly enjoyed my experiences teaching ESOL/LEP students. I am consistently impressed with my students' abilities to not only learn a new language, but to think and learn with the new language as their tool. I also highly respect the experiences and knowledge that they bring from their countries and circumstances of being in the United States. Many of them have overcome numerous obstacles to receive their education and continue to work through other difficulties to succeed.”

Katie Bach had a split assignment between two schools close to each other, both among the wealthiest schools in the county. She spent 80 percent of her time at Seneca Brook Elementary School, and that was where I chose to collect data. Seneca Brook Elementary School had a total enrolment of 317 students, described ethnically by the county as: 0 “American Indian/Alaskan Natives,” 45 “Asian/Pacific Islanders”, 22 “African American”, 209 “White (not of Hispanic origin)” and 41 “Hispanic.” The county considered 28 percent of the students to have “limited English proficiency,” and 13.9 percent were receiving free and reduced meals, significantly lower than the county’s 22.5 percent average.

An energetic, bubbly, and impassioned teacher, Katie sustained my interest in how bifurcated identities, particularly racial identities, shake hands with each other. Living a life steeped deeply in consciousness of the hybrid space (Bhabha, 1994) between ethnicities engendered powerful understandings of what it means to negotiate multiculturalism. Katie kept me connected to the fluidity of identity when my own

framings became rigid: "... identity is never a stationary thing. It changes with our ideas, thoughts, experiences, etc. I'm still in the process of negotiating what my own identity is" and later: "Anyway, I basically am still trying to figure out where I belong. I think my students are also. I am pretty comfortable with who I am and where I'm going, but ask me what my cultural identity is and it changes from situation to situation." She also helped me to understand that while ethnicity does not define a person, it is a fundamental part of identity:

"I still don't see myself as fully American or Korean or maybe even a meld of the two. Perhaps now, I just see myself as "Katie" and am trying to find my identity in who I am rather than what culture I associate with. However, (to contradict myself), I take pride in being "Asian." I didn't really until college and beyond. I am greatly interested in learning and am having fun in learning not only about Korean culture, but other Asian cultures as well."

Katie had been deeply affected by her apprenticeship of observation. She frequently related stories about teachers from her past: an elementary teacher whose class she observed during the first semester of her master's degree; a dedicated Asian-American professor who helped Katie to develop understandings of the social realities of ESOL students' lives and supported her exploration of identity development, and a Latina professor from her undergrad who supported her honors thesis on a group of biracial Mexican-Americans who identified themselves as *los pacucos*.

“A Blossoming Peach Tree”: Margaret Foulkes Chan

I think the purpose of schooling is to cultivate yourself so that you want to be with yourself so that you serve yourself and your community. Not only for others, but so that you can serve yourself. Schooling ideally should help you to clear your mind. I guess that’s why I think the spiritual side is important. Everything you’re learning or planning to do should also be guided, you should be aware of your intentions and the effects of your speeches and your actions and whatever you do.” (Webchat, 05.30)

Like Freire (1987), Margaret believed that reading the world precedes reading the word, and she sought to strengthen for her students the connections between text and context. Her intent is not simply to teach letters and words, the learners must also be skillful and intrepid in their explorations of the American world surrounding them and their discovery of its strange words. She wrote:

“I ask my students to look for art, clarity, purpose, kindness and vitality in themselves. Together we learn that the knowing of any subject matter should lead us to a knowing of how to be in this world. I celebrate digressions and yet hope, ultimately, to help my students distill themselves, recognize their essences.” (03.10)

And the part of her students’ world that Margaret inhabits is designed to be aesthetically pleasing, peaceful and comfortable, a place that surrounds them with calm and beauty and learning and lore. In her large, sunny classroom, an area with mats and a paper easel provides a place for reading morning messages and for storytelling and sharing. Towards the center of the room, small student desks are grouped together to form a single large

desk that students sit around. The far side of the classroom is a “Writer’s Corner,” including a small library. Everything is labelled: light, desk, chalk, pencils. A tidy word wall (or is it a word-world wall?) creatively fashioned from posterboard and yarn flanks a wall. Students’ names pop out: Ameera, Keoni, Brandon, Tabari alongside stone, zebra, soup. The students are present among the objects in their world. Near the windows, an area is set aside for computer use. On the opposite wall is a sign: *Flower of the Week: Mum* and underneath the sign, on the teacher’s desk, a vase of mauve and lemon chrysanthemums. There are always fresh flowers in this classroom. Margaret once sent me a poem written by Emily Dickinson:

“By Chivalries as tiny,
A Blossom or a Book,
The seeds of smiles are planted-
Which blossom in the dark.”

Chivalries. I would never have thought of a blossom or a book as a chivalry, but there is an air of courtesy and thoughtfulness surrounding the colored petals and leaves of books that Margaret scatters around her. They are intended to bring life and color and three-dimensionality to her teaching.

“Everyone is a writer,” she once remarked. “Everyone has something to share. Everyone has an experience that resonates with the experience of another human.” Margaret herself is a writer, and she encourages her small students to express themselves in writing.

Indeed, writing was the emancipation of child-Margaret: “Before I could write, I was very often a silent child, but being given pen, paper and the skills to use them allowed me to talk, *really* talk.” (Webchat, 02.05)

Beyond pen and paper and even lexical items, Margaret seeks to provide meaning and a social environment in which students can develop their understandings of the world around them:

“And I can give a student so beautiful a concept and word as ‘tintinnabulation’ (the sound of ringing bells) and this notion will always be in her heart. And I can give solace and support and perhaps a path, other ways of thought, to a student, and this will be meaningful. In Chinese, teachers are compared to blossoming peach trees ... the individual blooms their students.” (Webchat, 02.19.98)

Philosophical Margaret grew up in the county that she, Alexandra, and Katie taught in during the study. She in fact attended the elementary school that Alexandra taught at during her first semester. While she described her neighborhood as “homogenous ethnically, mostly caucasian,” (Margaret, Dinner, 05.30) many of her neighbors had international experience, which had been “enriching” for her. This, coupled with her father’s busy international travel schedule, evinced in Margaret an interest in travelling herself when she grew older. She studied history at a college in the American midwest, noting that: “I probably should have done English literature, but I loved my history professors, and I guess I felt that studying history, I could bring in anything.” (Margaret, Dinner, 05.30).

Margaret’s school, Pewter Brook Elementary School, had a total enrollment of 489 students, whom the county identified as: 2 “American Indian/Alaskan Natives,” 29 “Asian/Pacific Islanders,” 171 “African Americans,” 223 White (not of Hispanic origin),” and 64 “Hispanic.” Of these, 46 students (or 9.1 percent) were labeled “limited

English proficient,” and 30.9 percent received free or reduced meals, a higher percentage than the county average of 22.5 percent.

Before she started her master’s degree, she lived in China for two years teaching English. During the study she was in the process of exploring Buddhist philosophy. She married an engineer from Hong Kong who teaches Tai Chi. Her experience of migration allows her to connect with her students’ lives in this strange land. She shares her stories with them. As the coordinator of her student teaching experience the year before the study, I had the opportunity to observe her as she taught a lesson built around a poem she had written. She was required to teach 25 new vocabulary items that period. She introduced them in the context of this poem:

Far from My World
It is morning.
I have stepped off the plane into a Chinese park.
My mother’s house is far away.
Here, the air smells of fried scallion cakes
But when I close my eyes,
I smell my grandmother’s sweet lemon tart.
Nearby, a kind-eyed man holds his brother’s hand.
The two approach me,
Pointing to the front page of their newspaper,
Asking me questions
I do not understand, and squint my eyes at the letters.
This is not my language.
In my mind are beautiful English words, words easy to spell:
Daffodil, gingerbread, butterfly,
Here, I study and study Chinese words, words like pictures.
How should I walk through this new world, this new language?
Now, it is night and the picture changes again.
I am in my Chinese neighborhood.
Even the animals here are different.
Bats fly high and low over children playing in the street.
I wonder how I can learn to be in China,
This place that is not my home.
I have found deep beauty and kindness here,
But my heart is still in my homeland, in America.
In which country are the answers I am looking for?

(Lesson Plan, 04.27.1999)

Margaret is calm. Her calmness is a characteristic that is often foregrounded when people describe her. The year before she started teaching at Pewter Brook Elementary School, her cooperating teacher at the elementary level described her as: “calm, caring, kind, respectful, and artistic.” Her secondary-level cooperating teacher wrote that Margaret was: “a calm in the storm,” “a quiet and loving teacher” who “makes students feel special.”

The seminar paper she wrote for her master’s degree focused on her development of what she termed a *pedagogy of compassion*. She believes that children need a special kind of care, sometimes a nontraditional kind of care. She was affected by the work of Nel Noddings (1984), who suggests that our educational experiences should be undergirded by an ethic of caring and responsibility that develops from interconnectedness with others.

“But Then Again, Teachers Have Lives!”: Jane Fitzpatrick

Jane worked in James County, a different county from Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie, who all worked in neighboring Bennett County. Demographically, James County differed significantly from Bennett County. In James County, more than 86 percent of the students were ethnic minorities, while the majority of Bennett County’s student population was white. Students in James County were also poorer, with 39.2 percent receiving free or reduced meals, as opposed to 22.5 percent in Bennett County.

Jane’s presence in the study was muted for several reasons, many of which are relevant to the story this study tells. During her busy first year of teaching, Jane worked as a waitress at night. Salaries in James County were significantly lower than in Bennett

County, and Jane's salary was the lowest of the four teachers. She was also busy planning her wedding long-distance. She commented: "I don't know if my first year would have been easier if I didn't have so much going on in my life," and then added, astutely: "But then again, teachers have lives!" (Jane, 05.07). She was present at fewer afternoon teas than the other teachers, missing more gatherings than she was able to attend. We chatted less frequently by phone and on e-mail than I did with the other three teachers. Katie, Margaret, and Alexandra had internet connections in their classrooms and an e-mail account provided by their county's public school system, and while they were occupied (even overwhelmed) with their teaching responsibilities during the day, they had electronic access that Jane did not. Furthermore, I conducted fewer school interviews with Jane, partly because, in her overcrowded school, her classroom was used by another teacher during her planning period. We were therefore not able to talk in a relaxed yet private environment to the same extent as I was in the other three schools of the study. Yet, Jane was an important voice in the study, contributing perceptive insights and warm support, so I include her to the extent that I can. Because teaching is undervalued financially as well as socially, millions of teachers in this country supplement their salaries with second jobs at night and on weekends. This leaves them less space for reflection, for planning, for professional development, and for building supportive communities of colleagues. It also leaves them less time to participate in time-consuming research studies and to therefore be reflected in the body of research on teaching.

Jane taught at George Washington High School, a large school with a total enrolment of 2,100 students, of whom 136 or 6.5 percent were identified by the county as having limited English proficiency (LEP). The school population was composed of 1

“American Indian or Alaskan Native,” 67 “Asian/Pacific Islanders,” 1,480 “African Americans,” 138 “White (not Hispanic),” and 414 “Hispanic.”

Jane was energetic, commonsensical, and skilled in steering her way through what would otherwise have been a frenzied and muddled year. She combined an effervescent and light-hearted classroom demeanor with a sense of taking her job and her students seriously. She was analytical about what she needed to do to be successful. She worked in a school with a large ESOL department and therefore had many ESOL colleagues. One in particular, Penelope, was a supportive mentor, helping her to understand which rules should be followed and which broken, what administrative tasks were most urgent, and how to develop satisfying relationships with her students and their parents. She was particularly knowledgeable about her students’ home lives, often making reference to their family situations or biographies.

Despite the large community of ESOL professionals surrounding her, she defined her teaching practice as “isolated,” probably because of the autonomous nature of her classes. She did not view this isolation in exclusively negative terms. She commented at the end of the study:

“In some ways, working in isolation can be bad and in some ways—poor Margaret—I would look at her and think, oh God, I don’t have any of that pressure. In some ways, I never felt pressure from my department head or my principal or some of the other people breathing down my neck ... again, isolation can be very bad because you don’t have feedback, but on bad days when you clearly know they’re not getting it ... there’s no one making me defend.” (Jane, 05.07).

(The isolation of teaching is discussed in detail in Chapter 8). As a high school teacher, one of Jane's greatest challenges was negotiating the maze of standardized tests which, it seemed, guided her instruction to a greater extent than the other three teachers. She was frustrated by the tests, noting that they were poor measures of what they purported to assess and did not help her students learn language. However, they were necessary in order for students to graduate.

Jane was born and raised in Bennett County. She had become interested in working with children when she moved in with her sister and brother-in-law to help them care for her niece. Her interest in teaching ESOL was stimulated by her fiancé's mother, who herself was an ESOL teacher. She had spent 5 weeks in Spain and defined herself as primarily monolingual. Jane keenly felt an invisible norm of whiteness and Americanness in her social identity and deplored what she experienced as cultural neutrality. A year before she started teaching, she commented on her sense of an absence of culture in her life:

I know even for myself, I have always longed to feel culture more strongly. I was always jealous of those with an accent, or those who had living relatives they could visit in other countries, or those who without blinking an eye could define "what are you." I have chosen to define myself as Irish, but I don't feel strongly connected to that as I've seen many of the ESOL kids strongly connected to their heritage. (Webchat, 04.23)

The four teachers' life histories and positionalities differed from each others' on many levels, however they share many similarities—they form a cohort in their

commitment to social justice and ethic of caring; three grew up in Bennett County; three are white and native-English speaking and the fourth, Katie, grew up in a white native English-speaking family; and they have similar socio-cultural locations. They also shared similar challenges and experiences during their first years of teaching.

Historical Context of Teaching Immigrant Children in the United States

In order to understand the sense that Jane, Margaret, Katie, and Alexandra made of their practice, it is necessary to consider the historical context that they and other language teachers in the United States practice within. From immigrant education to Americanization studies to ESOL and multicultural education, educators have been aware that immigrant children had distinctive needs for almost as long as there have been immigrant children in America. There has, however, been little consensus about how to teach children who are crossing cultural borders. Current understandings of teaching linguistic minority children are complex and contradictory. Over the years, the institution of schooling within the U.S. has occasionally sought to recognize the value of multilingualism and multiculturalism but has, paradoxically, worked at the same time to anglicize and Americanize its young students.

A cursory glance over the past two centuries of literature that relates to the teaching of immigrant children shows the process of negotiating culture usually viewed in terms of a meeting or even collision between two whole, static entities. In this study, I move away from that image, seeking instead to delve into the hybrid space (Bhabha, 1994) or *fronteras* (Anzaldúa, 1999) in which amorphous and indefinable cultures coexist.

Prior to the 1880s, most immigrants were white and from Western European countries with somewhat homogenous political, economic, and social practices, primarily the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands. After 1880, however, the majority came from the Russian Empire, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and the Balkans (Hartmann, 1948). A larger proportion of these “new immigrants” spoke a first language other than English, and the cultural boundaries between recent and established immigrants were less porous. Initial attempts to specifically address the educational needs of immigrant children began to gain prominence at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Investigations into “school failure” that spun a deficit construction of immigrant children began to proliferate in the first decade of last century (Wade, 1903; Richman, 1904). For instance, in 1913, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Education held a conference on *Education of the Immigrant*, at which the Superintendent of schools for New York City described the immigrant children in the city’s schools as “defective,” “diseased,” and “illiterate” concluding that: “the very first essential step is to prevent the immigration of any child who has not the normal powers of a child or is affected by disease.” (Maxwell, 1913, p. 19).

In 1916, the Bureau of Naturalization of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had established classes in English and citizenship, but America’s participation in World War I slowed the expansion of this effort (Atzmon, 1958). The National Origins Act of 1924 legalized INS discrimination on the basis of national origin and heightened anti-immigrant sentiment. However, in the decade that followed, the notion of cultural pluralism, in which independent cultures co-exist side by side, gained popularity (Atzmon, 1958). World War II and the isolationist policies that followed it

affected immigration policies and social sentiments, resulting in an emphasis on a “melting pot” orientation to schooling immigrant children. There is, however, evidence of a rise in interest in “intergroup education” and in the early versions of ethnic studies during the 1940s and 1950s (Banks, 1995), both of which have deeply influenced the development of current day multicultural education.

The 1957 launch of the Russian satellite, *Sputnik*, led to the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which provided for, *inter alia*, foreign language education and ESOL. The civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s influenced multicultural education initially by inspiring renewed interest in (1) ethnic studies, particularly African-American studies, (2) multicultural education, and (3) multiethnic education, an offshoot of ethnic studies that sought to bring about systemic changes in the school system in the interests of equality (Banks, 1995).

The most significant recent legislative document for language minority children was *Lau vs. Nichols*, a 1974 Supreme Court decision that ruled:

“The failure of San Francisco school system to provide English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak English, or to provide them with other adequate instructional procedures, denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational program and thus violates 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based on “on the grounds of race, color, or national origin,” in “any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance,” and the implementing regulations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.” (pp. 565-569)

This ruling acknowledged that identical education does not constitute equal education and firmly places the onus on the shoulders of the school districts to take affirmative steps to overcome educational barriers faced by non-English speakers.

The ESOL Curriculum Guide from the following year for James County, the county that study partner Jane Fitzpatrick taught in, opens with a fairly disparaging representation of ESOL students, defining an ESOL student as: "... any non-English speaking student whose command of English is insufficient for them to function adequately in the classroom," (p. 1) later going on to explain that: "In addition to their linguistic needs, ESOL students face many problems in adjusting to a new culture." Despite its negative overtones, the document does acknowledge the role of home cultures and languages:

"We do not encourage the learning of English and American culture with the intention of abandoning the foreign students' own language and culture. Ideally, they should become bi-lingual and bi-cultural." (p. 1)

Since then numerous studies have indicated quite clearly that supplementing a child's first language while she is acquiring the second language leads to greater proficiency in both languages (Wong-Fillmore, 1983). Despite lip service to the value of bilingualism in many educational arenas, an increasing number of initiatives and propositions to discourage multilingual students' connections to their first languages have proliferated lately. In particular, California residents voted in 1998 to essentially outlaw bilingual education and allow their young bilingual students only one year of ESOL services before they are forced to "sink or swim," in a direct violation of Lau vs. Nichols. A similar proposal, Proposition 203 was passed in Arizona in 2000. English-Only and

English First propositions seeking to restrict “foreign” language use, most notably to outlaw government employees (including teachers) from speaking in a language other than English while on the job, have passed in 23 states.

Current meanings of teaching language minority children continue to be multilayered and conflicting. Within the context of an institutional history that has, on one hand, frequently viewed immigrant children from a deficit perspective and focused on eradicating first cultures and languages but has, simultaneously, created spaces to recognize the value of multilingualism and the resources that immigrants bring, Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra developed their craft. They worked to build pedagogies that allowed them to nurture their children’s senses of self. They supported their young students’ struggles to figure out what it means to be an immigrant becoming American and to reconcile the acquisition of English with their relationship with their first languages in a world in which English dominates.

Gender

The fact that the four teachers were all women was relevant to this study in several ways. It affected the ways in which certain constructs came to be understood, for instance rapport, relationship, authority, and voice. It affected our interactions with each other at the afternoon teas. The teachers themselves commented at the end of the school year that the tenor of the afternoon teas would have been completely different if a man had been present: “I don’t think I would have been as comfortable.” (Alexandra, 05.07)

I expected that this dissertation would include a chapter focusing on gender in some form. Indeed, I wrote several drafts of that chapter. However, while gender is visible throughout, and sometimes I name it as such, I eventually chose not to label it

specifically because everything is gendered. The themes and incidents that I tried to accumulate into one chapter cut across all and refused to be forced into one restricted space. I took this to be a good thing. Treating issues of gender as separate contributes to the construction of female as non-normative, as Other. When gender is made separate, it runs the danger of becoming marginalized.

Theorizing Identity

“The move away from singularities of ‘class’ or ‘gender’ as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions—of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation—that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of a society itself.

It is in the emergence of interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 1-2)

The concept of identity was the bedrock of this study. Understanding identity construction was a pivotal piece of understanding the processes of becoming an ESOL teacher and the practice of teaching ESOL students. The notion of identity therefore warrants momentary pause and discussion. In this section I will briefly theorize identity in relation to several key themes that became important in this study: authenticity, relationship, agency and subjectivity, image, and Otherness.

What constitutes identity? Who determines who a person is? Is there an authentic Self in each person, waiting to be uncovered? Are humans created by their relationships?

By their experiences? Is identity biologically influenced? Predetermined? What degree of consciousness is applied to the construction of identity? Theories about the nature and development of identities abound and will be delved into here in order to provide a framework on which to develop our understandings of becoming teachers and teaching ESOL.

Weber (2001) sees identity in terms of social categories: “At the individual level, race, class, gender, and sexuality are fundamental sources of identity formation for all of us: how we see ourselves and who we think we are” (p. 97). Indeed, when I think about identity, it is most frequently in terms of these basic social categories listed by Weber. Social categories are a cornerstone in Tajfel’s (1978) understandings of self. The theorist believes that identity is derived from group membership. He suggests that it is human nature to categorize and claims that by placing oneself and others into groups, and then assessing the various groups in ways that cast one’s own group positively, humans attain a sense of prestige. Tajfel’s analysis, while helpful in developing a framework that highlights a human proclivity toward classifying, is inadequate for our purposes because it minimizes the role of power and ignores the possibility of multiple group membership, both of which were fundamental to the understandings of identity offered by the present study. Categories were also important for Thesen (1997), but she conceptualized them in more nebulous terms. She saw identity not within rigid categories but in the interactional space surrounding them. She defines identity as: “the dynamic social interaction between the fixed identity categories that are applied to social groupings (such as race, gender, ethnicity, language, and other, more subtle representations that are activated in certain discourse settings) and the way individuals think of themselves as they move through the

different discourses in which these categories are salient.” (p. 488). Like Weber, Tajfel, and Thesen, Norton (1997) offers a definition of identity that is overwhelmingly relational. Norton, however, does not assign categorization the same degree of importance but rather focuses on relationship: “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 1997, p. 410). For Norton, there is no identity in isolation. Who a person is stems from her relationship to others and her position in the world.

A question then naturally follows: what part of who we are comes from within, and what part is socially mediated? Like many other psychologists, Wetherell (2003) believes that all identity is rooted in the *id*, the part of the human personality which, according to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, contains the basic, primitive instincts of the body and is oblivious to the external world. According to Wetherell, the *id* is mediated and altered discursively but contains the essence of identity. This viewpoint stands in stark contrast to that of many scholars (Deleuze, 1968; Fairclough, 1992; Pennycook, 1996; Kress, 1989; Foucault, 1981; Lather, 1991) who examine the construction of identity through discourse in social interaction. Bridging both of these perspectives, Alice Walker eloquently combines the inner being and the outer world to depict identity as “...an internal flower expressed externally.”

Authenticity

The notion of an authentic self, a real self, is one that is deeply embedded in the American social fabric. The classic children’s story *The Velveteen Rabbit* embraces the idea that everybody has a real self that can come into being only when they are loved.

When sleep deprivation makes me cranky, I say: “I’m not myself,” as though I have a different, more genuine identity that is simply concealed at that (this) moment. I recently saw a movie about domestic violence in which a battered wife, squinting through a black eye, declared: “This isn’t who I am really. I’m not a woman whose husband hits her.” These conceptualizations of identity all depict the process of identity formation as a quest for a essential self that exists somewhere out there but is simply hidden or missing at this particular moment. The current study, conversely, is grounded in an understanding of identity that repudiates this notion of a static, inherent, authentic self. The assumption of a real self raises ontological implications that parallel the assumption of an absolute Truth. A belief in a single true self restricts and limits the notion of multiplicity of identities and the possibility of fragmented, continually constructed and reconstructed identities. Alexandra, in fact valued the freedom and flexibility afforded to her by “differentiated identities”:

I also often think that my identity is differentiated in that I am a teacher, a mother, a woman, a housekeeper, a landscaper, and non-church goer. My identity is fragile or "complete" (to my satisfaction) depending on what role my being is engaged in. (Alexandra, E-mail, 05.03)

Alexandra’s embracing of her various roles is reminiscent of Lorde’s (1984) notion of “different ingredients”:

“As a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful

whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of myself. But this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live. My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves.” (Lorde, 1984, p. 120-121)

For Katie, recognition of the dynamic nature of identity construction was an essential part of teaching immigrant and bicultural students:

I also think that this must be accomplished by guiding the students to think for themselves, to see ALL cultural options as positive and fluid, and "identity" itself as a constantly changing, evolving "entity" (for lack of a better word). (Katie, E-mail, 04.25)

Both of these teachers complicated ideas about identity by acknowledging the possibility of change and contradiction. This is not to say that identities are capricious or unanchored to a person's character or experiences, but rather that:

“Identities are marked by the multiplicity of subject positions that constitute the subject. Hence identity is neither fixed nor singular; rather it is a constantly changing relational multiplicity. But during the course of this flux identities do assume specific patterns, as in a kaleidoscope, against particular sets of personal, social, and historical circumstances. (Brah, 1996, p. 123)

Relationship

The contextual nature of identity development was important in this study and echoed social understandings of identity that have prevailed in recent literature. For instance, Norton's relational framing of identity resonated with McKay and Wong's (1996), which promoted a "contextualist perspective" highlighting the formation of students' identities in relationship with each other and their worlds. In Hunter's (1997) study, fourth-grader Roberto negotiated multiple competing discourses and investments, variously seeking to match identities legitimated by his teacher, his classmates, the dominant school culture, and his home-oriented life. Looking at Roberto's life, Hunter describes identity "as creative of and created by responses to social forces." (p. 604). For Lave and Wenger (1991), identities can exist only in relation to their social communities. The authors emphasize the development of human minds in social situations, and the relationship between the production of knowledgeable identities and the production of communities of practice. Fanon (1968), in fact, inextricably coupled acknowledgement by others with existence itself. He believed that: "Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, the other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by the other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is the other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed." (p. 216-217)

For Fanon, as for *The Velveteen Rabbit* author Margery Williams, we exist only with recognition by another. While Fanon is conscious of the influence of racial power on recognition and reality, hooks (2002) highlights the role of gender within our male-

centered world, characterizing females as: “[s]chooled to believe that we find ourselves in relation with others ... For as females in patriarchal culture, we cannot determine our self-worth. Our value, our worth, and whether or not we can be loved are always determined by someone else.” (p. xv)

An essential element of identity in poststructuralist terms is difference. Derrida (1976) sees identity as a transient and unstable effect of difference, meaning that as relationships of socially specific difference change, so identity will change. My own understanding of identity embraces connectedness to others. Much of ‘who one is’ is modulated according to ‘with whom one is in relation’ currently. I am different when in relation with, for instance, a group of prospective employers across an interview table, my best friend after she’s been on a bad date, my baby daughter in the middle of the night, a telemarketer who has caught me when I’m pressed for time. All of these people might experience me quite differently, might describe me in widely different words. The same phoneme uttered by different people is not the same phoneme, says de Saussure (1969). Similarly, an individual’s identity will not be experienced as identical by any two other people or groups of people, which attests to the fluidity of the construct.

Agency and Subjectivity

Neither the notion of an authentic, pure, and legitimate self waiting to be discovered in every human nor the idea of a self shaped passively by the social environment leave room for agency or subjectivity in the active construction of identity. Every decision, word, and action not only reveals identity but actually produces it. Identity is shaped as it is lived. I turn first to a writer who has been enlightening in helping me to understand the relationship, Margaret Foulkes Chan, who wrote:

Perhaps "identity" (a marriage of what we are and what we choose to be) can be likened to "path" or "way" in the world, and therefore a work of both discovery and creation. I believe in fate and self-determination both. And so I am Foulkes, but also Chan; Scots Presbyterian/Gypsy, but Buddhist. Sometimes I wonder if there is any falseness in creating parts of myself. Could any part of me be Chinese? Is it not "academic" to believe in past lives and their influences? I wonder to what degree I shape myself as a reflection of and in contrast to the ways of my family.

And how much is in my control?

And wherein lie the causes, the effects?

(Margaret, Webchat, 05.02)

Margaret brought together the notions of authentic self and agency, suggesting that identity be conceptualized as a "marriage" of both. This understanding of identity as a blend of discovery and creation, rather than as one or the other, creates space for students and teachers to be shaped by their environments while at the same time taking an active role in constituting themselves. While Margaret believed in destiny, she also conceptualized herself as choosing who she is, creating parts of herself and then wondering if they bear falseness.

Closely related to the concept of agency is the authority to define oneself. Indeed Weber's (2001) interpretation of identity as "how we see ourselves and who we think we are" (p. 97) begs questions about the relationship between 'who we think we are' and 'who we are' and the about who has the authority to determine whether the two are synonymous. Like Margaret, Alexandra was protective of her students' agency in identity

construction. When I made reference to “her constructions of her students’ identities” (Suhanthie, E-mail, 05.02), she was quick to correct me, decentering her own interpretations in order to endorse the subjectivities of her students:

“I guess I would say that they are my "mis-constructions" or "mal-constructions" of my student's identities. It is awkward to say that I construct their identities because it is only my perception and misperception of their identities. What we have to do is encourage our students to express their true identities as they develop and grow into their own understanding of self and relationship to the world around them. I need to listen and observe with different ears and eyes. (Alexandra, E-Mail, 05.02)

The passage reveals a representation of identity that makes space for both authenticity (“their true identities”) and agency, evidenced in her disavowal of her own understandings of students’ identities in favor of privileging her students’ constructions and articulations of their own identities as they develop. Alexandra was similarly attentive to the relational aspect of identity construction:

As for identity, I think we are also "formed" or "malformed" by the expectations of those around us. I don't think that identity is devoid of choice, but there is so much involved. I think that identity is wrapped up in what we imagine, dream, experience and avoid experiencing. It is what we learn through trial and error as much as what we read and learn in formal ways. (Alexandra, E-mail, 05.03)

For Alexandra, agency in the process of identity construction happens under the influence of others, relationally. She connects identity to future vision and to experience. The connection between identity and the future echoes Bonny Norton's work on "imagined communities." Norton (2002) posits that humans build identities that are not only connected to others they are in interaction with, but also in relation to the community they imagine themselves belonging to in the future.

The importance of agency in identity construction becomes visible when teachers negotiate the line between providing guidance to their students and abusing their teacher power by bulldozing them towards a certain identity or identification. Katie walked this line when she sought to discourage a student's denial of his ethnic heritage:

There is tension between my desire to respect my students' power to construct their own cultural identities and my desire for them to experience a sense of pride in their native culture. However, I think that tension can be negotiated. In order for children/students to fully understand, develop, and establish their identities, I think that they should know at least where their families come from and the culture they were born or raised into." (Katie, E-mail, 04.25)

Katie's concern about allowing students the freedom to determine their own relationships with their heritages rang familiar. It echoed a thought she had written on a class webchat a year earlier:

Our job is not to "make" the child express her heritage, but to create the space for it and encourage her to take part. If she doesn't feel comfortable, she doesn't. That is something she will have to work it out on her own. We

as teachers should be there as a support and resource and create a "safe" multicultural environment. (Katie, Webchat, 04.27)

Long before she entered the classroom, Katie was solidifying a philosophy that privileged her students' autonomy and power in their self-identification. For this teacher, encouraging pride in her students' cultural heritage presented the danger of toe-treading on their agency to define their Selves, although she perceived this challenge to be surmountable.

Identity and Image

The distinction between identity and image is blurred. If identity is "who I am," then image is "who I present to others." James Baldwin (1972) likened identity to nakedness and image to robes, emphasizing the importance of being sensitive to the line between the two:

Identity would seem to be the garment with which one covers the nakedness of the self: in which case, it is best that the garment be loose, a little like the robes of the desert, through which one's nakedness can always be felt, and, sometimes, discerned. This trust in one's nakedness is all that gives one the power to change one's robes.

Baldwin sees changing images, or robes, to be related to identities and suggests that "one's nakedness" should always be discernable. The image a person presents publicly must find its root in some part of that person, her context, and her experiences. The teachers in this study and their students had occasion to construct images in response to the demands of their social contexts, sometimes focusing to a great extent on the images they presented. However, the mere fact that they consciously chose images they did not

condone does not mean that these images were disembodied from their identities. Identities and images are complicated in that they are not smooth, complementary, or coherent. In fact, contradiction, incoherence, and multi-layered meanings may better name the constructs of identity and image. Identity and image should not be conceived as divorced from each other. As images are constructed and presented, they become part of a person's identity and cannot be considered as a detached fabrication. The terrain between image and identity is theorized in greater detail in Chapter 8.

Otherness

Much of identity is defined in relation to a loudly silent norm: white, male, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle-class. To the degree that individuals deviate from the norm, they are Other. The relationship between norm and Other is invariably hierarchical, with the perceived norm topping the hierarchy and the Other falling lower on the totem pole. However, the polar positioning of norm and Other are themselves reproductive of the categories. Mohanty (1991) suggests a deconstruction of the dominant as "...the implicit referent, i.e., the yardstick by which to encode and represent cultural Others" (p. 55) as part of the quest to complicate the existing binary between norm and Other. The construction of Otherness presumes distinct, tidily delineated categories:

"Identity ... supposes that a clear dividing line can be made between I and not-I, he and she; between depth and surface, or vertical and horizontal identity; between us here and them over there. (Minh-ha, 1990, p. 371).

That dividing line is, of course, intangible and even somewhat quixotic. We all belong to multiple groups and may therefore be simultaneously in dominant and subordinate groups. For instance, I am at the same time of color and able-bodied. Furthermore, the

status of those groups is not consistently powerful. While women are an oppressed group in general social terms, sometimes I might be attributed greater credibility (perhaps erroneously) when I speak about sexism because I am female. Talking about norms and Others is a complex endeavor. It is important that we acknowledge the commonalities that are grounded in shared experience, but discussing these shared experiences without universalizing poses a perpetual challenge.

Conclusion

I separate the story that follows into three parts: meanings of teaching language, meanings of students' positionalities and identities, and meanings of becoming ESOL teachers. In Part I, I introduce the meanings that Jane, Margaret, Alexandra, and Katie make of teaching language. I describe some of the tenets that became important as the teachers defined themselves in relation to their work, such as sustenance of student voice, accuracy of form, discursive constructions of student identity, and language variation hierarchies. Part I also includes an in-depth examination of the role of grammar in language teaching, which was useful in helping me to understand meanings of autonomy, authority, social power, and knowledge. Part II is about how the four teachers grappled with their roles in the shaping of their students' identities and positionalities. In it, I seek to broaden the category of linguistic difference and to provide a richer account of other dimensions of difference, such as race, national identity, and gender differences, by including their role in a dimension that has traditionally been neglected, that is language minority status. Part III looks to the role that the teachers were playing in the discursive construction of their professional identities, examining the space between their practices

and their positionings, between their images and their identities, and between their contexts and their lives.

These three parts represent the strands within which I understood the teacher's experiences. They are not cohesive, in fact you may sometimes perceive them, as you read, to be jarringly disconnected. However, my intention was not to represent a perfect world in which I caulk in gaps and sand over bumps. The work that follows is not intended to capture an entire reality, but rather my representation, and it is shaped by my understandings of what it means to know, which in turn have been shaped by the time I have spent with Alexandra, Katie, Jane, and Margaret. I have come to understand the process of knowing to be fragmented and changeable and always on the verge of changing again. It was therefore more meaningful for me to represent the fragments of the story in the way that I saw them rather than seeking to create the appearance of a cohesiveness that was not evident to me. Knowing and identity are closely related. Like knowing, human identities are fragmented and sometimes contradictory. I therefore did not seek to create cohesion out of the teachers' and my own multiple identities, but rather I foregrounded the slices that were helpful to this discussion.

Ideology and Style

In terms of ideology and style, I tried to avoid a heavy reliance on the passive voice, recognizing that its frequent usage in academic language contributes to the illusion of an absolute and objective representation of knowledge, obscuring the role the researcher plays in interpreting findings. For instance, claiming that "these themes emerged" rather than "I saw these themes emerging" speciously implies that these are themes that would have been visible to any researcher. I use the first person throughout

this work (for instance: “I will discuss these ideas next” rather than “These ideas will be discussed next”) because I believe that the historical reluctance to use the first person in academic writing has served to construct the deceptive appearance of detachment and consequently of objectivity.

When I use the terms “ESOL pedagogy” and “language pedagogy,” I include more than merely the transmission of information about functional language use and grammar. I seek to broaden constructs of ESOL pedagogy by extending understandings of this term to include the making of meanings, identities, and ideologies within language. This means that I am interested in all ESOL classroom interactions, and not only those that revolve explicitly around language instruction in its narrowest sense. For this reason, while it could be argued that many of the events that I describe may have transpired just as readily in a math classroom, a music classroom, or a social studies classroom, what makes them relevant to this discussion is not a connection to a limited and technical understanding of language learning as simply transmittal of grammar and vocabulary; rather they are relevant because they occurred in the rich and corporeal context of an ESOL classroom. All language learning involves learning about identity, power, and knowledge.

Chapter 2. Methodology

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Shall be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T.S. Eliot*

Critical Feminist Ethnography

Eliot's (1942) musings about exploration and familiar terrain bring to my mind the parallels between ethnographic research and exploration. As I set out on this voyage, I embraced Oran's (1998) conceptualization of qualitative researchers as having no maps, just the tools necessary for making a map while journeying. I positioned myself to be flexible and allowed myself to deviate from paths if I found them unhelpful in the exploration of the terrain I was interested in.

At the end of my exploring, looking backwards at the map that I have drawn, I name the processes that have guided me: I present this work as a critical feminist ethnography. I believe that the integration of feminist methods, critical research, and ethnography offers rich possibilities for generating knowledge and understanding. My intent is to challenge and broaden current understandings of what it means to do critical work, feminist work, and ethnographic work by exploring the interstices (Bhabha, 1994) among the three. This study is ethnographic in that it is "a qualitative research process

and product whose aim is cultural interpretation” (p. 5., Graue, in press). My exploration was guided by a research question deeply embedded in the context of cultural interpretation: “What are meanings of knowledge, pedagogy, and identity in the context of becoming a language teacher?” However, my methods depart from traditional ethnography in many ways. I have been troubled throughout the study by methodological questions that related to power, representation, and relationship in ethnography. My misgivings stem primarily from dissatisfaction with the ways in which ethnography has historically positioned researchers in relation to participants, described by Behar (1996) in this way: “Somehow, out of [the] legacy, born of European colonial impulse to know others in order to lambast them, better manage them, or exalt them, anthropologists have made an intellectual cornucopia.” (p. 4). In a world in which the researched has traditionally been a cultural Other, preserving a strongly delineated boundary between researcher and researched serves to reproduce the power imbalance between the two. In traditional ethnography, the researcher is positioned as a consumer of participants’ experiences, using them for her own purposes.

I moved away from traditional ethnography in several ways. Most notably, during my data analysis, I made methodological decisions designed to foreground transcriptions of regular afternoon tea gatherings in my home over all other data sources, including observations and field notes. This practice stands in direct contradiction to guidelines offered by several leading theorists in research methodology. For instance, Spradley (1980) suggests that ethnography should rely primarily on observational field notes. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) believe that ethnographic research strategies are “empirical and naturalistic. Participant and nonparticipant observation are used to acquire

firsthand, sensory accounts of phenomena as they occur in real-world settings, and investigators take care to avoid purposeful manipulation of variables in the study” (p. 3). I moved some distance away from these guidelines; the afternoon teas were situated in my home rather than in a setting that occurred naturally and independently of me, and my presence and input influenced the course of the study. I will discuss my role in the study in relation to the construct of neutrality later in this chapter.

My understandings were guided by a number of feminist and critical researchers, including Behar (1996), Fine (1992), Wong (forthcoming), Reinharz, 1992, and Britzman (1991). My deviations from traditional ethnographic methods included the following. I used constant comparative methodology, coding and identifying important themes within the afternoon tea data, and then introducing the data from other sources only in relation to the themes that emerged from the afternoon tea data, which I believe to be more closely connected to the voices of the participants, the power of community, the epistemological intent of research as praxis, and the changing nature of my research questions. I will discuss the methodological implications of afternoon teas for this study in greater detail later in this chapter. I have chosen to move away from traditional ethnographic guidelines because I believe that ethnography’s historical commitment to observational methods of data collection has actually sustained ethnographers’ tendency to embrace unrealistic (and often undesirable) ideals of neutrality and to obscure the political nature of all research, particularly cultural research. In relying on observation field notes, which are the interpretation of the researcher, ethnographers venerate an ideal of naturalism that is misleading and convince themselves that it is possible to make a neutral record of what is going on. I sought an approach that differed from this stance, agreeing with Roman and

Apple's (1990) charge that "naturalistic ethnography constitutes an extension rather than a break from positivism"(p.48). Reinharz (1992) has understood ethnography to include "long periods of researcher participation in the life of the interviewee" (p. 18), but I did not focus on walking alongside participants in order to observe and record their lives. Rather, I favored methodology in which participants related and recounted their lives to me through their own lens.

Feminist Ethnography

*"When a subject is controversial—and any question about sex is that—one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold."
(Woolf, 1929, p. 4, quoted in Gilligan, 1987)*

Although I read *A Room of One's Own* in my younger years, it was only more recently and through Carol Gilligan that Woolf's words became richly meaningful to me. Gilligan used this quote to connect feminist thought with ontology. I embrace the idea that no research presents a single, limited, Truth. Instead, I seek to provide liberal contextual information to show how I developed my understandings of the people and terrain I was exploring. Neither educational scholars nor feminists agree about what it means to do feminist research, and I find the absence of an absolute definition a comfortable space to work in. I will not attempt to contribute or suggest a prescriptive definition, heeding Reinharz's (1992) counsel: "Instead of orthodoxy, feminist research practices must be recognized as a plurality" (p. 4). In this section, I will explore how I came to understand the meanings of feminist research methods in the context of this study.

Reinharz links methodology to identity, suggesting that that feminist research is research conducted by feminists or those who consider themselves to be part of “the women’s movement.” For me, this means, for example, that I have an interest in challenging oppressive practices, advocating for social justice, representing participants ethically, and embracing the constructs of relationship and connectedness. Villenas (2000) draws our attention to Behar’s (1995) discussion of breasts in anthropology in order to highlight the tensions facing women ethnographers studying other women. Behar noted metaphorically that bare breasts usually belong to Other women, women being observed, women under that objectifying tool of power, the gaze (Sartre, 1957), while the breasts of female anthropologists remain concealed. She comments that in hiding their breasts from view, female anthropologists can come to believe that their breasts are not important, and they can be seduced into embracing constructs that are more typically associated with masculinity (for example, detachment, objectivity, and power-neutrality), thus reinforcing invisible norm of maleness. I wanted to heed Cixous’ (1976) caution to all women who write about other women: “...don’t denigrate woman, don’t make of her what men have made of you.” (p. 252). Particularly in the context of a history of “teacher-bashing” research (McLaren, 2000) conducted by academicians on women teachers, it became important that I represent Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret’s practice in a way that was respectful of them and simultaneously genuine.

The contributions of feminist theorists helped me to think about how transformative research is related to participant relationship and voice. Michelle Fine (1992) describes three possible stances that researchers can take: ventriloquy, voice, and activism. I think of *ventriloquy* as the most traditional form, in it the researcher-author

pursues objectivity at its purest, claiming to be invisible, neutral, and objective. Fine tells us that ventriloquy "...can be found in all research narratives in which researchers' privileges and interests are camouflaged" (p. 214). A ventriloquist researcher would present herself as having no political agenda or underlying ideology. This claim is problematic because all researchers have beliefs and leanings about their research, and even the most objectively projected statistical study is making a political statement in support of a quest for objectivity and an absolute Truth. In Fine's ventriloquy, "The author tells Truth, has no gender, race, class, or stance. A condition of truth-telling is anonymity" (p. 214).

Her second category, *voices*, is more troubling for me because I find myself easily seduced by the idea that I can benevolently create a place for the silenced voices (and therefore knowledge) of beginning ESOL teachers. Fine cautions us that this stance is "a subtler form of ventriloquism" and that in adopting it, while "appear[ing] to let the 'Other' speak, just under the covers of those marginal, if now 'liberated' voices, we hide" (p. 215). I chose to privilege one data source over all others, the afternoon teas, because it was the data source that I believed to be closest to the teachers' voices. In doing so, I find myself flirting with the lines that bound the category that Fine names "voices". When I select interview excerpts or snippets from field notes and edit them, what I choose to include or exclude is integrally linked to my research intent and my identity. To present the voices of the four teachers as untouched by my own ideas and leanings would be prevarication. My challenge, then, is to organize the representations of the teachers so that I achieve a degree of candor in locating myself as a researcher in relation to them.

The afternoon teas, in particular, have both supported and complicated my attempts to strip ventriloquism from study partners' voices.

The researcher stance that I seek to embrace is Fine's third category, *activism*, referred to in her later work (1994) as activist feminist research. Activism "seeks to unearth, disrupt, and transform existing ideological and/or institutional arrangements" (p. 220). Whether or not the researcher chooses to share her stance, all research is positioned in relation to existing institutional arrangements, even research that claims to be neutral. Some researchers seek to reinforce institutional power, and others, including activist researchers, seek change and disruption. However, a desire for change in itself does not define an activist researcher. Rather, activist researchers are characterized by their acceptance of the "deep responsibility to assess critically and continually our own, as well as informants', changing opinions" (p. 41). Two elements are important in this abstraction, one being the insertion of the researcher's opinions into the study and the other being the value of change over time. To see ourselves and participants as evolving beings, and not merely convenient snapshots, liberates us from a static conceptualization of learning and becoming. Throughout the study I make reference to my changing conceptualization of my research and to the study partners' evolving pedagogies and identities. My intention in foregrounding these changes is not to represent the teachers or myself as inconsistent, but rather to highlight what I perceive as our development.

Critical Ethnography

The researcher role and relationship with participants are less straightforward in critical ethnography than traditional ethnography, and indeed the definition of "critical ethnography" is nebulous in nature. Few efforts have been made to develop a

methodology for critical ethnography, and those only relatively recently in terms of anthropological history (Carsprecken, 1996; Thomas, 1993).

I extend Reinharz' connection between researcher identity and feminist methodology to apply to critical ethnography. To me, prescribing a critical method is a paradoxical and even ironic project because the imposition of a prevailing definition subscribed to by the majority silences marginal perspectives and contributions. For me, the critical nature of a study is primarily an identity issue—this work is critical because I am the one conducting it, and I am motivated by issues that relate to how power circulates socially. I am concerned with racism, the oppression of language minority students, the assimilationist orientation of immigrant children's schooling, sexism, the marginalization of ESOL teachers within schooling, linguicism, and the disempowerment of beginning teachers. Scholars who have associated critical ethnography with concerns about power and oppression include Thomas (1983), who defined critical ethnography as "conventional ethnography with a critical purpose," going on to explain that critical ethnography ought to apply: "a subversive world view to the conventional logic of cultural inquiry." For Trueba (1999), critical ethnography stresses the notion that all education is intrinsically political, and that consequently critical ethnography must advocate for the oppressed. Carspecken (1996), too, is concerned with oppression, telling us that critical ethnographers: "... have both witnessed and directly experienced forms of oppression. We do not like them. We want to change them. Much of our research attempts to clarify how and where oppression works" (p. 7). For Dippo and Simon (1982), the project of critical ethnography challenges us to address the question: "How does one provide the details of concrete social relations in a manner which renders them

familiar and sensible yet simultaneously calls their take-for-granted character into question?” (p. 4).

However, this work departs from some traditions of critical ethnography. In particular, Trueba and Bartolome (2000) charge critical ethnographers with advocating for the oppressed by accelerating both their *conscientization* (Freire, 1970) and that of their oppressors. I disagree with the unidirectional implication of this intent. While I brought my own conceptual frames to the study, I was not in a better position to accelerate my study partners’ *conscientization* than they were mine. Indeed, they effectively supported the development of my own *conscientization* through both their familiarity with the study terrain and their positioning, ability, and willingness to analyze the nature of their own oppression within their contexts. In turning a critical eye to the systems of oppression in their own worlds, Jane, Katie, Alexandra, Margaret, and I supported each other’s evolving understandings of our marginalization and socialization as ESOL professionals, as female teachers, and as beginning educators. I believe that, as women of color, Katie and I sustained each other’s consciousness of how race and gender interact within our lives as second language educators. Assuming that a researcher is in a position to accelerate a participants’ *conscientization* runs the danger of reinforcing a researcher-researched hierarchy by assuming that the researcher is more knowledgeable and even more enlightened than participants.

My work also represents a departure from the teachings of Carspecken (1996), who wrote specifically about critical ethnography and offers a step-by-step guide for conducting critical qualitative research. Carspecken emphasized the importance of methodological rigor and attention to validity. What he defines as attention to validity—

he provides as examples multiple recording devices, multiple observers, and reduced Hawthorne effects—was absent in my study. I don't see these as overlooked but rather just not valuable in helping me to answer the questions I was asking. I was a poster child for Hawthorne effects. I am certain that my participation in the afternoon teas swayed the flow of the conversation, that my questions were at times leading, and that my relationship with study partners affected the identities they constructed while speaking with me.

I use the term critical ethnography as distinguished from naturalistic ethnography to separate it from the neutrality-seeking tendencies of the latter, in which the researcher purports to observe a culture without altering it by her presence. The quest for objectivity in naturalistic inquiry is a by-product of more traditional forms of research and in fact reinforces and perpetuates the connections between ethnography and positivism (Roman and Apple, 1990). This is not to say that I threw caution to the wind. Rather, I acknowledge that by merely walking into a classroom I changed its climate. By turning on a tape-recorder or taking notes, I affected teachers' actions. By asking certain questions, I led teachers to think differently. This did not prevent me from walking into a classroom, taking field notes, turning on a tape-recorder, asking a thought-provoking question. Rather, my challenge was to be mindful of my actions and their consequences and straightforward and transparent in my accounts of events. For instance, in the conversation I described in the Introduction (page 26), my assertion that “the master's tools will never destroy the master's house” held the potential to sway Katie away from her contention that dominant norms can be appropriated and redirected to support self-empowerment. Throughout this dissertation, I make a point of including my words or

actions when their consequences (or potential consequences) are visible, as they were in this instance. In decentering the observational data but nonetheless situating this study in ethnographic terrain, I hope to challenge and extend definitions of ethnography and of critical ethnography by encouraging methodological experimentation that creates space for participant voice and authorship.

As I was preparing my dissertation proposal, I mentioned to a faculty member my desire to see Alexandra, Jane, Katie and Margaret succeed professionally. The professor encouraged me to step back and reconsider my position in order to determine which role was most important to me: activist or voyeur. I was troubled then by the inherent assumption that the two are mutually exclusive because it seemed to extend to a battle between values and neutrality (Apple, 1996), a friction that I considered unnecessary. Few of my actions and decisions do *not* have a value orientation, I thought, and I would venture that the same could be said for most researchers. The assumption that reifying neutrality improves research is unsubstantiated, but the issue continues to rear its rather intimidating head in the lives of researchers fresh to the profession, like me—and even to veteran researchers. Throughout the course of the study, I found myself frequently in the position of deciding between roles: researcher or mentor, researcher or activist, researcher or friend. I’ve attempted to document these tensions throughout my account of the study.

Knowledge Construction in Research

At the heart of the researcher-researched dichotomy lies the relationship between knowledge and power. Research is the quest for knowledge, and the conceptualization of the researcher-researched relationship in any study helps to frame what counts as

knowledge, what knowledge is of most worth, and who gets to decide. The methodological intent of this study was to hear and understand teachers' voices and to explore teacher knowledge embedded in practice. I sought not only to present my meanings of Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret's lives, but to explore how they thought about their lives and the lives they lived alongside. This goal took me on a complicated journey, one that called into question my ideas about the relationships among data, theory, and self; the possibilities of emancipatory research; representation and voice; objectivity and objectification; power; humanity and the nature of being human; praxis; connection and community; context and situatedness; validity; agency; and the politics of telling other people's stories.

Research Questions

As I explored the space occupied by teacher knowledge in the literature, I found it to be obscured from view, hidden away in a dusty and barely accessible, poky basement room. I knew that I wanted to develop study methods that did not ignore that basement room. To this end, I pursued a dialogic, reflective approach in which my study partners and I interacted to generate knowledge and understanding together. I did not want this study to focus on how I wished Jane, Margaret, Katie, and Alexandra would teach, but rather I wanted to explore how the knowledge they constructed from their experiences could inform current understandings of learning and teaching.

I situated this study within the complex work of research as praxis, that is research situated at the complicated crossroads of theory and practice, informed by and embedded in life, action, and practice (Freire, 1970; Lather, 1991). In doing so I faced the task of developing research questions that helped me to find a space for my openness in

inquiry within the inherent partiality of my emancipatory orientation. My biases and leanings were unmistakably present, but I needed to find a way to ensure that I continually acknowledged them without allowing them to become an orthodoxy. In order to be truly exploratory, I needed to probe the connections between theory and data without viewing them either consciously or unwittingly in the conventionally sanctioned order of first theory (in the form of a research hypothesis), followed by (and supported by or refuted by) data, as is standard process in positivistic orientations. This task was complicated because I had specific ideas about how schools support social injustices and was invested in seeing traditional models of teaching transformed, and I needed to be sure that these preconceived notions of how schools should change did not serve silently as an unwritten research hypothesis. In situating myself in relation to the study, I pursued a fine balance between intrusive heavy-handedness and neutral invisibility: I did not want to frame this study as a hierarchical and even elitist intervention in which I, as a researcher, purported to know what Jane, Margaret, Katie, and Alexandra needed to do to teach well. Nor did I seek to witness my study partners' experiences and appropriate them for my own purposes as a detached and analytical observer. I faced the challenge, then, of asking questions that positioned me to neither direct nor exploit.

Wong's (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997) extensive work on critical dialogic approaches to teaching, researching, and learning was influential in the framing of the research questions. Wong (1994)'s critical dialogic approaches draw from theoretical sources as diverse as Socrates and Confucius, Paolo Freire and Mao Zedong, Lev Vygotsky, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Wong's work led me to Socrates' model of maieutic inquiry, in which wisdom is the humble assumption of one's own ignorance. Maieutic inquiry diverges

from hierarchical understandings of the researcher role that have come to be accepted within most Western academia. Historically in the United States, researchers created knowledge in experimental settings and provided their findings to administrators, who used the information to influence and even control teachers' classroom instruction. The institutional dichotomy between research and teaching is made all the more disturbing when viewed in terms of the inequitable relationship that men and women have to power as it relates to knowledge within educational institutions, with researchers being traditionally male, while teachers even today are predominantly female. Critical dialogic approaches serve to challenge the teacher-researcher power structure stubbornly enduring despite more recent recognition of its shortcomings (Gitlin, 1991; Fine, 1992; Lather, 1991; Wong, forthcoming; Motha, 2002) by listening to the teachers as experienced, knowledgeable practitioners. Absent the hierarchy, the possibility arises for inquiry that is truly dialogic, in which learning is a two-way street.

Wong's approaches underpin the framing of my research questions. Rather than defining desirable practice a priori and asking whether beginning teachers achieve it (as would be expected in a study in which theory and data are viewed in traditional sequential relation), I ask questions about the meanings the study partners make of the process of becoming teachers. In this study therefore, theory does not lead, but is produced within. Wexler (1982) has criticized the dichotomy between empirical research and emancipatory pedagogy, but Lather (1991) notes the absence of strategies to integrate the two. Methodologically, this study seeks to address that gap. My research questions therefore needed to capture my intent in a manner that was careful and thoughtful. I asked:

What are meanings of knowledge, pedagogy, and identity in the context of becoming a language teacher?

My three subquestions were:

1. What meanings of teaching language are crafted by beginning ESOL teachers?
2. How do first-year ESOL teachers come to understand and attend to students' identities?
3. What is the nature of the teachers' emerging identities?

My research questions have evolved considerably. The question in my proposal was: "What kind of pedagogy do first-year ESOL teachers craft as they attend to the cultural lives of their children?" I abandoned the last clause as redundant with the realization that everything that teachers do, whether by omission or by design, attends to the cultural lives of their students. This is particularly true of language teachers because language and culture cannot be understood separately from each other. I then turned my attention to the other peg of the question: pedagogical matters. Over the course of the year of data collection, I began to perceive the project of first-year teaching as less about learning to teach language and more about becoming a language teacher. This distinction, while subtle, is important because the revised wording represents a shift in focus from *pedagogy* to *identity* and more specifically from the identity of pedagogy to the pedagogy of identity. This study was not so much about how the teachers taught as about how they were becoming language teachers. Pedagogy and identity are, of course, interrelated, and the teachers' pedagogical lives were integrally linked to who they became as teachers. However, as my relationships with the teachers deepened, the piece I chose to foreground

shifted from *what they did* to *whom they became* and shifted the practical focus from classroom observations to contexts that included the teachers' voices in community.

Study Partner Selection

Alexandra, Jane, Katie, and Margaret were recent graduates of the M.Ed in TESOL program at a large, Research I, land-grant institution in the Mid-Atlantic. I chose to work with four teachers because fewer than four would have reduced the richness of variation among study partners and would have limited opportunities for comparing individual threads such as biography and context. Studying more than four would have required a sacrifice in depth.

I selected study partners who would represent a range of meanings in order to develop a deep understanding of identity formation and in particular, of the process of becoming a language teacher. A random sample would have been desirable only if I had been seeking population validity and intended to generalize claims to anyone beyond the teachers I selected. More useful to my goals was purposeful sampling, in which study partners are selected because they are appropriate for the purposes of the study (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Of the program graduates that year, nine students took full-time positions in the local public schools. I selected four of these whom I believed had particular strengths in "attending to the cultural lives of students," by which I meant the following (at the time that I selected study partners): they had indicated that they valued cultural diversity, were interested in maintaining children's connections to their home cultures, were invested in students' explorations of their own cultural biographies, and considered social identity development to be inherent to ESOL learning. The four teachers I invited agreed to participate. Choosing study partners whose philosophies

approximated my own created both limitations and benefits. It limited the range of perspectives that I had access to, but at the same time it helped to minimize the ideological difference between the teachers and me. Other graduates that year were similarly oriented, but in order to provide the most resonant picture of beginning teaching, I sought both commonalities and differences among study partners. The particular combination of Alexandra, Jane, Katie, and Margaret represented a nice range of grade-levels (Katie and Margaret taught elementary school, Alexandra middle, and Jane high school); of experience (Jane and Margaret were in their first semester of teaching, Katie and Alexandra in their second); and of counties (Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie worked in the county that is the largest employer of our graduates, while Jane worked in a county with fewer resources and in which the majority of the population was of color). All four teachers had lived in a non-English speaking country, as was typical of graduates of the program. Katie was the only graduate of color that year, and eight of the nine graduates were women.

Data Collection

This was a year-long study in order to allow me to explore deeply and to capture variation across time. I recognized that I could not tell an entire story. Rather, I sought various lenses that would allow me to view some of the many parts of the process of becoming an ESOL teacher. Each data source offered a different perspective.

- Afternoon tea transcripts (every 2 to 3 weeks). I had initially planned the study to revolve around classroom observations supported by interviews. The afternoon teas were the very definition of serendipity. They were not even a thought in my

research proposal, but by the end of the study I considered them by far my most significant source, with the other sources existing only to support this one.

- For each teacher, approximately 2 hours every two weeks of classroom observation from October to December, then approximately 2 hours every 3 or 4 weeks from January to March, observing for example teacher actions, patterns of communication, classroom discourse, student participation, and physical environment.
- Informal, unstructured interviews (dialogues) before the school year began, after school ended, and periodically over the course of the year. These were situated in the lives of the teachers and therefore took place in the context of teachers' day-to-day work.
- Informal, unstructured, unscheduled interviews with students in the classes, other teachers and faculty, administrators, principals, etc.
- Materials, curricula, lesson plans, school documents, textbooks, students' work.
- E-Mails exchanged between study partners and myself.
- Phone conversations between study partners and myself.

Although these were not gathered for the purposes of this study, I refer sometimes to historical events and documents: the teachers' master's-level seminar papers, student teaching evaluations, papers, e-mails, and electronic discussions that took place in the context of our relationship before the study began.

The Afternoon Teas

Because the afternoon teas were important not only in supporting the five of us as a community and in supporting the teachers' practice, but also from a methodological

perspective, I pause to discuss them here. This study was initially designed as a collection of four cases. I intended to explore the experiences of four individual beginning ESOL teachers during their first year of teaching, following the portraits with cross-case analysis (Yin, 1984). Drawing from the traditions of critical ethnography, I anticipated that the primary data sources would be observations and interviews. However, as the study began to unfold, an unanticipated element surfaced, the element of *community*. The teachers indicated an interest in meeting with each other regularly in an effort to build an academic and support network for themselves. First Alexandra, then Katie expressed a desire to spend time with their peers, and the suggestion was later supported by Margaret and Jane. They were seeking support from each other out of personal need, but in doing so they were claiming a space within the study.

Imagining something reminiscent of the kitchen table conversations of the early feminist movement, I offered my home, which was a geographical midpoint among the four schools. And so began the afternoon teas, which we held usually every two or three weeks throughout the 1999-2000 school year. The five of us would sit on my family room floor, clustered around the coffee table, drinking strong tea and munching cucumber sandwiches, scones, and Sri Lankan mas paan. We gathered together in the afternoon after the last school bell rang, sometimes rushing off to prepare lessons or put children to bed, more often talking late into the night. By the second semester of the study, the afternoon teas had grown into dinners, although we always drank tea as we chatted.

The afternoon teas transformed the study. I was no longer exploring four cases of individual teachers but rather was now studying one group of four teachers, a community

of teachers who came together and developed their meanings of teaching in a socioculturally fertile context. As I became increasingly appreciative of the constructs supported by the afternoon teas, such as connection, legitimation of participant voice, community, and the sociocultural nature of identity construction, I simultaneously began to see the numerous shortcomings of observations and field notes, which had initially formed the methodological backbone of the study, and of one-on-one interviews, which lacked the richness of community. On many occasions, I sat in teachers' classrooms and recorded what I believed I was observing, only to learn with greater probing during a lunch break that my interpretations were inconsistent with the teacher's because I had missed the confrontation in the previous day's class, I didn't understand the history with the student involved, I hadn't been privy to a hurried and whispered conversation in the staff room that morning, or I didn't know about the phone conversation between the teacher and a parent the previous week. The value of a humanizing (Freire, 1998) contextualization became apparent to me as the classroom observations began to appear to be disconnected from the teachers' voices and constructions of meanings. I began to revisit my questions about what I was hoping to learn in the study.

At the same time, my understandings of classroom practice were changing (I talk in detail about my changing understandings of practice in Chapter 8). As I conducted classroom observations, I became increasingly aware of just how much teachers' realities and discourses are structured by the complex worlds they inhabit beyond the classroom, and how limited classroom observations are in connecting to those worlds. The conception of practice as confined to classroom walls began to appear superficial and

even naïve, and the limits of classroom observations as a data source became more evident. I turned my attention to the afternoon teas.

Data Analysis

In response to Harding's call to rectify the androcentrism of research (1987) and Reinharz's (1992) suggestion that a feminist perspective on data analysis includes flexibility and creativity in format, I took steps designed to accentuate the qualities that I believed were well represented by the afternoon tea data, including study partner voice and power and a respect for the researcher-study partner connection. I made modifications to commonly used qualitative research methods. I used constant comparative methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as is popular in qualitative data analysis, coding all data by hand as a matter of personal preference. I started with line-by-line analysis because it is likely to be most generative (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). However, I took a step that was designed to privilege the afternoon tea transcriptions. I first coded the data from the afternoon teas only. I then introduced other data only in relation to the themes that emerged from the afternoon tea data. This step was intended to establish the centrality of the teachers' voices. I considered the afternoon tea data to form the basis of the study and have tried to avoid presenting observational data without overlaying the lens of the teacher's perspective.

The decision to privilege the afternoon tea data came about for multiple reasons and had several outcomes. I will explain my decision in the context of five threads:

1. My desire to support the legitimacy of participant voice;
2. My changing understandings of meanings of practice;
3. The proximity that the afternoon teas gave me to praxis;

4. My increasing respect for the methodological and psychological power of “community” as it evolved in the context of the afternoon teas; and
5. The changing nature of my research question.

I will discuss each of these in detail next.

Participant Voice and Representation

As I worked with my various transcriptions and field notes, it became apparent to me that different data sources afforded me different perspectives, and that the different sources were unequally related to knowledge and to power. I found myself becoming increasingly uncomfortable with and unable to escape the objectifying nature of observations and field notes, and I began to realize that a pivotal site for the teachers’ construction of meanings was their voices, rather than my record of observations. The afternoon teas in particular allowed me intimacy with study partners’ voices.

Observations are informative and very real in a positivistic sense, but they’re experienced through the eyes of the observer or researcher. I believe that there was something about the afternoon teas that helped me to disrupt the researcher-researched hierarchy by creating a distinctive space especially for teachers’ voices and in this way increasing the degree of authorship and authority in how their teaching was interpreted. In order to be positioned to tell about their teaching lives, they had to actually take themselves through a reflective process and make deliberate choices about how to present the events they described. Privileging the afternoon tea transcripts over other sources of data meant that the teachers chose which stories to tell and were active in the construction and (re)presentation of their professional identities. It was the teachers’ interpretations undergirding this study. I was therefore working not only with my interpretations of what

the teachers did, but with the teachers' own retellings of what they did. For me, the afternoon teas were a marvelous educational research tool because they allowed teachers to be the authors of their own experiences, a departure from a format in which researchers wrote teachers' lives.

At the same time, privileging the data from afternoon teas brought to the surface complicated questions about "accuracy", which I initially perceived to present a challenge to validity. My concerns began to surface during the very first afternoon tea. Throughout the year, there were times when I would sit in a classroom or at a parent-teacher conference and observe an incident, then listen to it recounted at the next afternoon tea. Teachers' retellings were not always consistent with my field notes. Sometimes these inconsistencies were minor, as in the time that a teacher remembered a name as "Andrew," although I had recorded it as "Anthony." At other times the differences were more significant. At first I was concerned, that little positivistic voice in my mind kept asking: "What of the incidents I hear about but do not observe? Are they valid data? What if the teacher remembered incorrectly? Misheard?" That voice will never move out of my head, and in many ways it serves me well, keeping me questioning and reflecting on many of the cornerstones of qualitative research, but it is a voice that privileges my interpretation of events over that of study partners, and hence legitimates the historically embedded power imbalance between the researched and the researcher.

Triangulation has been suggested as a way of increasing validity in qualitative research (Wolcott, 1990). In this study, triangulation would have been quite possible. I could have compared the stories told by the four teachers with my own observations, the interviews with the teachers, and interviews with students and other teachers. However,

triangulation serves our purposes only when we are seeking certain forms of knowledge, usually those that are considered to be more objective and less connected to individual, personal experience. Throughout the year, it served me to repeatedly revisit the question: What is the purpose of my research? I was less interested in whether study partners told the Truth and more concerned with how they made meaning of their classroom events. I was not interested in other people's interpretations of the study partners' experiences.

I would argue that shifting my emphasis from observations to afternoon teas helped me to better capture what I was trying to understand, that is the meanings that the study partners made of their experiences. Because all of the stories told at the afternoon teas represented study partners' meaning-making, they were all valid, and were consequently all connected to 'truth' (Motha, 2002).

Changing Understandings of Meanings of Practice

As the study began, my focus was on meanings of teaching, and I imagined that much of the teachers' discussions about their first year of work would revolve around what went on within their classroom walls. However, in the context of the afternoon teas, it soon became apparent to me that the teachers' practice was not constructed only by what they did in the classroom, it was about *how they thought about* what they did. The teachers were active in making meaning of their practice in many different contexts: in their classrooms; in their discussions with other adults—that is faculty, administrators, other teachers, and parents; at the afternoon teas with each other; at home with their partners; and at social gatherings with colleagues and also friends who were not teaching professionals. For instance, Katie linked her ideas about social groupings within schools to a discussion with her ultimate frisbee team members (Afternoon tea, 11.15). Margaret

told us about how she developed her ideas about language acquisition with her father at a family dinner (Afternoon tea, 06.19). As I became increasingly aware of the limitations of a definition of practice as confined to classroom walls, I began to see the inadequacies of a data source that was similarly confined to classroom walls, such as observations and field notes.

Proximity to Praxis

A central benefit of the afternoon teas was that they offered a fertile site for studying the praxis of beginning teaching, that is the space where theory and practice intertwined. Beginning teaching is a fascinating area because historically, in traditionally framed teacher education programs, it was the meeting place of theoretical knowledge amassed in academic institutions and the practical world of classroom teaching. Exploring the first year of teaching as a study site can therefore allow us an in-depth view into the meanings that teachers make of theory, practice, and the supposed area in between the two (it is difficult, and perhaps not even useful, to disentangle theory and practice). The afternoon teas permitted me greater intimacy with this terrain between knowledge and action because they became a site that nurtured the teachers' critical reflection on their practice, which Freire (1998) identifies as crucial to praxis: "Critical reflection on practice is a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice. Otherwise, theory becomes simply 'blah, blah, blah,' and practice, pure activism" (p. 30)

Community and Relationship

“All knowledge is constructed and the knower is an intimate part of the known.”

(Belenky et al., 1996, p.137)

The afternoon teas allowed me to be intimate with participants’ voices, but then again so did the interviews. A further ingredient that made the afternoon teas such a rich data source was the element of community, which helped to move my exploration beyond understandings of individual identity in isolation to the richness and complexity of how identities construct each other. Although I was also present and a participant at the afternoon teas, each teacher was engaging not with just one researcher, but with four other educators. In terms of representation, the presence and validation of multiple voices in community helped me to experiment with degrees of authorship and authority in voice. Community became important, not only emotionally but also methodologically, because power is integrally related to intimacy and relationship.

Relationship came to be a dominant theme in this study’s methodological framework. Mari Matsuda (1993) notes that group identity, like individual identity, has nebulous beginnings: “its potential exists long before consciousness catches up with it. It is often only upon backward reflection that some kind of beginning is acknowledged” (p. 3). Our group identity had its genesis several years earlier, in the summer of 1997, when I met the first of the study partners, Alexandra, when she wandered into my office in search of advising. I met Katie that fall when she and Alexandra enrolled in a research methods class I co-taught, and Jane and Margaret the semester after that. The study partners were similarly closely connected to each other when I began my study in the fall

of 1999. Each teacher had taken at least two classes with each of the others. Each had been in at least one class that I co-taught. I was familiar with their teaching, having served as coordinator of all four teachers' student teaching experiences, conducting observations, meeting with cooperating teachers, meeting with the teachers every two weeks, and exchanging dialogue journals. I was also familiar with the research of Alexandra, Katie, and Margaret, having supported their master's theses. We had developed friendships before the study began, socialized out of school, faced professional doubts together. We had attended each others' weddings and met each others' families.

My history and intimacy with Jane, Katie, Margaret, and Alexandra affected the way I structured the study and the methodological choices and changes I made throughout. Because I was in relation with the four women, I cared about their teaching practice and their personal lives, about how I represented them, and about what they thought of me and my work. As I wrote and rewrote their stories, I struggled incessantly with the daunting challenge of telling their stories in a way that had integrity. I recognized that there was no one single and absolute Truth to be told and that my truth would be only a rendering, but this knowledge did not absolve me of the responsibility of telling stories in a way that was candid and compatible with my truth and yet did not represent them negatively. I wanted to tell stories in a way that didn't exploit or break faith with them. My dilemma centered around the question: "How do women make other women the subjects of their gaze without objectifying them and ultimately betraying them?" (Behar, 1996, p. 28). Now, as I tie together the final threads of this work, I recognize that I haven't answered this question, nor am I satisfied with my representations of Jane, Katie, Margaret, and Alexandra. However, I share my processes

and offer my thoughts in order to extend the exploration of subjective research that does not objectify.

I set out to study a world I was already in and women I was already in relation with, and I was therefore not neutral to the four teachers. As the coordinator of their practica, I feel that I have journeyed with the study partners through more than merely theoretical or practical challenges. Laughter and tears have profound effects on research. On one hand, my history with study partners may make me less open to the negative in their experiences, but in this case I believe that the advantages of personal connection outweigh the drawbacks. I am guided by Noddings' (1983) ethic of caring. She writes of replacing the Kantian notion of fidelity to principle with a fidelity and responsibility to people, to individuals. I cannot claim to be objective or neutral to the study partners because we are connected. Connection has been given a bad rap. Gilligan (1982) suggests that connection, traditionally viewed as a pollutant in research, actually furthers our humanness by stimulating our recognition of responsibility for each other. She deplores situations in which: "the interconnections of the web are dissolved by the hierarchical ordering of relationships, when nets are portrayed as dangerous entrapments, impeding flight rather than protecting against fall" (p. 49). In a complex, context-dependent study, connection can also help us to paint a richer landscape.

The question of how much a researcher may be affected by her own personal reactions to her study is one that has been argued throughout history, but more hotly in recent decades. The supposition that objectivity is desirable is predicated upon the existence of both an absolute Truth and a path that leads if not directly to it, at least within a stone's throw of it. The form of knowledge pursued in this study was neither

detached nor objective. Rather, I sought meaning jointly constructed by the study partners and me, and now with you, the reader. The dynamic between objectivity and subjectivity has been conceived as a balance with a finite degree of give: If you add to objectivity, it must be subtracting from subjectivity. Harding (1987) has suggested that the converse is in fact true. She called for a rethinking of objectivity and encouraged researchers to make explicit their subjectivity and leanings because “introducing this ‘subjective’ element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the ‘objectivism’ which hides this kind of evidence from the public” (p. 14). An alternative to the positivistic reification of objectivity is Haraway’s (1991) concept of situated knowledge, which casts all knowledge as partial and situated within context rather than abstractly objective.

Changing Nature of Research Question

As my research question changed, so did my assessment of which data sources I considered valuable. My original research question asked about pedagogy: “What kind of pedagogy do beginning ESOL teachers craft as they attend to the cultural lives of their children?” The question underplayed the significance of identity in the teachers’ lives, and as time passed, identity became increasingly central to uncovering meanings of teachers’ experiences because the focus shifted from learning to teach language to becoming a language teacher. As I foregrounded *who the teachers became* over *what they did*, I turned my attention from observations to the afternoon teas.

Complexities in Privileging the Afternoon Teas

The decision to privilege the afternoon tea data resulted in some sacrifices. For instance in forgoing my focus on an in-depth analysis of classroom life, I also relinquished the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers' realities are linked to their classrooms. This is not to say that I saw events within classroom walls as unimportant—on the contrary, I believe that teaching practice should be studied further. However, the decision to look beyond the classroom afforded me a deeper exploration of issues of identity, brought me closer to the teachers and their voices, and allowed me later on to make methodological decisions nourished by connectedness and relation, both of which were cornerstones of the study's framing.

However, regardless of the steps I took to disrupt the traditional structures of power in educational research, and regardless of what I hope is an elevated presence of the teachers' voices in what follows, I urge the reader to be mindful of the context of this study: this is my interpretation of what I saw. I wrote it sitting alone at my computer. Spivak (1990) says that: "We cannot but narrate, but when a narrative is constructed, something is left out" (p.18-19). Even when you read a teacher's words quoted directly, remember that I chose when to include teachers' voices and also when to exclude them. This is not a collaborative work (Giroux, 1988; for an example see Lin, Grant, Kubota, Motha, Tinker-Sacks, Vandrick, and Wong, 2004); nor educative research (Gitlin, 1990); nor action research (Brown and Jones, 2001). I do not claim to present the teachers' perspectives. This work can be viewed only as my adulterated and personal version of reality. This is not reality, just the temporary account that I've managed to stretch and trim over this particular textual surface at this particular moment.

Power

Alexandra, Jane, Katie and Margaret participated in the study voluntarily and knew they could withdraw at any time. Nonetheless, like all researchers (those who admit it and those who don't), I was positioned within a complicated power dynamic. My study partners are all former students, and I supervised their student teaching practica and supported their seminar papers. It would be naïve to imagine that the power imbalance redressed itself once they graduated. Furthermore, I continue to occasionally provide references, write letters of recommendation, and initiate or coordinate professional opportunities for them. The nature of our relationships preceding the study had the potential to add to the intimacy and richness of the study, but also placed me in a position to potentially dominate, exploit, or take advantage of my study partners. Added to this was a further layer of hierarchy, the historically established power imbalance between researcher and researched. I found a need to take explicit and deliberate steps to ensure that the study partners were protected. My two greatest concerns surrounded participation and representation, which I will discuss in greater detail now.

Power and Participation

I was asking much of Alexandra, Jane, Katie, and Margaret. My initial request was for their permission to observe and interview them regularly over a year. Later, their participation included the afternoon teas and e-mail exchanges and phone conversations. At first, I phoned each teacher the day before I intended to come to her school. Within the first two weeks, Alexandra, Jane, and Katie all separately invited me to come without notice, and I did so from then on.

The afternoon teas presented a more significant complication because they required the teachers to drive to my home after a long day at school and give up their afternoons and later, as the afternoon teas extended in length, their evenings. I made it clear that they could participate as much or as little as they wanted to and could attend afternoon teas if they were helpful to them but were not required to do so. I needed the teachers to look forward to and welcome the afternoon teas without feeling that these functioned as meetings, obligations, or an inconvenience. I wanted them to feel comfortable, happy, well-fed, relaxed, and nurtured while in my home.

However, I was mindful of Lisa Delpit's (1991) caution that those who wield power are less conscious of it, so I took these steps. I specifically told the four study partners that they should consider the afternoon teas to be a place for them, rather than me, and that they should never feel compelled to attend on my account. All four were kind and wanted to see me succeed professionally, so I explicitly voiced my concerns about their support for my research interfering with their own personal needs. I told them to feel free to ignore e-mails if they didn't have the time or energy to respond and tried to reiterate this idea periodically when I e-mailed. I never had a preplanned agenda and tried (often unsuccessfully) to avoid initiating topics of discussion except in response to previous comments. I did this to ensure that the discussion centered on topics that sprang from teachers' own needs rather than from my agenda. I am by nature not a clockwatcher, so it was easy for me to be unconcerned about promptness. After the first couple of afternoon teas, I was vague about a starting time and teachers simply came when they were ready to leave school. The result was a gap of sometimes two hours

between the first and last arrival, but it also meant that the teachers didn't have the added stress of feeling rushed.

While none of these steps could have neutralized the researcher-researched imbalance, they were designed to help the study partners to feel comfortable saying no, ignoring requests, or bowing out of afternoon teas. Jane, who worked a second job as a waitress and was busy planning her wedding in the middle of the demands of first-year teaching, missed more afternoon teas than she attended, and as much as I missed her voice, her valuable perspectives, and her company, I was pleased that she felt comfortable limiting her participation to the extent that was convenient for her. I don't believe that I was completely successful: at the end of the year of the study, I asked her whether I could meet with her and ask her questions to "fill in some gaps." Her profuse apologies for missing so many afternoon teas led me to believe that, possibly because of the thoughtless way I worded my question, she did feel somewhat obligated to me.

One afternoon tea conversation led me to believe that at least one of the other study partners did not feel overly pressured to participate. In a discussion of why the afternoon teas were successful for her, Margaret shared: "I don't know how much is the collection of personalities. I was thinking as I drove over today, I was like: 'Oh my God, I'm over an hour late[er than I expected to be]' ... I would have been tense being that late to another setting ... it's very gentle coming here ... if [someone] with a different personality were in the group, they might be asking: 'What is our purpose? What are we accomplishing?' Although I trust there's a very large purpose. But some personalities might want to see the purpose accomplished within a certain amount of time and they might have to know: 'What have we come to?'" But I know it's a very large purpose."

(Afternoon Tea, 06.19). It is my hope that the teachers' view of the afternoon teas as gentle place of support for them might have given them the sense that they could construct their identities with a decreased sense of playing a role for me, the researcher.

Power and Representation

Weedon (1999) cautions: "it is important not to speak on behalf of others in ways which silence them and obscure real material differences" (p. 109). However, an inevitable tension arises when anyone tells someone else's story, and the framing of a research method affects participants' agency and voice within a study. I pursued methodology that addressed this tension in several ways. My most significant effort was in foregrounding the afternoon tea transcriptions in my data analysis methods.

Additionally, throughout, I made it clear that the teachers could veto any piece of information I wanted to include. Sometimes a teacher would ask me not to transcribe a particular story or comment, and sometimes I was asked to turn off the tape-recorder for a brief period. I always complied with these requests. None of the teachers asked for anonymity, but I have chosen to use pseudonyms for their privacy and also for the protection of their peers, colleagues, administrators, families, significant others, and, most of all, their young students.

Conclusion

Ethics and Politics of Voice

The quest for understanding is endless, and we will never know everything, but it does not logically follow that we should therefore resign ourselves to knowing nothing. The methodological lesson I learned from this study is that there is no perfect method,

and there isn't even a right method. Patti Lather (2003) calls on us to face the non-innocence of our work. In doing so I'm compelled to acknowledge that I embarked on this study reifying method, believing that if I could only find the "right" way to gather and analyze, my representations of my study partners would do them justice. Dale Spender (1985) cautions that there is "no one truth, no one authority, no objective method which leads to the production of true knowledge." (p. 5). What I'm learning to accept is that this work is still me telling someone else's story.

There are many stories within these pages that I am not telling, some because I choose not to tell them, some because they're not mine to tell (for instance, those that study partners asked me not to transcribe), and some because I don't know them (for instance, the many stories the study partners didn't tell me). I implore you the reader to be aware that these stories exist, interwoven around those that I am telling. The stories presented here are simply snapshots taken from a long and complicated year in the lives of Margaret, Jane, Alexandra, and Katie, and are not intended to represent that entire year. Because I believe that human identities are fragmented and sometimes contradictory, I did not seek to create cohesion out of these multiple identities, but rather to foreground the slices that were relevant to this discussion. Voices are rich, complex, and paradoxical and therefore difficult to code. The incompleteness of my representation does not make it less valuable. All knowledge is partial (Haraway, 1991), and the human condition is unfinished (Freire, 1998). One lesson that I learned from Katie, Margaret, Ann, and most of all Alexandra was about accepting that I can't always be in control, which is exactly what I seek to do as I lead you into my study.

Situating this Work in a Larger Landscape

“It is in our incompleteness, of which we are aware, that education as a permanent process is grounded. Women and men are capable of being educated only to the extent that they are capable of seeing themselves as unfinished. Education does not make us educable. It is our awareness of being unfinished that makes us educable. And the same awareness in which we are inserted makes us eternal seekers. Eternal because of hope. Hope is not just a question of grit or courage. It’s an ontological dimension of our human condition.” (Freire, 1998, p. 58)

Freire wrote of the *unfinishedness* of the human condition. This concept is liberating. Recognizing the unfinished nature of all research frees me to view this work as part of a larger ongoing research process. The methodology I explored through this study may not be for all researchers, all studies, or all questions. The process of experimenting with and even challenging orthodoxies in research methods was generative, but I don’t consider the methods I ultimately used to be final or complete. Nor do I consider them to stand in isolation: I view this study’s methodology as a step on the unfinished human journey of ever-evolving understandings of knowledge. I embrace Freire’s connection between unfinishedness and scholarly community: “I like being human because I am involved with others in making history out of possibility” (p. 54).

Part I. Meanings of Language Teaching

Introduction to Part I

Part I serves as an introduction to the ways in which the four teachers made sense of the process of becoming language teachers. In it, I describe some of the tenets that were important in the meanings of teaching language constructed by the teachers and discuss each. These tenets, which I understood to underpin their pedagogical practice, include sustenance of students' voices, depreciated emphasis on accuracy of form, guidance about what discourses are contextually appropriate or even permissible, negotiation through the maze of language variation hierarchies, authenticity of language use, political implications of learning English, and connections between identity and language use. Each of these ideas was considered significant to language learning by at least two of the teachers, but the teachers practiced in institutions that did not always echo or support their concerns. The resulting mismatch often left the teachers struggling to integrate their own ideals about language learning with societal and institutional expectations for their students. While they wanted to develop practices that promoted social justice, they were caring teachers, motivated by integrity to their young students' lives and needs beyond the classroom. In this chapter I explore the teachers'

understandings of language teaching and then describe the pedagogies that they developed as they worked to unite their pedagogical visions with their ethical commitments to their students' aspirations and the pressures and expectations of their schooling contexts.

Additionally in Part I, I will provide an in-depth analysis of the role of grammar in language teaching because the teachers' negotiations of a place for direct grammar instruction in ESOL classrooms were important in helping me to understand how the teachers constructed the intersection among pedagogy, language, and knowledge.

Chapter 3. Meanings of Language Pedagogy

“It makes me so mad because that’s what you do, you train them to take the question, find it in the text, answer it, and write it down. And then when you try to get them thinking and relating and deeply understanding, comparing to their life and that kind of thing ... arrgghhh!” (Jane, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

Introduction

The frustration that Jane expressed in this quote was one of the many emotions that she, Alexandra, Katie, and Margaret experienced as they tried to reconcile competing meanings of language teaching, among them the representation of learning English supported by their schooling contexts, the theoretical grounding laid down in their graduate coursework, and their own emerging understandings of their students’ learning. The teachers’ M.Ed coursework had centered heavily around theories of communicative competence, which has been the dominant paradigm in language teaching for the past two decades. However, all four teachers had also taken one or two courses that supported their critical questioning about the larger social and global context of the teaching and learning of English. To varying degrees, the teachers were deliberately conscious of how power operates in classroom contexts. For instance, during afternoon teas, they spoke of inequitable patterns of classroom participation in relation to gender, language identity, race, and ESOL status. The teachers were critically contemplative of the paths well-worn by the language teachers who preceded them. Before exploring the meanings of ESOL

teaching crafted by the teachers in this study, I will briefly describe the historical terrain of language pedagogy that they were stepping into.

Historically, until the early 1900s, to teach language was to teach *about* language by teaching grammar and translation (Richard-Amato, 1988). The ability to use language was less important than knowing how it was put together. As behaviorism became rooted in this country's educational systems in the 1950s, the goals of language teachers shifted to revolve around the drills, memorized dialogues, and chains of repetition of the audio-lingual method (Lado, 1977). Language theorists believed that if common, high-frequency dialogues and phrases were repeated and reinforced often enough, they would become second nature and learners would become speakers. At the height of audiolingualism's popularity, Chomsky (1965) launched a critique on Skinner's stimulus-response based orientation towards learning, proposing instead a perspective on grammar that reified a native speaker's intuition of what counts as grammatically accurate. Chomsky made a distinction between *competence*, which he defined rather narrowly as a speaker-hearer's underlying mental representation of grammatical rules, and *performance*, the external evidence of that competence. To Chomsky, the important element in competence was native speaker ability to distinguish grammatically correct from incorrect structure. Chomsky's emphasis became an important foundation for the subsequent theoretical pendulum swing in the early 1980s to communicative approaches.

Theories of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) were crucial in redirecting the vision of language professionals towards a conceptualization of language as dynamic, living, and arising from social interaction. Communicative language teaching (CLT) (Littlewood, 1981) represented a significant departure from the mindless repetition

of audiolingualism as language teachers focused their attention on the concept of communication. The questions being asked no longer related to students' knowledge of grammar and syntax, but to whether they could be understood and whether they could communicate. Theories of communicative competence went beyond grammatical competence to include the "psycholinguistic" and "sociolinguistic" contexts of language learning, defined in an individual, classroom-based rather than larger societal sense (Mesthrie et al, 2000; Gleason and Ratner, 1997). Communicative competence was assumed to include several forms of competence (Canale and Swain, 1980), including grammatical competence, discourse competence (cohesion and coherence of communication), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness of interaction), and strategic competence (strategies for compensating for failed communication). Savignon (1983) in fact pointed out that a speaker can be communicatively competent without grammatical competence, stimulating recognition of the secondary role that grammar plays in communication. This perspective shift from form and fluency to meaning-making and communication was important, but theories of communicative competence as they are currently conceptualized do not adequately address the complexity of language learning. They overlook the ways in which purposes for language learning and mode of acquisition are inextricably linked to larger issues of language ownership and usage in the context of the relationship among language, power, and identity.

Embedded in any culture and its discursive practices are rules about what counts as *truth*. In order for an assumption to become a regime of truth (Foucault, 1977), it must be accepted as fact by the community it exists within. Through an uncritical emphasis on the communicative competence paradigm over the past twenty years, the community of

language professionals has naturalized an ideology that contributes to the construction of NNES as deficit in several ways. For instance, while dialogue between native speakers is a collaborative process in which both speakers are jointly responsible for communication, focusing on NNES's "communicative competence" (or absence thereof) places the onus for the success of the dialogue or conversation firmly onto the shoulders of the NNES with the supposition that it is the responsibility of the non-native speaker to be competent, to make herself understood. This assumption simultaneously stems from and reinforces a construction of NNES as deficient, as needing to remediate inadequate communicative ability, and this construction furthermore contributes to an understanding of native speaker as normative. These current perspectives of teaching English sustain teachers' disregard of the integral role that social power plays in any discursive interaction and erroneously assume all speakers in dialogue to be equal with each other. Communication cannot be equitable when it is between people who have different degrees of ownership over English (Pennycook, 2001). In the context of English-language learning the assumption of equality is particularly inaccurate because the dominant global status of English, and consequently speakers of English, necessarily places NNESs into a subordinate position (Canagarajah, 1999; Brutt-Griffler, 2000). The preoccupation of TESOL professionals' with communicative competence has supported a representation of language as passive and ideology-free, and of language learning within an individual framework, divorced from the larger political and social context in which it actually takes place. Furthermore, in venerating the concept of "competence," language professionals have embraced a product-oriented pedagogy that values the end, competence, over the processes in which discourse is constructed. Despite their support

for growing awareness of the social nature of language learning, theories of communicative competence have contributed to the deficit construction of non-native English speakers in several ways, and as a result the subjectivity of this ideology has become obscured. The construct of communicative competence as an individual, narrowly construed outcome of language learning has become a regime of truth within language teaching, ironically leading to communicative *incompetence* and deskilling by subscribing to a limited and normative definition of what it means to be competent. This framework has unwittingly marginalized issues of power, privilege, and sociopolitical domination in language learning.

This historical context differed sharply from the stances that Alexandra, Jane, Katie, and Margaret demonstrated and discussed. They all revealed broad understandings of language teaching as dynamic and socially situated, as extending beyond the transmission of information about rules governing language use and, furthermore, beyond teaching students to simply make themselves understood. The teachers' pedagogy illuminated for me several key tenets that moved the teachers' pedagogy beyond communicative competence. These tenets, which are important themes throughout this work, include sustenance of students' voices, depreciated emphasis on accuracy of form, guidance about what discourses are contextually appropriate or even permissible, negotiation through the maze of language variation hierarchies, authenticity of language use, political implications of learning English, and connections between identity and language use. The teachers' ideologies had much in common with each other's, but the four women also represented four divergent and often even contrasting philosophies and styles. Throughout this study, I present my understandings of the teachers' individual

pedagogies, but I will also highlight elements and ideas that the teachers have in common and those that are jointly constructed in collaborative environments, such as the afternoon teas.

Sustenance of Student Voice: “How Happy Are You?”

Many elements of language teaching were significant for the teachers. One in particular was the sustenance of student voice. “Voice” has been described by Maher and Tetreault (2001) as “the awakening of students’ own responses, of their ability to speak for themselves, to bring their own questions and perspectives to the material” (pp. 18-19). Maher and Tetreault viewed voice as connoting: “the connection of one’s education to one’s personal experience” (pp. 18-19). The following conversation at an afternoon tea is a representative example of Margaret’s investment in the development of her students’ voices.

Margaret: I spend a lot of time with my first graders. Sometimes they’ll be very irascible, they’ll come in all full of their emotions and they can’t work. We started this thing with the very beginners, I write up a little letter to them: “How are you?” and they all go down the line, “Fine, fine, fine, fine, fine.” And I look at them and I go: “Are you happy?” And they look at each other, and they all say “Happy, happy,” all different ways. So then I ask, “How happy are you?” And they say, “I’m this happy, I’m this happy” (indicating quantity with hands). And so, even though they don’t have the vocabulary. I thought that was an interesting way to communicate with their hands ...

Suhanthie: Yeah, that totally makes sense, you can show with your hands...

Margaret: Just to kind of check in with them, even though they don't have all those words. I just feel that kind of tending to that kind of helps out.

(Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Margaret's primary pedagogical concern in this exchange is not with language acquisition in a narrow sense of grammar or accuracy of usage, with meeting the demands of the curriculum, or even with expanding students' vocabulary range. Nor is her focus on communicative competence. Rather, her questions and scaffolding are designed to help her students to express to her how happy they are, an approach that attends to their voices and connects classroom learning to students' capacity for expressing their experience. To nurture their voices, Margaret attends to her students' whole selves, listening to their voices, connecting to their hearts and happiness, and encouraging them to use their bodies and physicality when words are not readily available. At first glance, her pedagogy seems to fall into Canale and Swain's (1980) category of strategic competence. However, Margaret's focus delves deeper than simply helping her students to make themselves understood and becoming communicatively competent because she is concerned with the content (and not merely comprehensibility) of what they say and how what they say allows them to share their experience.

The sustenance of voice illuminates Margaret's meanings of teaching because voice and knowledge are firmly interconnected. Tarule (1996) wrote about how, following the publication of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986), she and her co-authors, Belenky, Clinchy, and Goldberger, were frequently questioned about how to help

silenced students to participate in discussions. Tarule connected this question to transformative practice because it asked how members of traditionally marginalized groups could see themselves as having something worth saying. She writes about the relationships between epistemological development and the nature of voice. Margaret's preoccupation was not with the form or comprehensibility of students' speech, but with the value of what her non-native English speaking first graders had to share as they spoke for themselves and expressed knowledge of themselves. Margaret's pedagogy underscored the potential of voice as "an indispensable act of knowing and thinking" (Tarule, 1996, p. 276). What Margaret names "tending" is concern about students' whole selves, not only their linguistic output in the narrowest sense of the term.

Katie's meanings of language teaching also included encouraging her students to value their own knowledge and voice. She told us about one student, Leena, who was insistent in her belief in a "right" answer accessed through the teacher:

I have one student, Leena, from Pakistan. She [has been identified for special education services]. She's culturally isolated, she has only one other friend, who's also from Pakistan. This kind of thinking is very hard for her. Even when she expresses an opinion, it's in the form of a question, like: "Is that right?" So I have to reinforce it: "Yeah, that's great, there's no right or wrong, it's an opinion." (Katie, Afternoon tea, 01.24)

In this and many other instances, Katie tried to guide her students away from a preoccupation with correct form or acceptable responses to teachers' expectations and towards a valuing of their own ideas and thoughts. For her, language teaching was not exclusively about sleuthing out and then providing expected responses, but rather about

supporting students' ability to think for and express themselves. For a student who was "culturally isolated" and questioning of her own opinions, Katie's support of voice can nurture much more than Leena's ability to communicate, it can support her social and psychological development. When Katie and Margaret taught, they demonstrated an understanding of language as a social system in which meaning is central (Kress, 2001), rather than as an autonomous communication system, the development of which was complete before their students started speaking it.

Depreciated Emphasis on Accuracy of Form: "My Kids Are so Hung up on Spelling"

Related to supporting students' voices was delegitimizing binary opposites, including the notion of knowledge as either right or wrong. The construction of knowledge as absolute was endemic in the teachers' contexts. Katie, Jane, and Margaret all sensed pressure from their students to focus on accuracy, and their students' desires were upheld by other influences, such as parents and standardized tests:

Katie: My kids are so hung up on spelling. I always try to tell them, "Spell it the best way you can," like I want to see how much they can do on their own. I tell them even if they have to make up a spelling, because I want to see their inventive spelling, so I can see... And then I can tell them, "This is how we write it in English," but they won't do it. I'll be like, "Spell it the best way you can," and they'll be like, "No, you spell it." They really want to get it right!

Margaret: Yes!

Katie: I've been working on them to free up their mind a bit and let their ideas flow a bit.

For Katie, a focus on form detracts from students' free flow of ideas and inhibits their incentive to attempt to draw from their own knowledge. Her students turned to her in search of information about spelling. As a form of knowledge, spelling has certain characteristics: its correctness is arbitrarily determined, and it is absolute in that partially correct spellings are typically considered to be incorrect. It is constructed outside the learner and disconnected from students' lives, a perspective that has been referred to as "received knowing" (Belenky et al, 1986). Katie responds to her students' requests by downplaying the importance of accuracy in spelling and focusing instead on the process of discovery. By accepting the value of partially correct answers, she constructs her students as knowers to her and, more importantly, to themselves. Margaret questioned Katie:

Margaret: That's something I've been wanting to ask people about, inventive spelling and how to ... you see it posted on the wall. Sometimes I'll sit and say "Mmmhmmm", like I won't say it's right, but I don't say it's wrong, I say "Keep going." But if they ever ask is it right, the moment of truth. I say "Looks good," I try to be truthful and keep them going. I'm not sure what other people do. Usually, my little ones don't ask if it's right, but if they do I don't know what to say ... usually they're okay if they're sounding it out and I'm saying "Okay," but if they do ask is that the right way.

Katie: I would pick one thing, one word that's used very often or something, and I'd say: "You're doing a good job sounding it out! Let's look at this word, and I'll show you how we spell it in English."

The preceding exchange is one of many examples of how the teachers negotiate the stretch between their own epistemological values and those supported by their teaching contexts. Within the framework of teaching this form of knowledge, Katie and Margaret explore what it means to take their students seriously as knowers and to encourage them to view themselves as knowers. The pedagogical knowledge blossoming in this exchange arose as Margaret and Katie worked together in dialogue to critique existing authoritarian and detached forms of knowledge and to replace them with knowledge that allows students to “free up” their minds and “develop their ideas.” It was in dialogue together that Katie and Margaret were able to question established ideas about what should be taught and why. Neither of the teachers was attempting to withhold information about accurate spelling, they were simply trying to devise ways of teaching that allowed space for more than a single mode of learning, such as active student knowledge construction as well as transmission of detached information about spelling. For example, Katie’s suggestion included both encouraging students to make guesses about spellings and choosing one word to tell the child: “This is how we spell it in English.” Margaret expressed concern about parents’ support of inventive spelling:

Margaret: What would you say to parents if they saw it posted on the wall.

Suhanthie: Would you post it on the wall?

Katie: Yes. I would explain it to parents that the main idea of writing is to get your ideas out and that from that flow of ideas you develop lessons and bring out specific points. And explain to them that it’s a developmental process – not with so much educational jargon. The most important point in writing is getting your ideas down. Let them know that you’re teaching

them simultaneously conventions of print and spelling and punctuation and all of that stuff. At the same time you're trying to get them to develop their ideas because that's the harder part of writing. That's how I would explain it. And most parents go "Okay."

Suhanthie: Do they go "Okay"?

Katie: Most of them do, Usually, I'll say, "Do you have questions?" or I'll say, "Does that make sense to you?" And they'll say "Okay" or they'll say "But I don't understand this part." I try to get them to reiterate to me or I'll repeat in a different way.

Some students' high regard for the accuracy of spelling reflected the investments of their parents. Beyond challenging students' ideas of what knowledge is of worth, Margaret was concerned about how parents would react. Katie offered ways of respecting and addressing parents' concerns. She suggested that teachers explain the developmental nature of learning to parents in order to advocate for the maintenance of students' ideas and at the same time reassure parents that forms of traditionally valued knowledge were not being neglected: "Let them know that you're teaching them simultaneously conventions of print and spelling and punctuation ..." but also that: "... you're trying to get them to develop their ideas ..."

Like elementary school teachers Katie and Margaret, Jane questioned the forms of knowledge that were being valued in her high school context and developed approaches for teaching in a way that had integrity towards her students and simultaneously to her ideologies. Her students were preparing for a series of high-stakes tests administered throughout the school year:

I'm the only English they're getting, I've got my level 2s now and I don't know where to even begin with them. You're talking about first-grade level—periods, capital letters—forget the grammar work! Simple “I am tall,” they need. With the reading, they can answer directly from the story, but if you do any kinds of questions that aren't keyed in directly from the story ... which is all the preparation they need for the reading test! It makes me so mad because that's what you do, you train them to take the question, find it in the text, answer it, and write it down. And then when you try to get them thinking and relating and deeply understanding, comparing to their life and that kind of thing ... arrgghhh! ... It's just that sense that I'm getting from you [Margaret] of that overwhelming I am not prepared for this. (Jane, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

Jane's meanings of language teaching related to “thinking and relating and deeply understanding, comparing to their life and that kind of thing.” However, the teacher was not able to teach language in a way that is meaningful for her because her students had to pass the standardized tests in order to graduate, and to her the tests celebrated forms of knowledge that were less mindful of and relevant to students' lives. Information that was important in order to pass the tests included punctuation and keyed answers from reading texts. Jane felt unprepared to practice the pedagogy supported by the tests, but her sense of responsibility towards her students compelled her to develop methods that allowed her to be responsive at once to her own ethics and her students' futures. Her strategies will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter. For Jane, language teaching was connected

to more than simply language use but extended to meaning making, thoughtfulness, and connection to students' lives.

Appropriateness of Language Use: "Those Are Very Dangerous Words"

Besides the sustenance of student voice, another element of language learning that was important to the teachers relates to what language is permissible—what can be said and what cannot be said in a given context. In particular, Katie, Alexandra, and Margaret connected permissible speech to cultural mores, which played an important role in language learning. Katie told us about one student, Noah, whom she sensed needed guidance in learning to use language responsibly. She was concerned about his use of disproportionately strong, sometimes threatening language but wanted to support his expression of his emotions and avoid silencing him. She told us:

Noah has a lot of emotional issues [He]'s very manipulative. He says things all the time about how he's going to blow up the school. This is the way he expresses himself. Part of it is that the TV programs he watches are very violent, and this is where he learns his English. He knows that it's something serious, he doesn't really grasp just how serious it is. I say to him: "Noah, we have to find a different way to say that. Those are very dangerous words, they're very scary for people to hear, you could get into a lot of trouble saying them. Especially now." He tells people, "I'm going to shoot blah, blah, blah." In [his home country] I think he was exposed to violence, but I think it comes from TV, all the expressions he uses are from American TV. I ask him every day, how are you, he says, "I'm bored and disgusted", except he says boring and disgusting. He's got a very

violent way of expressing himself. I told the ESOL counselor, but the ESOL counselor says he scares her. He's in 2nd grade. She says, "Noah scares me. He's so manipulative." I said, "Yes, he's manipulative, but you address it. That's your job."

While Noah may have known the definitions of the individual words he selected, he needed his teachers' guidance in recognizing what they meant within the context he uttered them in. This represents an expansive and mature definition of vocabulary, extending beyond basic translations and rewordings of lexical items to deep questions about what it truly means to know a word. An important part of Katie's mission was to teach her students the meanings of their language in living use. In the context of rising school violence and national fears about terrorism, the teacher aimed to teach her students to use language responsibly and to choose words befitting their situations and emotions. Jane hypothesized about Noah's ability to express himself in ways that are considered more socially appropriate:

Jane: Maybe he only has extremes where he can't talk about loneliness and can only go to hate.

Katie: I say: "Don't say these words, you can say 'I'm very angry,' but don't say you're going to break up the school." We reported it to the principal. This is the [same] little kid, he was in class, he was crying, he was like: "I'm going to move out of this country and I'm going to kill myself and then you'll be sorry." So then Sarah the counselor and I went to his house. She was like, "Well, he can't say things like that!"

Jane: The scary thing is if you say that to him, he might stop saying it, but he's still going to keep feeling it. (Afternoon tea, 03.21)

For Katie, part of knowing a language is understanding how powerful words are in a given context. English language learners can choose the language they use, but Katie is concerned with what it truly means to be in a position to choose language. Sustaining those possibilities of choice includes supporting students' acquisition of the language, but also their understandings of what the language means to their audience. Katie represents a dialogic interpretation of language, one in which language is jointly constructed by Noah and his audience, and she seeks to support Noah's developing understanding of language as a "historically shaped resource" (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates, 2001) as it is "populated—overpopulated—by the intentions of others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294).

Katie negotiated a difficult line. She needed to encourage Noah away from making violent statements without causing him to feel silenced. Theories of communicative competence have extended language teachers' focus on accurate form to include the teaching of appropriateness of language use and register. While this intention helps language learners to adopt a pleasing and suitable identity within U.S. schools, I believe that it has been interpreted to err on the side of indoctrination, neglecting student voice and alternative forms of expression. The fact that a school context encourages a student to present herself in a certain way does not necessarily mean that the identity being adopted is in the best interests of the child.

Theories of communicative competence can encourage teachers to socialize young ESOL students into passive silence and conformity under the guise of teaching them appropriate speech. Katie sought a pedagogy that supported Noah's acquisition of

suitable language within his school context without neglecting the expression of his emotions. She assumed that he did not actually intend to blow up the school (making a report to the principal about the threat in case her assumption was incorrect), and she wanted to help him to express his frustration and disappointment in a more constructive way. For Katie and Jane, teaching Noah acceptable speech was insufficient; they were also concerned with reducing his sense of alienation by helping him to communicate his message in a way that was permissible within a school context that had no tolerance for bomb threats. The teachers wanted to help Noah to carve out a third space between the identity he was constructing for himself and the one that would have long-term viability within school walls. They wanted to ensure that the identity appropriate for the school context was also in Noah's best interests.

This incident with Noah raised a larger concern about appropriateness of social meanings, which was a significant part of the four teachers' discussions during the year. In many ways, the teachers' ideas about language teaching included not only teaching students what to say but also helping them to understand the meanings of language and how to use it.

Appropriateness of Social Meanings:

“All the Girls Should Come to School and Kiss Me”

A part of language teaching related to appropriateness of language use was appropriateness of social meanings. For Alexandra, as for Katie, language teaching included teaching students about what speech is appropriate in the U.S. school environment and, by extension, in U.S. society. This was complicated because both middle school teaching and ESOL teaching necessarily (by design or by omission)

develop students' understandings about appropriate expectations. Alexandra faced the challenge of teaching her male middle-school student, Carl, about cultural values and expectations within a U.S. social context:

We had a test in which you had to write about a problem at school or in his neighborhood and what you would do to make it better. And he wrote to make sexual harassment okay. "All the girls should come to school and kiss me." And it was just disgusting, and for his age kind of pathetic. So I showed him his grade based on the grammar, and I said, "Let's talk about the content. It's not appropriate for you to say sexual harassment is okay. The angle you could express your opinion from, it's natural that boys chase girls and we shouldn't get in trouble for doing what was natural."

(Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 01.24)

Alexandra believed that as a language teacher, she was responsible for responding to both the form and the social meanings of Carl's test, indicating a conceptualization of language that includes both linguistic and social practice. Her strategy was to give him a grade based on his grammatical competence (part of communicative competence) and another that addressed the content of the paper. It is impossible to know whether Carl was writing inappropriately because he was young, because he was a cultural newcomer, or because he wanted to antagonize his teacher, since his identities as youth, immigrant, and rabble-rouser were inseparable one from the other. However, Alexandra believed that part of being a language teacher was teaching students about acceptable speech. She told him explicitly that it was inappropriate for him to say that sexual harassment was okay. She offered him an alternative and more ambiguous phrase: "It's natural that boys chase

girls,” which might have the same meaning for him, but is likely to be less offensive to his listener.

Alexandra’s suggestion brings to light a further challenge facing language teachers, that is how to address the distinction between what is constructed socially and what is a “natural” part of human gendered identity. Is it natural that boys chase girls, or is sexual harassment a behavior that is learned and socially propagated within schools? Sexual harassment has the effect of perpetuating male sexual dominance and underscoring heteronormativity. As teachers pass through their daily routines, they are called upon to make value-laden on-the-spot decisions about how to frame problematic behaviors and positionings with their students.

All teaching is political, whether teachers acknowledge it, as did Alexandra and her three peers, or whether they seek to suppress its subjective nature. As they teach the cultural and social values of students’ new communities, teachers therefore walk on delicate ground because they must make decisions about whether to teach the ruling ideas of the society they believe themselves to be representing. In telling Carl of the negative connotations of the loaded term ‘sexual harassment,’ Alexandra was teaching him language, but she was also teaching him that beyond the linguistic, the actual act of sexual harassment is not socially acceptable. Foucault (1979) problematized the distinction between language and practice, noting that the one cannot be isolated from the other because in discourse, knowledge is actually produced. As teachers teach language, they teach ideology and in fact regulate social conduct in practice (Foucault, 1980). Teaching can therefore not be viewed apart from the ethical culture that it is practiced within.

Teachers' discursive guidance influences the ways in which things can be talked about and consequently governs the ways in which ideas are put into practice. As Alexandra is telling Carl that it is not appropriate for him to *say* that sexual harassment is okay, she is also telegraphing that the practice of sexual harassment is not permissible. Inherent in Alexandra's language teaching is a lesson on morality. In teaching against sexual harassment, she is teaching about social justice and ethical living. This interaction takes place on the shaky middle ground between regulating conduct and embracing humanist caring in pedagogy.

Appropriate Register: "Jesus Said: 'Shut Up'"

A further thread that appeared to be important to the teachers was appropriateness of register. Rather than teaching a student Katie's own version of appropriate norms, the teacher relied on the teaching power of the classroom community. Katie discouraged the phrase "shut up" in her class:

We had had a discussion about other ways of asking someone to be quiet and how 'shut up' was very rude. Personally, I don't like it, which I think was from my Mom because she didn't let us say 'shut up'. (Afternoon tea, 06.19)

The use of the phrase "shut up" had surfaced in one of Katie's classes earlier in the year. When a newcomer student who had recently joined her class told a fellow classmate to "shut up" in the midst of a group activity, his peers responded instantly.

Maria: Ms. Bach, Jesus said 'Shut up'!

Katie: Okay, so what can you tell Jesus it's better to say than 'shut up'?

Several students: Be quiet, please be quiet.

Katie: Well, instead of telling me, why don't you tell him?"

Maria: (shaking head) Jesus, no shut up. Say please be quiet.

Jesus nodded his head. (Observation, 04.15)

Rather than correcting or reprimanding Jesus, Katie relied on his peers. The discourse community of this class had embraced the discursive conventions and were teaching and initiating their new peer, who indicated complicity. The success of students' entrance into a larger community, such as the school community, is affected by the discourses they acquire in the ESOL classroom. Throughout the years, all of the teachers encouraged their students to teach each other language, not only grammatically but also socioculturally as a discourse community embracing linguistic norms.

Language Variations: "It's a Bit of a Different English"

In addition to appropriate meanings of language, appropriate forms and variations of language were also a significant strand of the teachers' understandings of the development of voice and identity. In the four linguistically and racially diverse schools in this study, and particularly in Jane and Alexandra's schools, several forms of English were commonly spoken. Alexandra expressed support for her students' fluency in multiple English dialects and even resisted teaching "standard English." Alexandra's representation of "standard English" differed from the definition ascribed to by the other three teachers, she constructed standard English as a formal, infrequently used, and grammatically pristine language that most people could not access. She recognized that in the school context, students were being exposed to and acquiring different varieties of English: "So you're picking black vernacular up quicker than you are Mrs. Lau's English." (Afternoon tea, 06.19). She appreciated the value of adeptly using multiple

dialects in a variety of settings: “What does this mean, why do you say it differently?” Furthermore, she advocated explicitly teaching students about the relationship between language choices and social contexts: “You have to teach them that there’s different settings that you’re going to use Black vernacular and you’re not going to use it. I feel sorry for these kids because they’re learning three different languages and they all sound like English.” Alexandra’s objection to the teaching of standard English within school walls stemmed primarily from its disconnection with the lives of her students:

If one of the outcomes is to speak standard American English, then that’s a different language than we speak around here. You’d have to have teachers who could speak standard American English, which I couldn’t even know. I don’t think I ever end a sentence with a preposition. Just things that come out of the Midwest that I recognize when I hear them, but I don’t know what it is. (Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 06.19)

For Alexandra, Standard English is not the language “we speak around here,” not the commonly spoken language of the people. It is a language that she, a bright and resourceful woman with two graduate degrees, “couldn’t even know.” In Alexandra’s view, standard English was not representative of language as it is truly used in her students’ communities. Rather, the teacher valued ESOL classes that teach students the language of their everyday lives.

Language teachers’ decisions about how to position themselves in relation to the teaching of language varieties have significant political implications (Wolfram, Temple Adger, and Christian, 1999). Bakhtin (1981) wrote of the conflict between centripetal forces, which produce authoritarian, dogmatic discourses designed to exclude and

dominate, and centrifugal forces, which support the natural diversity of language use. Teaching and acknowledging only standard English, which nurtures centripetal forces, would have the effect of deprecating students who speak nonstandard English and of reinforcing the supremacy of standard English. Teachers' support of diverse varieties, registers, and ways of using language serves to whittle away at the power of centripetal forces and to move students' conceptualizations away from the idea of one legitimate language. This is not merely a pedagogical stance, but an epistemological one; it creates space for the possibility of multiple simultaneously correct language variations and the legitimacy of more than one perspective and attendant truth. However, to single-mindedly embrace centrifugal forces, turning a blind eye to the social norms that acknowledge one form of English as "good" English, is to ignore the social needs of students who need access to legitimated forms of language that will allow them to succeed (Pennycook, 1998). Rather, the teachers, to varying degrees, sought to expand their students' repertoires of forms of communication that were effective.

Beyond supporting multiple varieties of English, Alexandra actively taught the students to associate different variations of English with different settings, indicating a conception of language teaching that was respectful of social use and appropriateness of context.

Jane, too, taught African American vernacular English (AAVE):

Jane: Yeah, I've taught the difference between dog and dawg.

Suhanthie: Dog and dog?

Jane: Like dog, D-O-G, is that sitting right there (indicating her puppy, Duff) and dawg, D-A-W-G, is like your friend. I thought it was just so ironic, here's me teaching the language of the kids.

Suhanthie: Do you tell them specifically about language variations?

Jane: I just say it's slang. It's just a popular word for your friend. (Jane, Dinner at her house, 06.25)

In teaching AAVE from her position of teacher-authority, Jane promoted its validity to her students. She identified it as “slang,” a term that can carry negative connotations—the second entry in Webster’s Third International Dictionary (Gove, 1976) describes slang as “vulgar or inferior”—but Jane also used the word “popular,” which is positively nuanced, thereby promoting a conception of slang as approved and as a language of people.

Wolfram, Temple Adger, and Christian (1999) have theorized the distinction between slang and language variations. They note that while the term “slang” can convey several possible meanings, including jargon, informality, and nonstandard English (including derogatory references to AAVE), linguists restrict the use of “slang” to refer to language in informal use. They draw attention to the social purposes of slang: “Despite its reputation as linguistically marginal, slang shows complex and interesting sociolinguistic properties” (p. 67). Language variations can help to support the boundaries between various social (for instance, age, racial, and cultural) groups, so that in legitimating AAVE, Jane was supporting the legitimacy of “African-American” as a cultural group and helping to provide potential access to that group.

Other forms of English spoken in the four schools came under the umbrella term “World English.” Jane, Alexandra, Katie, and Margaret had received conflicting

messages about World Englishes from multiple sources throughout their graduate coursework and in their professional environments. A guest speaker in one of their classes used “World English” synonymously with “pidgin English,” and local public school ESOL offices used the term “World English” to refer to many of their students who were proficient in a limited number of nonstandard forms of English. Language hierarchies had been supported to some degree in some of their classes but specifically deconstructed in historical context in other classes.

I suggest that the factor that relegates a language to “World English” status is not degree of language variation, but race, as evidenced by the blurry area between the county’s definition of World Englishes and other forms of English that also differ structurally and prosodically from the governing American standard (such as Scottish English). The students who were referred to as World English speaking students during this study were all ethnically South Asian or black and came from African, Caribbean, or South Asian countries. Countries in Kachru’s (1988) “outer circle” include Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. Speakers of English in these “norm-developing” (Kachru, 1992) countries speak forms of English that are locally established and standardized, but are not typically the first languages of the citizens and are not legitimated globally. Dominant standards in outer-circle countries and around the world are dictated by the English spoken by the “inner circle” of countries, that is the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, where the population majorities are white.³ Native English speakers from Jamaica (which is not included in

³ A third category, the “expanding circle” includes countries in which English is learned as a foreign or international language.

Kachru's 1988 model) were classified as World English speakers in this study's public schools, but Jamaica does not fit smoothly into any of Kachru's categories because most Jamaican citizens speak a form of English as their first language. I suggest that race is the most significant factor keeping many language variations, including Jamaican English, from amassing the same linguistic power as British, American, and Australian English. Jamaican English is categorized as a "World English" because the country's population is predominantly black. Katie, Margaret, Ann, and Alexandra's "World-English" speaking students spoke Englishes that were not validated by their school system, and they had been placed in ESOL classes in order to ensure that their English was quickly coaxed into anglicization. Brutt-Griffler (2002) notes that: "The center-driven narrative of English language spread writes people residing outside the West out of their central role in the spread of English and their place in making the language we call English." (p. viii). I believe that the scope of the "center-driven narrative" extends far beyond "people residing outside the West" to reach people living in the West—if they are not White.

The placement of World English speakers into ESOL in the first place presented a fundamental social challenge to the teachers. Within the cultures of all four schools, ESOL was socially constructed as deficit (for further explanation of the construction of ESOL in these four schools, see Chapter 7), with ESOL students perceived as unable to speak English rather than in a more positive framing of "bicultural/lingual" or "multicultural/lingual." Jane, who taught World-English-speaking students from Jamaica, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, wanted to legitimate multiple forms of English, including World Englishes. However, her efforts were hampered by the mere placement of World English speakers into ESOL classes, since the policy communicated to the school

community at large that these students were not native speakers of English. It follows that World English speakers can lay no rightful claim to English. In failing to sanction World English as a legitimate form of English, the school system was refracting a history of colonialism and the persistent colonialism of the larger society in which the school is situated.

Jane's students questioned the presence of native-English speaking peers in their ESOL classes. The teacher described the tension she grappled with as she tried to offer her students an explanation without underscoring the racism and linguicism undergirding the placement policy: "World English is tough, and it's tough for a couple of reasons." Of one student in particular, Terrell, Jane said: "So it's almost like they're putting him down, like 'Why are you in this class?'" She went on to explain:

So I say, "Well it's an English, it's a bit of a different English, and we're working on the writing skills." Some of the kids really don't understand why they're in the class. It's almost like, "What are you, dumb? Why are you in here?" I know why he's there, I know the writing structures are different, and what needs to be focused on is the reading and writing.

(Jane, Dinner at her house, 06.25)

Jane framed the distinction between World Englishes and standard English as primarily significant in their written rather than spoken forms. She sought to explain in a way that did not contribute to the stigmatization of World English. In presenting the linguistic differences as a gap between speaking proficiency and reading and writing skills, she implies that World Englishes in their spoken form pose no complication within the school context, but that writing structures in, for instance, Granadian and Jamaican vernacular

English are sufficiently different to necessitate support to World English speaking students.

Jane: Some of the words he uses I have to have him clarify because I don't know what he means. Yeah, it would probably be an issue of standard versus nonstandard English. Trying to help him communicate more.

Sometimes I understand what he means, but ...Structure, too, I'm thinking that some of my kids are from Sierra Leone, and the structure is so different. And organization too.

Suhanthie: Is that because they're speaking a different form of English?

Jane: You mean, could it just be their education? Could be. It could be where they're coming from and what they've worked on and what they haven't. (06.25)

While Jane sought to challenge the school's deficit construction of World English, she also wanted to support the ability of Terrell and his peers to communicate with the English speakers in his new community. The school's placement of World English speakers in ESOL made it impossible for her to present World English as anything but a form of language that was unsanctioned by the school without openly criticizing the school's policy in front of the students. However, she sought to mitigate the stigma by emphasizing the distinction between spoken and written World Englishes and implying that students were in ESOL in order to acquire written academic forms only, thus legitimating at least the spoken forms of World Englishes.

A further complication was presented by the indistinct lines among interrupted education, World English, and ESOL. Students whose education had been interrupted,

usually because of war, were often placed in ESOL regardless of their first language, and they were labeled “World English speakers.” ESOL teachers therefore needed to have expertise in supporting emergent literacy development embedded in their professional knowledge of second language acquisition and related pedagogy. Referring to students whose education had been interrupted as “World English speakers” reinforced the false construction of World English speakers as students without formal schooling.

In making decisions about how to situate nonstandard forms of English within their classroom contexts, the teachers were thoughtful about the global positionality of English. For Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret to have helped their students to become communicatively competent without regard for the positioning of their first languages in the larger political global context would have implied their uncritical adaptation to standard forms of English. This would have had the ancillary effect of delegitimizing their languages and consequently their selves. Instead, the teachers crafted pedagogies that encouraged the development of their students’ communicative competence while simultaneously challenging irrational language hierarchies.

What is Said: “Is ‘Hey’ a Bad Word?”

The teachers’ discussions of the legitimacy of language are significant. However, we cannot separate what *can be* said, that is permitted language, from what *is* said, that is native speaker speech. For Margaret, “what is said” was a guiding principle in language teaching. Margaret was motivated to teach not the language sanctioned by her teaching texts, standardized tests, or “grammar bibles,” but the language of actual everyday usage. She told us that as a language learner in China, she appreciated the praise she received when her language mirrored native speech:

Being a language learner ... praise, I try to remember how that feels, praise. I think that also comes back to what people really say. Because I hated it when I learned an expression in a book and people would smile and say 'We don't really say that' or if I said something that was really local and people would say 'Where did you learn that?! That's exactly how you say it.' I remember my students in China were very concerned with register, especially because they were taking it for business purposes... My kids now, we work on that in a more limited way. I use humor, I'll say: "Oh, would you kindly give me that." (Dinner with Suhanthie, 05.30)

She tried to support her students' familiarity with a range of registers. Her memories of her own emotions as a second language learner were a guiding force in the development of her pedagogy. What Margaret described is a teaching practice that has been referred to by Price and Osborne (2000) as "humanizing pedagogy," in which "...the whole person develops (not just a facet of a person) and they do so as their relationships with others evolve and enlarge" (pp. 27-28). I asked her why "what is said" was important, and she shared:

Margaret: Just today, [Jose], a student who's actually really fluent verbally, he came to class today and I was working on reading with them one-on-one. And he said: "Is 'hey' a bad word? Because somebody told me it was a bad word." And I said: "Well, it depends on who you use it with. For instance, if my sister were on the other side of the street and I wanted to get her attention, I'd definitely use 'hey.'" But if my teacher

were at the end of the hallway, or the principal, I definitely wouldn't use 'hey'. I think it's good to know that the registers exist and to be able to choose for yourself, to know how to make a situation go more smoothly."

(Margaret, Dinner with Suhanthie, 05.30)

Similarly, she made a connection between empowerment and students' ability to use phrases that "other people say":

I think my students feel so empowered when they learn something that they know other people say. For example, getting off the phone by saying: "Well, let me let you go." I think I never even realized how I'd gotten off the phone ... Sometimes I think you can do it unwittingly but just get the pattern in your head. (Margaret, Interview, 05.30)

Margaret seeks for her students the ability to develop a sociolinguistic competence that approximates that of native speakers. She wants them to be able to position themselves as a native speaker might be positioned. Margaret's focus was on her students' ability to choose. She was concerned with more than Jose's ability to assemble words together into a comprehensible form. She was invested in his capacity to use language appropriately for the context, about his ability to "make a situation go more smoothly" as an empowered and agentive participant in a conversation. Saussure (1967) made the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, with *langue* referring to simply the arbitrary system of a language, and *parole* to discourse as social action. This dichotomy has been the subject of much critique, but it is useful in illustrating the distinction between two potential pedagogical orientations—the first seeking to simply transmit information about language as a detached system, and the other, a pedagogy like Margaret's, supporting the

possibility of linguistic choices that originate in an assessment of the social situation the student finds herself in. This is a much deeper conceptualization of teaching than communicative competence. Margaret was engaged not merely in socializing her students to produce socially appropriate speech, but in their capacity to “choose for yourself.” She wanted her students to make themselves heard, not simply by knowing the right words and knowing how to weave them together, but also by understanding “how to make a situation go more smoothly” if they choose to. This returns us to the issue of voice. Gannet (1992) has described “coming to voice” as “...a central epistemological metaphor for intellectual development” (p. 178). Coming to voice is particularly significant for language minority students who speak from the margins of school culture, who must often struggle to be heard and legitimized, and for whom education and its attendant socializing influences are synonymous with the suppression of voice.

Beyond Communicative Competence to Identity

All four of the teachers believed that in teaching language, they were supporting students’ development beyond communicative competence to the construction of identity through language use. For instance, Katie valued the ability of her students to construct identities of intelligent and good employees and recognized that a way to contribute to this identity was to develop proficient speech (Afternoon tea, 06.19). Throughout the year, Alexandra noted several examples of the relationship between language use and identity. For instance, at an afternoon tea, Katie told of a friend’s surprising language choices:

I had a friend who was from Sweden. When I first met her, everything was like “Fuck, shit,” she’d be like: “Oh, that’s fucking great,” but she’d say it

like normal conversation, and I was thinking, should I explain that ... in conversation, it's not considered a good thing to use all those words in that fashion ... In every sentence, she'd have the f-word, the s-word, that a-word ... Well, I met her again later and it was gone, she wasn't swearing anymore. I wondered if someone had explained it to her or if she noticed that other people weren't using those words.

Alexandra responded:

That's why the language you use expresses who you are ... the language she chooses gives you some clue as to who she is as a person and what her experiences have been.

She continued, in reference to an earlier conversation, to connect linguistic choices to cultural identity and then to the difficulties associated with developing a national curriculum:

You refusing to use the n-word, we know that you've lived in the United States and there's a different connotation for you. That's another reason we can't have standardized curricula. That's part of the social and human construct of language, why it can't be this mathematical formula.

(Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 06.19)

The connections between language and identity represent a conception of language teaching that involves a broader charge than simply helping students to become communicatively competent. For Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra, teaching language meant helping students to become the humans they aspired to be with regard for the positioning of their individual identities in the larger world.

Summary

The pedagogies crafted by Margaret, Jane, Katie, and Alexandra demonstrated that aspiring to communicative competence is not enough. In order for understandings of language teaching to evolve appropriately, language professionals need to consider the relationship between language learning and social power in the classroom and in the broader political context. All agents in the social worlds of ESOL students—teachers, parents, students, administrators, school systems, and teacher educators—should be aware of how language teaching methods position students and contribute to the shaping of their identities, and they should be conscious of the ways in which supporting the global domination of English underscores the subordinate status of NNEs.

The teachers' meanings of teaching language highlight the nature of voice and its relationship to knowledge. An emphasis on voice can assist teachers in supporting students' capacity to connect their classroom learning to their personal experience and can communicate to ESOL students that their experiences are worth sharing. Coming to voice is particularly significant for language minority students who speak from the margins of school culture, who must often struggle to be heard and legitimized, and for whom education and its attendant socializing influences are coterminous with the suppression of voice. The potential for ESOL students to come to voice cannot be reached unless teachers venture into the terrain beyond communicative language teaching.

The teaching practices and experiences of Alexandra, Jane, Katie, and Margaret helped me to see how the concept of communicative competence, while important and valuable in its original context, has evolved into a regime of truth that needs to be

critiqued, reconceptualized, and expanded. The work that the four teachers were engaged in was complicated, and it pushed up against established boundaries and understandings. If English language teaching is to improve the lives and realities of ESOL students, ESOL professionals must continue to explore pedagogical possibilities that attend not only to whether students can be understood, but to the development of their voices, identities, and positionalities within their worlds. Such a charge is complex and elusive, but it is my hope that in demonstrating the ways in which four teachers accepted and grappled with the challenge, this study has taken a first step in the direction of extending our understandings of the possibilities available to language professionals.

Chapter 4. Grammar and Social Power

“I don’t want to talk grammar. I want to talk like a lady.”

- Liza Dolittle, *Pygmalion*, by George Bernard Shaw

Introduction

Liza Dolittle’s understanding of grammar was conceptually disconnected from the genteel and privileged identity she sought to construct, but without grammatically pristine language, she stood little chance of belonging to the community she had targeted. For parallel reasons, teaching grammar was a theme that Margaret, Alexandra, Katie, and Jane discussed with some frequency as they developed their pedagogies over the course of their first year of teaching. Their discussions revolved around which language forms and discourses were considered “correct” and the ways in which they managed the contradictions inherent in the process of responding to their students’ simultaneous grammatical, communicative, and social needs. An examination of how teachers viewed the relationship between grammar and power provides a window into their various thinking about and meanings of language learning and teaching within their students’ worlds.

The four teachers operated in different contexts, and the needs of their students therefore varied. However, all four verbalized resistance to or discomfort with the direct

teaching of grammar. For instance, Margaret expressed a preference for allowing children to discover linguistic conventions and rules through natural language usage rather than through direct teaching (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 06.19). Alexandra believed that “grammar slows things down” and “when you teach grammar, you’re teaching [language] in a segmented way” (Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 06.19). Katie told us: “I don’t like teaching isolated grammar” (Katie, Afternoon tea, 06.19), and Jane simply said: “I don’t like teaching grammar. I don’t like teaching it!” (Jane, Dinner at her house, 06.25). All four sought ways of teaching language that embraced a tighter connection to their students’ lives than grammar-based methods. However, I will explain in this chapter that the four teachers were operating in worlds that supported, usually implicitly, technical constructions of language learning as grammatical learning. As they developed their ideas about teaching, they sought pedagogies that were steeped simultaneously in integrity to their student-centered ideologies, which did not embrace the direct teaching of grammar, and in fidelity to their students’ future lives and needs for formal grammatical knowledge. I will provide examples of their various approaches to the dilemmas they encountered as they negotiated a role for grammatical teaching in their daily practice.

The assumption that there exists one correct English grammar is an example of what Foucault (1977) has termed a *regime of truth*. Embedded in any culture and its discursive practices are rules about what counts as truth. In order for an assumption to become a regime of truth, it must be accepted as fact by the community it exists within. For instance, it could be argued that the assumed incorrectness of “I be going to the store” is a regime of truth: the sentence is likely comprehensible to all English speakers but considered correct only within some minority communities. The supposition of its

incorrectness within society writ large has become so inherent that it is unquestioned and unquestionable, and as a result its arbitrariness is no longer visible. To resist teaching direct grammar would be to challenge a regime of truth, that is, the assumption that the dominant and standard form of English is most valuable. However, confronting this regime of truth presents a complication for even the most idealistic and transformative of teachers; Foucault tells us that a whole community, and not a single person, must participate in order for regimes of truth to be altered. Challenging the supremacy of correct standard grammatical forms is therefore not a straightforward and facile choice available to teachers. All four of the teachers expressed awareness of the connections between their ESOL classrooms and the social pressures beyond their classrooms and described structural limitations to their abilities to teach in ways that challenged the supremacy of nonstandard forms of English. This chapter is about how they made sense of those incongruities.

The direct teaching of grammar in foreign language instruction has historical roots that date back as far as language teaching itself. Until the early twentieth century, grammar instruction was the most commonly practiced form of language teaching in the United States (Omaggio, 1989), and an explicit focus on grammar is visible in classrooms across the world today. In the United States, the most popular grammar textbooks focus on grammar principles with teaching suggestions and exercises (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Deakins, Parry, and Viscount, 1994; Azar, 2002) using grammar as a point of departure in language learning. Some of these texts present grammar as an essential code to be cracked, some as a route toward the liberation of foreign students fettered by their native cultures. For instance, the introduction to a best-selling grammar

book claims: “Some cultures virtually train their children to be passive in the classroom, but *Tapestry* weans them from passivity by providing exceptionally high interest materials.” (Deakins, Parry, and Viscount, 1994, p. vii). Another assures readers that: “Students who complete the lessons in this text will be well-equipped to express themselves accurately and appropriately in all types of communication situations” (Pollock, 1997). Yet another links information about grammatical parts of speech to power and effective communication: “All the kinds of words we use—nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc.—are explained and used in exercises of increasing difficulty... The ability to use language correctly is a very powerful tool. The purpose of this book is to help you write and speak better, so that you, too, will be able to communicate effectively with the world around you.” (Pulaski, 1982, p. 5). Grammar has historically been offered as a *passé-partout* to mainstream culture.

Research into the teaching of grammar in second language education has focused to date on developing new ways of teaching grammar (Liu and Masters, forthcoming) and fresh approaches to “drilling” and “correcting” the “same grammatical structures over and over again” (Meloni, 2000/ 2001). What current research on grammar has neglected is attention to the relationship between grammatical instruction and social power in and out of the classroom. Bourdieu is helpful in connecting grammar to power. He draws attention to the arbitrary nature of sanctioned speech (for instance, why do we say *feet* instead of *foots*? Why do we use *whom* as an object?). He (1982) believes that “correct usage” or “legitimated language” (p. 61) owes its prestige to grammarians, who categorize official usage, and teachers, who enforce and reinforce its propriety through correction and instruction. Legitimate language is continuously protected by speakers

who possess command of the highbrow rules, including teachers. He contends that “[w]hat creates the power of words . . . , a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief.” (p. 170) Language that has been legitimated by those in power remains sanctioned only if that legitimacy is continuously recreated by, for instance, repeated correction and instruction by an English teacher. None of Alexandra, Katie, Jane, and Margaret held a belief in the legitimacy or supremacy of “correct” grammar, and all four sought a departure from the direct grammar teaching practiced by their teacher-predecessors. However, they taught in school systems and indeed a society that valued, for a variety of reasons, grammatically proficient speech and grammatically accurate writing. The four teachers truly cared about their students, and part of this caring included concern about their students’ capacity to present themselves as proficient or to pass high-stakes tests that relied on explicit knowledge about grammar. Katie, Jane, and Margaret felt compelled to provide grammatical guidance, concerned that if they challenged the legitimacy of “correct usage” by refusing to support grammatical rules, their students would be less likely to become proficient in legitimated language and would not master the code of power. Language teachers face a special dilemma in negotiating the line between inciting social justice and reinforcing the code of the culture as they develop their ideologies.

Although each teacher articulated a philosophy that are more tightly connected to either teaching grammatical conventions or protesting against them, none is committed exclusively to one or the other. Pennycook’s (1999) framing of the dilemma faced by language teachers is attentive to the dangers of reinforcing legitimate language but also

respectful of the limitations of teachers' contexts. He asks questions about access in relation to transformation. He perceives the two as potentially in opposition to each other; teachers whose focus is on transforming social order can fail to equip less privileged students with access to cultural (including linguistic) tools of power, while exclusive concern about access to these tools fails to challenge inequitable distribution of resources and encourage social justice. While Pennycook's access/transformation dualism provides a helpful scaffolding within which to conceptualize pedagogy concerning grammar, it, too, is not sufficiently three-dimensional and doesn't allow us to capture some of the complexities that teachers bring to the binary. In this chapter, I will explain how the four teachers crafted pedagogies that deviated from the polarity of the access/transformation conceptualization to offer language researchers and teachers evolved and fertile pedagogies that knit together access and transformation.

This chapter discusses the perspectives of the four language teachers and seeks to develop a more complex and fluid understanding of how knowledge, pedagogy, and identity play out in the context of the relationship between grammar and power.

Grammar Instruction

Although grammar was a topic of discussion throughout the year, during an afternoon tea on the last day of the school year, the teachers focused specifically on their ideas about the place of grammar in language instruction. Unless otherwise noted, these conversations about grammar took place at an afternoon tea on June 19.

While the teachers were all, to varying degrees, reluctant to directly teach grammar, Katie, Margaret, and Jane all supported instruction about grammar for a variety of reasons and in a variety of contexts. Katie recognized that students' mastery of

grammatical conventions allowed them to construct proficient identities and therefore access a degree of status and subsequent power. Margaret perceived grammar as the “bones” of language and supported the development of her students’ understandings about the rules governing language use. Jane identified two situations in which she supported grammatical instruction: to connect to students whose learning styles and histories had accustomed them to grammar-based teaching, and to prepare her students for grammar-focused standardized testing. At the end of the year, she made reference to a third purpose served by grammatical instruction, the construction of a proficient speaker identity. Alexandra, in contrast to the other three teachers, did not support grammatical instruction, believing that it served to detract from authentic language learning and inhibited students’ communication with their peers. However, although she didn’t teach grammar directly, she believed that her students acquired natural and comprehensible language proficiency through opportunities to practice language in use.

A dominant conception of grammar in language teaching would be quite narrow, limited perhaps to morphology (word forms) and syntax (the relationships among words) only. All four teachers defined grammar more broadly than this. Their definitions were closely related to each others’, but not always identical, and I will discuss those differences in meaning as I explore philosophical differences among the teachers.

Katie: “Power Comes Out in Your Knowledge of Grammar Structure”

For Katie, grammatical competence was one component of culture, and teaching culture was part of an ESOL teacher’s responsibilities: “You can give students knowledge of the culture to help them advance.” While she expressed great discomfort with the teaching of grammar in isolation, she supported an explicit focus on grammar

within context, perceiving grammatical mastery as a tool to access power. She believed that grammatically appropriate speech was one way to lend legitimacy to discourse and increased the likelihood that the speaker would be heard. For Katie, “grammar” went beyond merely an explicit focus on grammatical rules; her definition extended to grammar in actual use and even included the ability to distinguish which discourse forms are appropriate for which situation (register) and the ability to use language to convey the speaker’s intended meanings (pragmatic competence). For instance, she refers to a speaker’s ability to indicate politeness or to be demanding as being evidenced in “grammatical structure,” indicating a broad conceptualization of grammar.

For Katie, the connection between grammar and power related to identity, with grammatical accuracy providing to students the tools they needed to construct an identity that could procure power. She explained that “grammar’s a way to access yourself to power because the way language is structured people will see you in a certain way and if you can have access to the language, then you can have the power that comes with the language.” In the eyes of this teacher, language was not merely connected to power, it was situated within identity. She provided an example: “So for instance, if you go into a job interview wearing a nice suit and you sit down and go ‘Me four years school’ and start talking in broken English, their perception of you will be very different than if you went in and said: ‘I went to school and I have taken this many classes.’” Just as Katie saw a “nice suit” as a marker of an identity of power, she associated the social ignominy of “broken English” with the identity of one who operates outside the culture of power and was concerned about the ability of her students to escape its associated stigmatization.

Katie believed that accurate language use was not an indication of intelligence or even education, and she was critical of general tendencies to associate developing English proficiency with lower intelligence: “I think unconsciously, people associate intelligence with language. If you know how to speak a language very well, you’re very intelligent.” Her assertion is well supported; others, including Lindeman (2003), have found ideologies about nonnative English speakers to assume lesser intelligence, particularly for certain linguistic groups. Katie recognized that regardless of how she valued grammar in her classroom, students would eventually be facing native-English speakers who held positions of power. She recognized that in order for her students to overcome potential employers’ stereotypes, non-Native English speakers must learn to speak “well”. “That’s why I think grammar is helpful. Because it’ll get you from one point, where people see you as uneducated even though you may be very educated, to the next point, which is, this person has a good command of the language.” She blames the injustice and inaccuracy of the controlling images of non-native English speakers on those who accept these images, but she recognizes that she has no control over these misperceptions. Responsibility for how non-native English speakers are perceived therefore falls not on “people” who unquestioningly accept stereotypes but on the non-native English-speakers themselves: “That’s a problem we have with ESOL students—even though you’re very bright, your English isn’t very good, so people think you’re not all there.” Here, she referred not to a problem with people who accept stereotypes unquestioningly, but to “a problem we have with ESOL students.” In developing strategies to help to work around societal stereotypes and assumptions, which she had

very limited influence over, Katie focused on what she could contribute to, that is her students' grammatical proficiency.

“Language and power are very connected. I finally believe that,” said Katie. Her use of the word “finally” is telling, indicating a reluctant and almost resigned acceptance of a relationship that she had hoped to repudiate. She provided an example: “Especially in the way that you get people to do things, it comes out in your grammar. If you want to be polite, you say ‘please.’ If you’re demanding, you say: ‘Get me whatever.’” She noted the social power to be gained through pragmatic competence, for instance an ability to indicate politeness: “The power comes out in your knowledge of grammar structure.” This represents a deeper step; knowledge about how to use the language empowers the speaker, but furthermore enables the speaker to assert her power with language.

Katie wanted to teach in a way that supported two processes that both contributed to social change—the first a growing societal awareness of the inaccurate nature of stereotypes about immigrants (Pennycook’s “transformation”), and the second English language learners’ entry into the culture of power in order to challenge those stereotypes (“access”). As is evident from the following quote, I initially perceived these two as incompatible with each other and asked Katie whether she had difficulty finding a balance between “teaching her students what they need in the world and teaching them to conform.” This dualism was not present for Katie: “I don’t think there’s a tension.” She saw a gradual change in the publicly perceived images of English language learners and saw students themselves as potential advocates for themselves. She explained why access and transformation could coexist:

“There’s a movement to broaden people’s perspectives on language and minority students, but it’s a slow process. But in the meantime, you can give them knowledge of the culture, knowledge of the culture to help them advance and, once they do, they themselves can contribute to the process of broadening people’s perspectives. So you’re helping to empower them to change the system. They’ll succeed in the system, but at the same time they’ll be able to change it because they’ll know how to get inside. They say that the most effective way to change something is to get inside the structure and work from within.”

I offered in response: “But, you know, Audre Lorde says the master’s tools will never destroy the master’s house.” Katie’s perception was less black-and-white, and she voiced disagreement: “I think you need both.” She believed that social change came through a concerted effort between “people on the inside and outside railing the system,” with the “radicals” on the outside attracting attention to injustice and “people on the inside” furthering the process from within. She believed that “They’re not mutually exclusive” and moreover that: “...one’s not necessarily better than the other.”

Katie has re-cast the access/transformation dichotomy with the important observation that access is a form of transformation, and transformation is a form of access because “the most effective way to change something is to get inside the structure and work from within.” Katie’s discussions of cultures of power reveal a clearly delineated distinction between insiders and outsiders, with proficiency within the culture of power enabling social mobility and social change. The borders of the “culture” of power are firmly established. English language learners occupy space outside this culture

of power, and their ability to construct and present appropriate identities is related to their ability to enter the “culture”. In her discussion of the perceived correlation between English proficiency and intelligence, Katie referred to native English speakers, future employers, and those within the culture of power as a collective “people” whose impressions of non-native English speakers played an important role in her students’ futures: “I think unconsciously, *people* associate intelligence with language,” “... your English isn’t very good, so *people* think you’re not all there...,” “[*P*]eople see you as uneducated even though you may be very educated,” and “...the way language is structured *people* will see you in a certain way.” Her language choices revealed her vision; she was motivated by a desire for her students who were currently outside the culture of power to gain entry, and she believed that the identities they forged to present to “people” were instrumental in their access to insider status. Lisa Delpit (1988) has endorsed teaching codes of power. Delpit tells us that to neglect teaching the linguistics of the culture of power is to underscore the outsider status of minority groups, reaffirming difference and perpetuating marginalization. An essential ingredient in the construction of appropriate identities was “knowledge of the culture,” which can be provided by ESOL teachers in the form of, *inter alia*, grammatical competence. For Katie, language teaching had the potential to be a political act.

Alexandra: “Grammar Slows Things Down”

Alexandra also perceived grammar teaching as connected to liberatory teaching. However, in direct contrast to Katie, she refused to teach grammar directly. I interpreted her pedagogical choice as an act of resistance. Alexandra believed that an explicit focus on grammar was artificial, detracted from language learning, and reinforced inequitable

and arbitrary notions of which language was most legitimate. Her meanings of grammar were more specific than were Katie's and centered exclusively on the rules governing language use. For instance, most of the examples of grammatical knowledge that she provided referred to tense shifts.

Alexandra perceived a tension between natural language use and grammatical instruction. She believed that "grammar slows things down. Because I think the kids are using the language." One example she provided of grammatical instruction was teaching one tense at a time, and she believed that this focus drew students away from the less contrived, "fluid", mixed-tense usage of everyday conversation: "If you sit there and say, we're going to use the present tense today ... but they're using present, past, and future all day." She drew the conclusion that "...when you teach grammar, you're teaching [language] in a segmented way." To focus exclusively on one facet of language is artificial, "segmented." Embedded in Alexandra's philosophy was a belief in the acquisition of language through its use. She expected that students "are going to pick up the difference between 'he' and 'him' just by using it" and should not be distracted or confused by a grammatical focus. For Alexandra, therefore, teaching grammar directly not only detracts from her transformative goals because it reinforces dominant norms, but it does not support the language learning that her students need

Another tension that made itself evident in Alexandra's discourse was the distinction between accuracy and communication, which she saw in opposition to each other. She spoke of an "expectancy," noting that "when we're sitting around talking about what we're going to do this weekend, they expect it to be in the future tense. So even if it doesn't come out in the future tense, they understand it in the future tense." The

use of the correct tense was less important than the listener's ability to comprehend the message. Rather than teaching tense changes directly, she relied on literature to contextualize and provide natural modelling "because in literature you can mix tenses and still understand the content of what you're reading."

Canale and Swain (1980) understood communicative competence to comprise four components, (1) grammatical competence, which includes knowledge about the basic principles of language use, what Alexandra refers to as "grammar," (2) discourse competence, which concerns adeptness in combining grammar and meaning to create continuous text, (3) sociolinguistic competence, or producing and understanding language in relation to its context, and (4) strategic competence, the ability to navigate and compensate for language gaps, both verbally and nonverbally. In saying: "So even if it doesn't come out in the future tense, they understand it in the future tense," Alexandra was making a distinction between grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence and privileging the latter over the former to the exclusion of the former. Katie, on the other hand, viewed grammatical competence as a stepping stone toward sociolinguistic and discourse competence. For her, having control over the grammar resulted in more dexterous constructions of meaning.

Like Katie, Alexandra was concerned about the ability of her students to discern among appropriate registers and particularly to know the difference between informal and formal registers. However, while Katie's primary goal for her students appeared to be competence in mastering the dominant discourse and hence constructing an identity of power, Alexandra's concern was with her students' ability to converse with their peers. She suggested that "grammar doesn't help you speak to your peers in middle school." In

her desire to legitimate colloquial and nonstandard language, Alexandra enacts a decentering strategy, refusing to teach the dominant code. Both Alexandra and Katie were caring teachers motivated by their students' needs. Katie considered the primary need of her elementary-level students to become empowered within broader society, while Alexandra noted that for her students "when you're in middle school ... what's most important [is] speaking to your peers and being part of." A character in John Farrow's 1955 film *The Sea Chase* said: "A ship may belong to her captain, but the lifeboats belong to the crew." For Alexandra, regardless of which language form was socially dominant and was affirmed by most, it was the lifeboat, the living language-in-use, that had currency and relevance in the everyday lives of her students and that had longevity apart from the ship. By determining that grammar interferes with language learning and rejecting legitimated language, Alexandra avoided reinforcing arbitrarily defined identities of power. And conversely, when Katie sanctioned legitimated language, her students were more likely to learn the forms of language that are granted social legitimacy and might therefore have greater access to the culture of power. The two teachers have chosen different approaches to reconciling their pedagogical ideals with the realities of their students' needs in a socially inequitable world.

Alexandra perceived a conflict between learning formal English and vernacular English and believed that one needed to take priority over the other. Despite this apparent conflict, she articulated a desire for her students to be able to master different dialects at the same time, stating that in teaching grammar, "you lose the code-switching capabilities." The term *code-switching* refers to the simultaneous use of two or more languages in one single interaction between two bilingual speakers. An example would

be the sentence: “J’ai déjà vu that movie,” which begins in French and then switches to English with no interactional markers of the language shift (Gumperz, 1982). What Alexandra is saying is that direct grammar teaching not only fails to contribute to language acquisition, but that it actually interferes with students’ abilities to move among languages or language variations.

In discussing the value (or lack thereof) of an explicit focus on grammar, Alexandra told us of a colleague’s grammar-based final exam that was disconnected from students’ realities. She deplored the teacher’s lack of caring and consideration for his students’ needs: “All it was xeroxed grammar exercises, and the grammar exercises would ask: ‘Please put the following verbs in the past ... past ... perfect ...’ whatever, I don’t even know what these things are because I don’t do it that way. So, it comes across, when you don’t care.” She associated this artificial grammar-based assessment with a lack of caring. While she went out of her way to connect her lessons and her assessments to students’ lives, her colleague structured his teaching and testing around grammatical concepts that had no basis in his students’ lives. Furthermore, she explained to us that she is not familiar with tense names because this knowledge is not related to authentic use of English, which brings us to an interesting point. Most language teachers are indeed familiar with tense names. I contend that when Alexandra explained that she didn’t know them, she was describing resistance, and not ignorance. To say that she did not know tense names would be a gross oversimplification of her knowledge as a teacher. A superficial reading of her teaching might suggest that she did not teach grammar because she needed to obscure the fact that she did not know grammar. However, her teacher education and academic context did indeed equip her to know grammar. A formal

grammar class was included in her master's coursework. In it, she learned not only methods of teaching grammar but also the basic grammatical principles of the English language. She was exposed to whatever terminology would have been unfamiliar to her at that point. She was required to buy grammar textbooks and usage guidelines during her graduate coursework, and she still owned these during the study. Additional resources were available through her school and the ESOL office. What is relevant is that although technical knowledge about grammar has been placed directly in her path and around her, she had chosen not to memorize tense names and other forms of explicitly grammatical knowledge, which implies a deliberate refusal to invest heavily in memorized rules about grammar within her language classroom. If Alexandra truly did not know tense names, it was because for her, they were not a part of language learning. She noted that transmitting information about grammar is of limited utility because this information is available to her at any moment: "I can look it up in my grammar bible, but I don't bother because I focus on authentic use." She again called our attention to the distinction between knowledge about grammar and knowledge of language: "To me it doesn't matter what it's called, [students] just need to know how to use it. And [my colleague] thinks if they know what it's called, they'll know how to use it, which I don't agree with."

Learning language does not have the same meaning as knowing tense names.

Among the four teachers, the greatest proponent of transformation over access in the teaching of grammar was Alexandra. Alexandra was guided by the concept of language in use—not native speaker use, but use by her ESOL students in their everyday lives and interactions. She employed a decentering strategy in order to show her students how much she valued their language. She expressed a desire to recognize all language

varieties and to equip students to navigate among them, for instance saying: “You have to teach them that there’s different settings that you’re going to use black vernacular and you’re not going to use it.” However, she privileged the acquisition of colloquial language over the socially legitimated formal language: “What’s most important is speaking with your peers and being part of.” For Alexandra, the colloquial language of school culture is constructed oppositionally to grammatically accurate language. For Alexandra, “grammar” was associated with formal English, so she didn’t teach it. The strategy that Alexandra has chosen, *decentering*, is important because she used her position of authority within the classroom to challenge the status quo by not only legitimating vernacular speech but also delegitimizing standard speech.

Like the other three teachers, Alexandra expressed a philosophy that does not fall neatly on the transformation/access spectrum, but rather included more complex elements. While her focus is transformative and she is concerned with access, it is not Katie’s access to dominant culture of power but rather access to the social peer groups and communities of practice of other students. While she did not advocate direct grammar teaching, she, like Margaret, valued students’ ability to absorb rules about grammar in a natural context. However, while Margaret was pleased to see students’ directly correcting each other, Alexandra advocated less direct acquisition of knowledge through, for instance, literature.

The tension between ensuring that minority students are explicitly taught to enter the culture and challenging the arbitrary codes that affirm linguistic values is consistently present for ESOL teachers, but all four of the teachers find strategies to accommodate

their philosophies and move the skirmish beyond a black-and-white choice between transformation and access.

Margaret: "The Bones of the Language"

"To teach grammar means to give bones to the language," said Margaret. Margaret, who taught elementary-aged students but had past experience teaching adults, made a distinction between the language-learning needs of a child and those of an adult and saw grammar functioning differently in the classroom according to her students' ages. She believed that while explicit grammatical instruction might be appropriate for adults, other forms of teaching would be more suitable for children. She indicated a preference for allowing children to discover grammatical rules themselves, for learning through hearing each other, and for peer correction. As she discussed language, it became apparent that "grammar," for Margaret, referred to the rules governing language forms and usage. For instance, an example she gave when discussing "grammar" was the distinction between the third-person object *him* and the third-person subject *he*. Form was referred to in connection to grammar, specifically "repetition of patterns and recognition of patterns." Margaret's definition of grammar also included appropriateness of speech, "what is said and what is not." Margaret's definition was similar to Katie's in that it extended to grammar in use and not merely an explicit focus on rules. Both Katie and Margaret also consider register as part of grammatical competence, which represents an understanding of grammar that is slightly broader than Alexandra's and Jane's definitions.

During the course of the study, Margaret was contemplative and sometimes unresolved about the role of grammar instruction in her classroom. "I haven't done very

much explicit teaching of grammar,” she shared with Alexandra, Katie, Jane and me. I asked her: “Are you glad that you haven’t?” and she replied: “I guess so, but I want to explore ways to give the kids more of a handle on what is said and what is not said.” While she, like Alexandra and Jane, associated direct grammar teaching with authoritative and directive teaching, she was simultaneously concerned about providing sufficient information about language use, a recasting of the tension that Katie discussed between teaching the codes of power and teaching conformity. While Katie believed that explicitly teaching the codes of power placed students in a position to construct powerful identities, Margaret was concerned about presenting herself as the sole source of knowledge. She negotiated this difficulty by relying on the social nature of learning and on sources of knowledge for her students other than herself, for instance each other: “A lot of it they discover for themselves, by hearing the other kids. Like in the first grade, I’ll have kids correct each other. I have one girl, An-Lin, she says ‘Him go. Him like this.’ And the others will say ‘Not him go, he go!’” She herself refrained from direct correction, noting that because her students were child learners, they were less in need of explicit instruction than adults would be: “But I haven’t done as much purposeful modelling. My adult students would get very frustrated if I didn’t do more direct grammar. They’d say: ‘I know I can’t talk like that person, and you have to give me the way to talk like that person.’ I think that an adult has a different way to anticipate what’s coming in a language, in relation to their own language. If I were in a language class, I would need some explicit instruction.”

Margaret’s metaphor of bones indicates a conception of grammar underlying language and providing support for words. Margaret believed that knowledge of the rules

of language use is a necessary part of English learning, regardless of how that knowledge is obtained. She likened language to math:

“I was just talking to my family in Pig Latin last night, and I ... explained it to my husband. I said, okay, it’s very mathematical. It’s like multiplying every word by a common variable. The way my dad and I perceive it, it’s just like math.”

She valued knowledge of the formula, the grammar:

“And if I were learning Turkish, I would want the math of the language laid out first. Like, just the syntax, the mathematical relationship of certain words explained before I started embellishing and exploring.”

Alexandra disagreed with Margaret’s conceptualization of grammar as a mathematical formula. She believed that “the language that you use expresses who you are” and serves as an indicator of who a speaker is and what her experiences have been. “That’s part of the social and human construct of language, why it can’t be this mathematical formula.”

Margaret valued teaching the form of language as an alternative to teaching grammar. She referred to Kenneth Koch’s books:

He’ll just give a pattern like: ‘I used to, but now...’ and then do lovely poems, like ‘I used to be a cloud but now I’m the water on your cheeks’ and just have fun with it so you don’t have to present it as a grammar lesson, you can present it as a form, and everyone does one on that pattern, but you’re getting down that: ‘I used to, but now...’ And I think that the recognition of patterns and repetition of patterns is there.” (Margaret, Interview, 05.30).

She values students' ability to grasp the grammatical patterns in language through their use. Her ideas about language acquisition and particularly grammatical acquisition are consistent with Gee's (1993) suggestion that "humans simply do not acquire a repertoire of language forms and functions by being explicitly presented with paradigmatic instances of them...Rather, it is the other way around. They (subconsciously) induce patterns and paradigms from actual practice and experience with a broad range of cases." (p. 270). Rather than teaching simply the form "I used to," Margaret sought to introduce Koch's poetry and to allow that particular structural form to be acquired passively, as the students experimented with their own compositions. In this way, while the teacher perceives language function as akin to a mathematical formula, she aims to teach it in a naturally occurring context.

While Margaret valued her students' access to information about grammatical usage, she also strove to teach authentic, living language. She challenged not the actual legitimacy of grammatical knowledge, but rather its source by supplanting herself as the primary reference and embracing instead peer teaching and discovery principles.

Jane: "A Necessary Evil"

Jane, who taught high school students, characterized grammar as "a necessary evil" (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25) and taught direct grammar reluctantly:

Jane: I don't like teaching grammar. I don't like teaching it.

Suhanthie: Because ...

Jane: Okay, I have a lot of kids that ask me 'why?' And I find it very difficult to explain why without saying 'just because'. (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25)

She took issue with the irrational nature of grammatical rules, and, like Alexandra, she believed that grammar holds back language learning:

I think it's bogging them down if you're focusing on "is" and "are" and "present progressive." (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25)

Like Margaret, Alexandra, and Katie, however, Jane felt an ethical responsibility towards her students. She was therefore unable to justify withholding direct grammar instruction when she recognized its potential to enhance their learning and life opportunities. She cited three instances in which direct grammar instruction was appropriate. While Jane didn't believe in the inherent usefulness of grammar instruction in second language acquisition, she saw grammar instruction as appropriate in response to contexts that celebrated specific knowledge about grammar. She took an instrumentalist orientation, supporting a focus on grammatical accuracy (1) to meet the learning styles of students who were accustomed to grammar-based teaching methods, (2) to prepare them for high-stakes standardized testing that relied on grammatical knowledge and (3) in the negotiation of competent speaker identities. Like Alexandra, Jane viewed "explicit grammar teaching" as support for and conformity to grammatical rules, a more specific definition than Katie's or Margaret's. She cited as examples of grammar teaching the use of "grammatical terms" (Afternoon tea, 06.21), the distinction between "singular and plural" (Afternoon tea, 06.21), "question formation" (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25), and "modals" (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25).

Rather than teaching her students what she believed they needed to be taught, Jane sought a connection between her teaching and their learning styles. Many of her students had studied English in their home countries, often in grammar-focused contexts,

and were comfortable learning grammar directly. At an afternoon tea on 03.21, she explained her pedagogy as an adjustment to her students' "learning styles," explaining that: "I don't do a lot of explicit grammar teaching, but I think that some kids really miss that and really want it." Her intention was to teach grammar as suggested by the curriculum: "in the curriculum, grammar is supposed to be integrated." She strove to teach grammar only in the context of editing students' written work, but she found herself frequently responding to their specific questions about grammar and grammatical terminology when she wanted "to get them into process writing and work on things based on what they're doing wrong." She noted that although it contradicted her philosophy of second language learning, "some of them do well with: 'This is the rule, practice it.' Some of them like that." Similarly, at the end of the year, she expressed her sense of a conflict between providing an enjoyable learning experience and responding to students' requests for grammatical instruction.

Some of the kids love it. That's a whole other thing I struggle with because here I am thinking we're doing all of these fun things and much more of what I like with the reading and the literature and the writing and the speaking activities, and then I have kids who are like: 'We don't do enough grammar.' I mean, we have the Azar series, which is so traditional in my view, and some of the kids love it, they crave it, they really want it, I don't know if it's structure or familiarity, I mean if they're coming in at level 2, they've already been learning it. (Jane, Dinner at her house, 06.25).

She linked her philosophy to Vygotskian (1978) theory. Her point of departure is what students can do independently, and her goal for them is assisted performance of grammatical use in context: “I was thinking about how my philosophy was almost a Vygotskian model, allowing them to show you what they need.” She valued the notion of teaching that focused on the students: “I guess some direct teaching is good, but I guess I had this idea of this teacher who will motivate their students and guide them, who will say: ‘What do you think about X?’ and figure things out.”

Jane’s second reason for teaching grammar directly was to prepare students for high-stakes standardized testing. When she was teaching to the test, she used technical grammar terminology and encouraged students to know grammatical rules. For instance, she distributed a list of verbs whose past tense is irregularly conjugated and added this list, in poster form, to her classroom wall. Her class on 11.07 began with the following warm-up:

“Warm Up

Write a sentence in the past tense using these verbs:

write

forget

go

be”

(Field Notes, 11.07)

However, Jane was not simply conforming to a traditional teaching style in grudging response to the requirements of this functional writing test, a requisite for graduation. She made a point of telling her students that the knowledge they were acquiring was

specifically for the test, making the distinction between real learning and learning for the test:

Jane: Why are we talking so much about the past tense? We're doing a lot of past tense, but why?

Ignacio: The writing test.

Jane: Right! The writing test. We're doing this for a reason ... There is a certain way they want you to answer the questions. There is a certain way they want you to write in order to pass the writing test. Most of your writing will be in the past tense, and they look for that, to make sure you are writing in the past tense. (Observation, 11.07)

Her teaching focused not on meaning-making, communicative competence, or language in use, but rather on efficiently and expediently ensuring that students would be able to produce the type of writing that the test valued.

Jane: Who has a sentence?

Ricardo: I write a letter last time for my brother.

Jane (writing the sentence on blackboard): So ... write becomes?

Students: Wrote.

Jane: Wrote. Okay. Forget?

Luis: I never forgot my homework.

Jane (writing on blackboard): Good.

(Observation, 11.07)

She told me later that her teaching style for test preparation differed from her beliefs about how language should be learned:

“The way I’m teaching now is nothing like the way I would teach if there were no test. Absolutely not.” (Interview, 11.07)

While she regretted the effect the test was having on her teaching, she was comfortable with her pedagogical choice which she saw as necessary within an ethic of caring and responsibility. She recognized that grammatical knowledge had a valuable meaning in the lives of her high-school students and was crucial to their success, and she felt a responsibility to support them: “I want these kids to graduate. I mean, it’s not fair of me to say I’m not going to do it that way. That’s not fair to the kids.” (Interview, 11.07)

She was aware of the broader advantages of studying for tests that relied on grammatical knowledge and uses the word “justify” in support of her teaching of grammar. Her word choice appears to illustrate a general regret regarding direct grammar teaching (although it is unfortunately equally possible that familiarity with my orientation and ideologies made her feel the need to explain or ‘justify’ her teaching to me), and she made a point of letting her students know that this focus on grammar was simply in deference to the test.

“That’s another way I justify it, how it’s test-taking skills. That can help them throughout high school and if they go on to college.” (Jane, Dinner at her house, 06.25).

Jane, like Katie, had concerns about identity construction and in particular about her students’ abilities to project the appearance of proficiency. This provided her third reason for directly teaching grammar. She perceived the ‘fossilization’ of errors as an impediment to the construction of a competent speaker identity, and she believed that it was a problem that could be redressed by the direct teaching of grammar:

I think [grammar is] necessary because the kids sometimes tend to fossilize some of their mistakes, and I understand them, but part of my goal is to get them to a level where everybody can understand them and perceive them as being proficient in English. I think they're looked down on if they make grammatical errors. (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25).

She made a distinction between her grammatical standards and those that she believed are expected of students beyond her ESOL classroom:

And it doesn't bother me a bit if they make grammatical errors, and I don't most of the time correct them, but I would like them to be able to know it and then choose whether to use it. (Afternoon tea, 03.21)

On a personal level, Jane was unconcerned with nonstandard or incorrect grammar. However, she constructed empowerment as having enough knowledge to make a choice between forms considered correct and incorrect. The language that she believes was important communicatively was not the same language necessary in the negotiation of students' own identities:

Question formation, certain points just immediately grab someone as an error. Modals like may I, can I, could I, I don't think those are necessarily important at this stage. But if the kid continues to make the same mistake over and over, I think it just limits them. (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25)

Her concerns with students being "looked down on" and "just limit[ed]" related not to students' communicative abilities but to their identities. Another concern of Jane's was the contextualization of grammatical instruction:

Suhanthie: Would you ever stand up and teach a grammar lesson without the context of a kid making an error?

Jane: Yes, but only that feeds from something else we've done. If it's in a story and it's a teachable moment, like if there's a bunch of pronouns in a story we're doing, then I might pull them out and have them work with them. (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25)

Like Alexandra, she avoided teaching grammar that lacked connection to the lives of students, telling me later during the same conversation that: "It's very rare that I will take out the grammar book and do a chapter." She saw the acquisition of knowledge about form as developmental, as part of the process of self-improvement for all people, not only non-native English speakers. She consequently offered grammar in the context of editing:

I do a lot of editing, which I think is a skill. Yeah, I'm focusing on grammar but I'm also focusing on writing and editing which is something that we all have to do forever. I just keep telling them nobody writes perfectly the first time, there's always a way to improve your writing in a second draft. And we look for mistakes. I think that's valuable, finding your own mistakes in whatever language, looking over what you have written and seeing if you can make it better ... Or I have them peer edit where we work on vocabulary, they have to come up with a sentence for the vocabulary word, they put it on the board and as a class we look at it and we edit it. That's where in my mind I'm doing grammar. (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25)

Even when Jane directly taught grammar, she framed her instruction as the improvement of writing, rather than the teaching of grammar, and furthermore moved away from a deficit construction of second-language learning by casting editing as something important for everybody's writing, regardless of language proficiency.

In response to Alexandra's reluctance to teach grammar, Jane focused on the "necessary" rather than the "evil":

"What if your grammar is so poor in English that it's not communicative? What if the teaching of the grammar makes another kid able to understand her? Then are you doing a disservice to them later? When they leave your classroom, where that's acceptable, and then they go to the next classroom? Orally I think it's fine, I think the teacher's going to accept whatever the kid says as long as they're getting the content. But in writing, there's such a push for writing across the curriculum that if you don't teach them at least the rules ... and then they can choose. Because I think they're going to pick up the vernacular just by being in the halls and being in the lunchroom and hearing it and watching it on TV." (Dinner at Jane's house, 06.25)

To Jane, the fact that standard English was sanctioned meant that it ought to be taught in order for students to be successful. Both Katie and Jane were aware that the success of their students involved a certain degree of compliance with a dominant conception of success, one that included a legitimization of forms of knowledge that the teacher appreciated not as valuable knowledge but as a means to an end. They both believed that to challenge social acceptance of these forms of knowledge by refusing to

teach them, and hence legitimate them, would be an injustice to their students, disempowering them and hindering them on their path towards success in their American lives.

The teachers all practiced in contexts that accorded a greater degree of legitimacy to the teaching of grammar than the teachers themselves embraced, and all expressed a need to adequately integrate teaching language in a way that had integrity with a caring and ethically motivated desire to prepare their students for real-life success. The degree to which the teachers embraced direct grammar teaching varied according to the teaching context and identities of the teacher and the students.

Grammar and Authority

A discussion among Katie, Jane, and me touched on issues of authority and connection in relation to grammar and accuracy. Katie described a lesson she taught on a verb tense. The first day, she taught the concept directly, and the next day she re-taught it in a less direct and more inductive format.

I had a little crisis ... well, not a crisis, just a reflection, I guess ... For this new curriculum, we have to teach the present perfect. It's taught through content. So we're studying the rainforest, people have cut trees. It started in the past, it continues through the present, so it's present perfect. I did model the language, but I just taught it and let it come out.

Katie went on to describe the lesson, in which she drew a timeline illustrating the past, present, and future, and "had the students give me examples of something that they started and something that they finished that's over and done with and drew that on the

timeline,” color-coding their sentences in relation to a biography of a scientist who worked in a rainforest. She told us:

I guess it was okay because they got to manipulate sentences and words, but I wasn’t very satisfied with it.

Suhanthie: You thought you were too directive?

Katie: Yeah.

Jane complicated the link between authority and the absolute nature of grammar by placing it within the framework of culturally tinted learning styles:

Jane: I don’t know, I wouldn’t beat yourself up over that. Some kids really want that. I mean, if you’re coming from how to deal with learning styles. I don’t do a lot of explicit grammar teaching, but I think that some kids really miss that and really want it. Like they want to know, is that plural or singular, and they will use grammatical terms, where I want to get them into process writing and work on things based on what they’re doing wrong. But some of them do well with, this is the rule, practice it. Some of them like that.

Katie: I find myself saying a lot, this is what we’re going to do today instead of just doing it and then saying look, what we just did was I found myself doing a lot today we’re going to, instead of approaching it a different way and having them work the language a bit and then pointing it out. Because I think that would get them to think, I want the students to be able to construct their language, use the language in situations and then

maybe pick out points that I can focus on. I think it's that I don't want to directly teach it off the bat. I think it's very boring.

Katie sensed that grammar teaching was pulling her into a transmission-oriented teaching style that failed to allow space for student knowledge and knowledge co-construction, but Jane pointed out the importance of specificity and clarity for linguistic minority students:

Jane: What about for the kids who find it confusing unless you tell them today this is what we're going to focus on, almost like a guide for some kids versus why are we doing this. In high school, they always want a reason for what they're doing. I was thinking about how my philosophy was almost a Vygotskian model, allowing them to show you what they need. In the curriculum, grammar is supposed to be integrated. I guess some direct teaching is good, but I guess I had this idea of this teacher who will motivate their students and guide them, say what do you think about X figure things out. (Afternoon tea, 03.21)

In the course of this conversation, direct grammar teaching was constructed as directive. Katie was pursuing a pedagogy that was open and relied on discovery principles, primarily because her experience on the first day of the more directive format was that it was "boring." Jane noticed that some of her high school students were actually reassured by teaching styles that were compatible with their own, in this case, more traditional styles. Jane refers to students using grammatical terms, asking whether words are plural or singular, and seeking to practice rules. Jane's point is important. There is a stark epistemological difference between the absolute nature of a grammar lesson and open-

endedness of a lesson that revolves around students' lives rather than around a body of concrete information to be learned. One values categorical and definite constructions of knowledge, the other more equivocal and subjective forms. For some students, there is something comforting in the consistent availability of right answers and wrong answers. It underscores teachers' authority, since the teacher then (usually) has the answers, but it eliminates a certain degree of intellectual chaos and the possibility of questions with no answers. Informing students about the upcoming format of the class, similarly, can be construed either as directive or as informative. Katie felt that she was guiding her students with too heavy a hand rather than allowing the class to evolve naturally from students' interests, but Jane pointed out that, for some students, being warned of what is to come next can provide a sense of security.

This conversation illustrates the unfeasibility of the teachers developing liberatory ideas about teaching language devoid of direct grammar instruction. To do so would be to ignore the needs, interests, learning styles, and realities of their students, a pedagogy which in itself would not be liberatory. The teachers' pursuit of pedagogies that allowed knowledge co-generated by teachers and students while still creating space for teachers to be clear and specific is an example of a collision and subsequent conciliation of transformation and access.

Access Versus Transformation

Katie, Margaret, Jane, and Alexandra challenged the bifurcation of transformation and access, exploring instead pedagogies that united the two. For these four teachers, to neglect to provide access to information about how the "culture of power" (Katie, *Afternoon Tea*, 06.19) operates was to deny students the chance to advance or learn. For

Katie, grammatical proficiency was “a way to access yourself to power” in order to construct and present an identity associated with social power. Margaret’s definition of grammar extended beyond an explicit focus on rules to include register. She expressed a desire to “give kids more of a handle on what is said and what is not.” Her motivation to “give kids” linguistic facility, to “allow them to discover,” and to comply with requests to “give me the way to talk like that person” all reflect concerns about access. Jane, too, saw an exclusive commitment to social transformation within her teaching context as injustice: “It’s not fair of me to say I’m not going to do it that way. That’s not fair to the kids.” (Jane, Interview, 11.07). In Jane’s eyes, if she had refused to affirm the value of decontextualized knowledge about grammar, she would have been robbing her students of the probability of passing the tests required for graduation. Alexandra sensed that her middle-schoolers’ most pressing need was to belong. She refused to sanction the dominant discourse by teaching it and expressed concern that her students be able to navigate not the culture of power, but their peer cultures, noting that: “grammar doesn’t help you to speak to your peers in middle school.” Hammond and Macken-Horarick (1999) have examined the challenges presented by mainstream literacy programs that include explicit teaching of genres (cultural tools within key curriculum subjects, an example of which is grammar). They note that: “...although the teaching of key genres may help some individuals gain access to the discourses, texts, and genres that have accrued cultural capital, such teaching does nothing to change the power structures that privilege these and that give rise to inequality in the first place.” (p. 530). This conceptualization of language teaching in binary terms is insufficient for our discussion. Two questions are raised: Does direct grammatical instruction imply abandonment of

transformative pedagogies? And conversely, does a commitment to transformation deny students access to cultures of power? These questions will be discussed next.

Student Agency in Transformation

The answers to the questions lie within the pedagogy of the four teachers, and specifically in the terrain between access and transformation. The access/transformation dualism provides a helpful scaffolding within which to conceptualize pedagogy concerning grammar, but it doesn't allow us to capture some of the complexities that the teachers bring to the binary. For instance, Katie was not single-mindedly committed to access, she saw it as the first step towards transformation: "There's a movement to broaden people's perspectives on language minority students, but it's a slow process ... once they [advance] themselves, they themselves can contribute to the process of broadening people's perspectives." Like Hammond and Macken-Horarik (1999), who believe that ESL students "cannot be expected to run before they can walk," Katie saw the mastery of tools of power as a necessary precursor to transformation. What the access/transformation dualism pays insufficient attention to is student agency, which to Katie was key. She saw her commitment to access as an investment in potential student agency. However, further attention needs to be paid to how that agency develops over time. Katie devoted her energies to assisting her elementary-school-aged ESOL students to construct grammatically proficient identities, but she did not do so uncritically. Rather, she was disparaging of erroneous stereotypes about language minority students, in particular the unfair perception of a relationship between English proficiency and intelligence later in their lives.

“How It’s Said”: The Idealized Native Speaker

Margaret was committed to providing access to information about grammar and language usage, however, she did not do so in a way that encouraged students to blindly adopt the prescriptive form of knowledge revered by grammarians. Rather, she privileged the descriptive language of everyday usage. For instance, she told of a sign she made for her classroom: “So I put up a sign, but I put it up as ‘Nobody is perfect.’ Then I remembered hearing in one of Carolyn Graham’s talks, she said that you shouldn’t teach anything how it’s not said, even just for the function of grammar. Nobody says: ‘Nobody is perfect.’ You always say it with the contraction. So I took it down and put a new sign up with the contraction ... I think my students feel so empowered when they learn something that they know other people say” (Margaret, Interview, 05.30). On one hand, Margaret spoke of “how it’s said,” which she immediately juxtaposed with, on the other hand, “grammar.” She accepts Carolyn Graham’s contention that “how it’s said” is more important than “the function of grammar.” For Margaret, the two are not natural companions and may even exclude each other. Her goal was not grammatical purity but a native-speaker sound. Her ideas about “what is said and what is not” revealed an understanding of a commonly used register that serves as a desirable goal for ESOL students.

The notion of a monolithic native speaker has been problematized by Cook (1999), who has called into question both the nature of and the validity of the native speaker as the sole “appropriate model” (p. 185) for non-native English speakers: “The prominence of the native speaker in language teaching has obscured the distinctive nature of the successful second-language user and created an unattainable goal for L2 learners.”

Cook suggests that acceptance of native speech as ideal establishes a deficiency perception of non-native speech, positing that in favoring access to native-like speech as a goal in second language acquisition, teachers and students glorify the ability of an immigrant to sound American and to suppress the foreign element of her speech. Cook is critical of this approach because doing so has the power to underscore the stigma of difference. However, Margaret developed a pedagogy that responded to the desires, needs, and “imagined communities” (Norton, 2000) of her students. Her terminology “how it’s said” is not necessarily synonymous with “native-speaker like” because the vaguer description allows the possibility of “how it’s said” by any community, including the bilingual community at Pewter Brook Elementary School. Her terminology chips away at the artificial division between “native” and “non-native.” Her strategy has the potential to rely on the conception of common speech as a more authentic alternative to the grammatically pristine speech historically reified in language classrooms. Margaret’s students found it “empowering” to be able to say English phrases that “they know other people say.” Because she was a caring and responsive teacher, a pedagogical style that made sense to Margaret needed to be cognizant of what made her students feel empowered.

Alexandra, who valued authenticity of speech, questioned the dominance of standard English in relation to what counts as native speech. Alexandra questioned the conception of a single, pre-cast native speaker and its contribution to an essentialist rendering of the native speaker. There is not one type of native speech. Alexandra spoke of the simultaneous existence of three language varieties in her classroom, formal English, colloquial English, and African-American vernacular English (Afternoon tea,

06.19). Which of these best represents “what is said and what is not”? Accepting the concept of an idealized native speaker, rather than multiple images of English speakers, would inevitably necessitate a decision about what counts as *the* native speaker. If we delved further, we would likely find even more varieties in all of the classrooms, depending on students’ other dimensions of difference such as geographic origin, gender, and class.

“There is a Certain Way They Want You to Write”: Postponing Transformation

When Jane taught grammar in order to meet students’ learning styles, she did so with the assurance that she would incrementally decrease her attention to direct grammar instruction in order to eventually address grammar in the correction of student texts only. She was deferring her pedagogical ideals temporarily and could envision a point when she would teach in a manner consistent with her philosophy. However, when she taught to the standardized tests, she did so with the acknowledgement that she was suspending her philosophy of teaching indefinitely, perhaps permanently, in the face of a pressing need: graduation. Deleuze (1977) notes that: “No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.” (p. 206). Jane’s liberatory philosophy had struck the wall of practice and the teacher was faced with a choice. She was contending with an additional challenge, her students had immigrated at a later age than those of the other three teachers and needed to therefore achieve a higher level of competence in English in order to be considered proficient, than would, say, a second-grade student. They also had a much shorter period in which to adjust to their new settings and fulfill the requirements for graduation. Rather than choosing among raising levels of consciousness, legitimating alternative discourses, and ensuring that her students

graduate, she developed an approach that allowed her to integrate the three. On a superficial level, she seemed to be teaching contingently until the ideal setting presented itself and allowed her to teach in tune with her ideals. However, part of pedagogy is a response to context. If we believe that a teaching philosophy cannot be divorced from the environment it is practiced in, we must examine not only how she would like to teach, but how she does teach.

Again, the simplicity of the access/transformation binary shrouds the teacher's intent. What counts as discourse or language in Jane's classroom was grammatically correct, so she felt coerced into teaching direct grammar. This, however, does not mean that Jane was agreeable to access to the exclusion of transformation. She enacted a philosophy that was responsive to her ethical commitment to her students, and she mitigated her legitimation of grammatical accuracy by telling students: "There is a certain way they want you write in order to pass the test," making a clear distinction between writing in general and writing for the test. She avoided using words such as "wrong" and "right." Jane wanted her students to graduate, but she also wanted to emphasize that the qualities valued by the test are not universally valued.

Summary

Alexandra, Margaret, Katie, and Jane sought to develop pedagogies that were respectful of their students' humanity and supportive of their lives beyond the classroom. The four were intentional and thoughtful practitioners teaching for social justice. Part of the development of their pedagogies was discovering a balance between pedagogy that supported transformation and accountability to their students. Freire (1998) tells us that: "...coherent democratic authority recognizes the ethical basis of our presence in the

world and necessarily recognizes that it is not possible to live ethically without freedom and that there is no such thing as freedom without risk” (p. 87). The decisions that the four teachers make are steeped in ethical responsibility to their students and, simultaneously, to their own ideals. While the strategies that Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret have arrived upon are not perfectly comfortable for them, they represent the most caring, most ethical balance that the four teachers are able to negotiate within their contexts.

Part II. Meanings of Student Identities,

Positionalities, and Difference

Where I'm From

I am from the dreams of my country.
I am from the volcano.
I am from the cana dulce.
I am from the farms with rice.
I am from strong coffee.
I am from las pupusas.
I am from baseball.
I am from Sami Sosa.
I am from beautiful dresses, barot saya.
I am from fritada with tortilla de papa.
I am from half of the world.
I am from 'El Patrimonio Nacional de la Humanidad'.
I am from the land of lakes and volcanoes.
I am from rice and beef.
I am from La Paz.
I am from the rice field, fruit, the fish in the river.
I am from the little country with five volcanoes.
I am from the smaller place in America.
I am from rice, milk, egg, corn, cheese, chicken, meat.
I am from nature.
I am from banana and yuca.
I am from merengue and bachata.
I am from the people who are real soccer players.
I am from where you can see the stars and dream with them.
I am from the fishing place.
I am from old Cora books.

~A collaborative effort of Margaret Foulkes Chan's ESOL I class ~

Introduction to Part II

Part II, “Meanings of Student Identities, Positionalities, and Difference” is about how Alexandra, Margaret, Katie, and Jane grappled with their role in the making of students’ identities. Language teachers may be unaware of the ways in which they inevitably contribute towards the shaping of their students’ identities, but Alexandra, Katie, Jane, and Margaret recognized the embeddedness of discursive practice in pedagogy and were mindful of the production of identities and positionalities implied in the generation of language. Their awareness stems from the informed, thoughtful, and analytical lenses they apply to the social dimensions of their teaching and their attentiveness to the active presence of their ideologies their classrooms. As Canagarajah (1999) puts it: “In the postmodern world, education has lost its innocence.” (p. 3)

Being conscious of their power in their classrooms did not mitigate the tensions inherent in that power, nor did it provide answers to their questions about how to negotiate the terrain between responding to their students’ various needs and challenging an inequitable status quo. However, their discussions around the topic afford us a window into the complexity of language and learning in the making of ESOL student identities. As I develop an account of their pedagogies, I highlight the numerous contradictions within and across the various dominant discourses of their contexts, their social worlds, and their academic histories.

Chapter 5. Pedagogies of Difference

Introduction

The processes of student identity construction in ESOL classrooms were intricate and complicated. Much of identity is constructed through discourse and, as was made patently evident in the study, meanings of language and positionality are inextricable one from the other. In a world in which English has immense linguistic power and in a country in which English is supreme, the language minority status of ESOL students usually places them in a subordinate discursive position. The intersections of language minority status with national identity, gender, race, class, and other dimensions of difference therefore provide rich terrain for understanding how identities are formed in and out of classrooms. Consequently, as researchers examine the ways in which teachers teach language, they are simultaneously scrutinizing the multiple ways in which identity is represented and, implicitly if not knowingly, constructed in classrooms. As crossroads of multiple cultural and linguistic identities, ESOL classrooms allow a special perspective: they are sites in which divergent and mutable meanings of identity meet and are negotiated. I drew from Alexandra, Katie, Margaret, and Jane's perspectives and practices and sought to develop an understanding of how knowledge, pedagogy, and power are played out as students' identities are negotiated and constructed. Doing so helped me to develop a broader account of the category of linguistic difference. The

study enriched my understandings of gender, ethnic, racial, and class identities by including the role of one dimension that is often neglected in the larger educational research community, that is linguistic difference, which permeates all other categories of difference within realm of English language teaching.

It is within social institutions, and in particular the institution of schooling, that meanings of difference are created, supported, challenged, or all too often overlooked. Just as schools are instrumental in the production of meanings of difference, they contribute to the shaping of individuals—teachers, students, and others—whose expectations either confirm, refute, or confound those meanings of difference (Weedon, 1999). In this chapter, I look at what difference meant for the teachers in this study and examine how their understandings of difference made themselves present in their classrooms and schools. How are meanings of difference, and in particular cultural, racial, gender, and linguistic difference, constructed in the classroom? I make a distinction between social constructions of difference, such as race, class, and gender and sexuality, which will be discussed in this chapter, and constructions that are particular to institutions of schooling, in particular the school constructions of ESOL, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Many years ago, I read Valerie Ooka Pang's (1988) description of very young first-grade students who arrived in her classroom already highly sensitized to racial differences. She explored the sociocultural interpretations of those differences. I remember that piece because the degree to which her tiny students were racially aware was perplexing to me at the time. However, throughout the year of this study, that was one element that never ceased to surprise me: not so much the sensitization to difference—

because after all even infants internalize messages about gender, ethnicity, and other forms of difference—but the comprehensible meanings that young children gave to difference and the transparency of these meanings to the social world they lived in. During the course of the study, at a social gathering in my home with several people including Margaret and Alexandra, a university faculty member pointed out that “just as genderization begins very young, so does the racialization of people. The sorting out of people, the whole hierarchy. And kids notice things at a very young age. My brother at age 5 noticed that all of the women taking the bus into our neighborhood were black, they were cleaning ladies coming in.” (Conversation, 12.14). Many incidents over the year of the study revealed the children in the four classrooms to be acutely aware of categories of difference and to be operating with internalized and often stereotyping messages that were recognizably derived from their environments. The teachers used a variety of approaches to negotiate these constructions of difference. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which the teachers’ conceptualizations and perceptions of difference manifested themselves in their teaching. The pedagogical acts of teachers who seek to teach transformatively are a rich site in which to explore the ways in which identity, gender, and language pedagogy interact.

Talking About Difference

Before I explore the ways in which difference was discursively produced in the four classrooms, I will probe the ways in which the subject was sometimes avoided because silences surrounding difference can potentially have an even more powerful effect than actual open discussion of difference. Bhabha (1998) believes that humans

have arrived at a period of history during which silences surrounding race and gender are ripe to be filled:

“In matters of race and gender, it is now possible and necessary, as it seemed never to have been before, to speak about these matters without the barriers, the silences, the embarrassing gaps in discourse.” (p. 21)

In order to overcome these silences, it is important to examine the ways in which they are constructed and maintained. Talking about difference is less straightforward than it would appear. Like the proverbial elephant in the room, difference is often visible and unmistakable, but in many instances it is unmentionable. Over the year of the study, silences played a significant role in the discursive fabric of the four teachers’ classrooms and of the afternoon teas, but because these silences refracted societal silences around difference, they were sometimes not immediately noticeable to me. Unconscious but concerted efforts to preserve silences surrounding difference shed light on the social meanings assigned to difference.

Beyond classroom discourse and in discussions with colleagues, administrators, and even each other, discussion of difference occupied a complicated space in the teachers’ lives. The fear of offending and the fear of saying something inappropriate often serve to silence. Using an example from a discussion of race during one afternoon tea, I will explain here how this silence can contribute to the erosion of social justice. Katie related a story to us at an afternoon tea. She told us of a conversation between Geraldine, a first-grade teacher, and Garry Macclesfield, a fifth-grade teacher.

Katie: Yesterday in the lunchroom [two teachers] were talking about a student who’s obviously struggling in class, and Geraldine said that she

could spot from a mile off that he has a learning disability, and Mr. Macclesfield's first question was, 'Well is he black?'

[Gasps from the other tea-drinkers]

Suhanthie: Oh my God, what did you say?

Katie: Geraldine just very calmly said: "Well, that has nothing to do with it" ... I was like, oh my God. This teacher should not be teaching!

(Afternoon tea, 06.19)

Geraldine's response: "Well, that has nothing to do with it," struck me at the time as a suitable response, but much retrospective reflection has persuaded me that something about that stance made us complicit in the sustenance of an inequitable status quo. Let me explain: Mr. Macclesfield asked: "Is he black?" which offended us because embedded in the question is an assumed correlation between black boys and learning disabilities, an assumption that a student with a learning disability is more likely to be a black boy. We were offended because not all boys with learning disabilities are black and not all black boys have learning disabilities. Geraldine's response: "Well, that has nothing to do with it" was designed to silence Mr. Macclesfield and to tell him that his question did not merit a response. But we missed an important point: there is indeed an overrepresentation of black boys in classes of students with learning disabilities. Everyone at the afternoon tea was aware of this fact. We had all read studies about black boys being tested for all forms of special needs disproportionately, labelled as learning disabled more often than their peers who were not black or not male, and placed in special education classes in higher numbers than their classmates. We were fairly sure that these statistics were the reason that Garry asked his question. However, no one mentioned the statistics when

Garry made his comment, and none of us mentioned it when Katie told the story at the afternoon tea.

Every time the topic of difference is avoided, important issues of difference (such as this one) become more unmentionable and remain unresolved. Because the subject was unmentionable, nobody spoke with Mr. Macclesfield about why such a large number of black boys have learning disabilities. It then follows that silencing discourse about racial difference also stymies discussions about power difference and therefore about the fact that black boys are overidentified as learning disabled because they are more likely to be singled out for testing, because they are more likely to be poor, because they are more likely to experience cultural disconnects with their teachers, because they are less likely to have access to economic and social resources, and numerous other reasons that relate not only to racial difference but to power difference.

I did not choose this example to illustrate the enormity of our oversight, nor because it was an unusual event, but because I believe that it was ordinary and representative of so many everyday interactions in U.S. schools in which race is inadvertently obscured. Frankenberg (1993) tells us that “color evasion actually involves a selective engagement with difference, rather than no engagement at all” (p. 143), and in this incident, our unwitting refusal to allow racial difference to be named had a silencing rather than neutralizing effect.

The ESOL teachers were not in agreement with each other about the necessity of discussing difference with their students, and even individual teachers’ ideas changed with their experiences over time. No one consistent pedagogical representation can therefore be made. For instance, Alexandra’s ideas about teacher-initiation of talk about

difference shifted over time. During the semester before the study started, she made a sharp distinction between exploring identity, which she advocated, and creating dissonance, which she warned against:

How this plays out in the classroom is very complicated in how we approach our students and their different ways of understanding and expressing themselves. I do feel, however, that facilitating the exploration of self/group identity with the students is part of our job. Students are naturally going through this search anyway as a natural part of growing up, but being a newcomer in a strange environment may be too much to bear alone. I think it is important that the teacher allow a free exploration through journal writing and student generated topic discussions and writing experiences. I would recommend not "creating" dissonance for our students (talking about racial tension for example) ... they will find their own ("I don't have anyone to talk to."). (Webchat, 04.15.99)

For some, the dissonance that often accompanies exploration of identity is an inherent part of the search. Not so for preservice Alexandra. Before she started teaching, Alexandra recognized identity and belonging as pressing issues for recent immigrants. However, like most ESOL teachers, she wanted her students to feel comfortable, and she accepted the widespread societal perception that discussion of racial tension necessarily implied discomfort. The balance is delicate: the teacher assumed that if racial tension were discussed openly, it would have to be acknowledged and given a space. She also assumed that if it were ignored, its presence would be minimized. At this stage of her professional life, it was conceivable, and even desirable, to Alexandra for ESOL students

to explore identity without discussing racial tension. In this way, Alexandra was making decisions about which topics were permissible on the basis of the levels of short-term comfort she expected her students to experience. Over the course of the school year, however, Alexandra's ideas changed considerably. The contrast is starkly visible in this comment that she made one year later, in which she identified herself as willing to discuss race to a degree that was unusual within her school context:

The teachers talk to me about racism. Some teachers see my willingness to talk about subjects that most people don't talk about or that white mainstream people don't like to talk about. (Afternoon tea, 04.10)

As Alexandra navigated the racial tensions within her school context, she came to value open discussion of race. She no longer conceptualized racial discussions separately from explorations of identity, and she was no longer vested in avoiding dissonance but rather constructed herself as willing to talk about difficult subjects.

Attending to Difference

"We have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate."

Audre Lorde (1984, p.115)

Ideas about difference are repeatedly, continually, and inevitably constructed around teachers and students within school walls but also in the world beyond the school, with students receiving multiple messages about what difference means. Among the four teachers, the meanings of attending to difference in the lives of linguistic minority

students took the form of a variety of positions and strategies, including most notably attempts to cast difference in a positive light. The teachers challenged constructions of difference that they believed caused their students “to see and fear (?) the different” (Margaret, E-mail, 04.25) or compelled them “to begin a new identity that is easier for [the mainstream] to understand” (Alexandra, E-mail, 04.26). At times, however, these intentions appeared to be in conflict with other pedagogical ideals, and the resulting struggles warrant deeper probing.

Constructing a Positive Image of Difference

Throughout their preservice coursework and teacher preparation, the four teachers had been influenced by theorists and ideologies that presented difference positively and encouraged teachers to value the home cultures of their future students. This ideological underpinning was evident in their classroom practice and in their afternoon tea discourses. For instance, they had read and made reference to Moll’s (1991) work on funds of knowledge, which advocates that teachers view students’ home communities as a pedagogical resource. They had studied Serpell’s (1997) suggestions for creating connections between home and school literacy practices. They had read *Hunger of Memory* (Rodriguez, 1982) and had discussed the dangers of seeking to uproot one culture and replace it with another. Two overriding themes in the construction of difference in the four classrooms in this study were (1) valuing the knowledge students brought to the classroom and (2) reinforcing students’ connections to their home cultures. I describe and provide examples of Alexandra, Katie, Jane, and Margaret’s pursuit of these two ends and then go on to explain that these strategies were not facile fixes. The literature supporting teachers attending to diversity can encourage teachers to believe that

indiscriminately honoring students' knowledge is a simple strategy they can use to counter the tendency of American schools to suppress ESOL students' perspectives. However, the assumption that all aspects of a minority culture should and can be uncritically absorbed into U.S. culture is a liberal multicultural assumption that celebrates difference for difference's sake. Such an approach exoticizes ESOL students and their histories and ignores the complexity, hybridity, and value-laden nature of "culture." Similarly, an important and popular theme in the literature on multicultural education is the support of connections between home cultures and school cultures. The strategy is important in challenging fixed and normative definitions of U.S. culture, making learning relevant, and creating space for ESOL students' voices, but it is not a straightforward solution. It can lead teachers to make assumptions about what constitutes a home culture, to universalize cultures and identities, and to ignore students' agency to self-define. The teachers in this study struggled not to fall into these traps without relinquishing the vision of classrooms that wove meaningful connections between classroom lives and home lives, and school knowledge and personal knowledge.

Legitimizing Student Knowledge

The teachers' discourses indicated that they were in agreement that affirming student knowledge was an important part of teaching. Particularly during the afternoon teas, they collaboratively developed understandings of desirable teaching practices, and endorsing the knowledge that students brought to class figured prominently in the construction of what it means to teach well. For instance, Margaret noticed that the content of one mainstream class she plugged into had the potential to draw from students' background knowledge, but that the structure of the lesson didn't provide students with

the opportunity to share. Margaret was tactfully critical of that absence of opportunity. It was a third-grade class on plants, and Margaret was sitting in the back of the classroom with the ESOL students, helping them to understand a video on plants being shown by the classroom teacher. Beside her sat Carmen from El Salvador. Margaret told us:

In the books and the videos, all the plants they showed in this lesson were plants from this [the Mid-Atlantic] region. Carmen was whispering in my ear: “In El Salvador, they have flowers like cactus.” She was describing the flower all in detail, and I thought: “Oh, that should be in the video!”

Margaret was mindful of the special knowledge her students brought and reflective about why different students have acquired different forms of knowledge:

My kids, it’s just because they’ve been doing plants. They have more knowledge than I did a couple years ago about how things grow. I think because some of my kids were in more rural areas. Like, they’re like: “Oh yeah, the flower comes and then the fruit comes.” And I just found that out this summer! Like, they’d see the picture of a painting of a pumpkin patch, and they’d be like: “Yeah, after that falls off then comes the pumpkin.”

Katie agreed with her: “There’s so much rich knowledge that they’re not allowed to share. Not that they’re not allowed, there’s just no opportunity.” Both teachers saw chances to share background knowledge as valuable part of classroom procedure.

However, incorporating this knowledge was not so simple. Katie perceived an actual conflict between student knowledge and teacher knowledge:

That’s one of the questions that I have about the curriculum that I’m piloting, I don’t think it allows enough room for self-expression. Like the

first unit, yes, the new beginnings. With all of the material that you're supposed to learn with this new curriculum, it seems that they're trading it in for knowledge that the kids can bring. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 01.24)

In this instance, Katie experienced a clear contest between school knowledge and student knowledge with little leeway to negotiate a space that accommodated both. Bhabha's construct of third space is a useful framework in helping me to understand the challenge before her. "Third space" in Bhabha's sense is the terrain between the identities of Self and Other, which I conceptualize in this instance as home and school. This concept of third space challenges the "fixity" of ways in which knowledge is coded (for instance, school knowledge and student knowledge) and offers the possibility of a fluid and ongoing reconstruction of identity. Katie was not seeking to replace school knowledge with student knowledge, but rather to nurture the possibility of hybridity, of a space that accommodated both. Therefore, exploring the factors that made this space so inaccessible highlights the ways in which certain representations of knowledge are made visible and others are smothered. Much of Katie's challenge was presented by the orientation of her county's new ESOL curriculum. Because it was being piloted that year, Katie was not permitted to deviate from it for any reason. She was instructed to follow the curriculum to the letter and was therefore not free to be guided by the individual needs of her students, the variable nature of classroom events, or the relevance of the material to the moment. The curriculum presented an objective for every class and a lesson plan that detailed activities and explicitly listed the information that students were to know by the end of the lesson. The transmission-oriented focus encouraged a parallel teaching style, and Katie found herself struggling to resist teaching as though unidirectionally transferring

facts. The curriculum allowed Katie little room to weave together school knowledge and student knowledge but actually required her to make a choice between the two. Her challenge was therefore spawned not by the clash between two forms of knowledge, but rather by the one-way pedagogical ideology undergirding her curriculum. A significant drawback of transmission-based teaching, termed banking education by Freire (1970), is its repression of student knowledge. Katie was disapproving of the curriculum's failure to support her desire to legitimate student knowledge.

Similarly, Alexandra was outraged at school administrators' implication that ESOL students' knowledge was not valuable. She related an incident to us indignantly:

This general call went out asking teachers for names of students they felt could tutor. I sent a list of ESOL kids. And they were like, what can *they* tutor?

She made a point of responding to the administrators:

I was like, they can tutor ESOL and they can tutor their native language.

(Alexandra, Conversation, 01.26)

It was not only the school administrators and the ideology of the curriculum that compelled the teachers away from valuing student knowledge: sometimes students themselves devalued their own contributions, and it took a conscious effort on the part of the teachers to ensure that they affirmed the knowledge that their students brought. Katie explained her students' reluctance to share from their lives and experiences, and she described her strategy for encouraging their voices:

I have to structure my questions in a way to draw from them, and even then it's very hard. I have to ask little smaller questions to lead up to the

big question. I don't always like to do that because everyone thinks differently. (Afternoon tea, 01.24)

It took a critical examination of pedagogical interaction and a conscious and strategic effort in order for Katie to teach in a way that created space for her students' knowledge.

The teachers referred to broad definitions of "culture," going beyond the limited yet popular conception of culture as connected only to national origin or race. They viewed students' nationalities and ethnicities as intersecting in complicated ways with their other dimensions of difference. For instance, in the context of literature, Margaret considered multiculturalism to include many social categories, including homelessness and mental illness:

When I was doing student teaching, I did a couple of books about Appalachia. Even though those are about caucasian students in the US, I felt that those are multicultural. Something real. An author writing from or about something that is very real and specific ... Like Kaye Gibbons, a little girl's taken in by a foster family and she takes on the name Foster. I felt it really let you in to her family and her world, and there's something multicultural about it. Certain things that aren't always called a culture I feel are a culture. Like mental illness. If it invites the reader into something they didn't know before. Like the Paperbag Princess lets you in on women's culture. (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Alexandra's understandings of her students' cultural identities were similarly broad. Her concern for supporting connections between students' experiences out of school and in the classroom extended beyond connections based on ethnic group identification, as evidenced by her criteria for text selection. For instance, of Sharon Creech's *Walks Two Moons*, she said:

“It's a book about girl who's in her teens and her mother has left ...The girl lost her mother, alot of my kids are separated from their parents ... There's a girl in the book who imagines things about people based on how they look, that's an issue in middle school. So it brings up some of their background knowledge.” (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Alexandra sought to make connections to students' identities beyond merely national identity. For her, identity included other factors, such as family configuration and age.

Creating Connections Between Home and School

Another way in which teachers sought to steer the direction in which difference was constructed within their classroom walls was in nurturing the connection between home and school. For instance, Alexandra perceived the incorporation of students' home knowledge into her classroom lessons as a step towards connecting students' home lives and school lives. In a unit on food, her school curriculum required that students be taught about what constituted healthful food. In order to make connections with students' home lives, she asked them to bring in a recipe from their family's recipe book. The class then broke down the recipe and discussed whether ingredients in the recipe were healthy or unhealthy. When one student explained that “We don't have a recipe book, my Mom

always just does this, does that,” Alexandra found another avenue to create space for home knowledge and responded: “Ask your Mom [for the recipe], and write down what your mother tells you.” (Field Notes, 11.08). Later in the year, Alexandra specifically described this strategy as a technique that she used to strengthen the connection between home and school. I was talking with Alexandra and another faculty member about home-school connections. I told the faculty member of Katie’s desire to visit students’ homes and of our conclusion that home visits might be unrealistic for overwhelmed first-year teachers. Alexandra made the suggestion:

“You can put things into your homework assignments that ask for that home-school connection. Like, in a project, I asked them to get an oral rendition of a traditional legend and I’ve asked them to bring that back to the classroom.” (Alexandra, Conversation, 01.26)

Margaret similarly tried to underscore the relevance of school life to home life. She told us of her student, Gloria, whose schooling had been interrupted and whose literacy in her first language was limited:

I was talking to her in the corner of the classroom, and I asked what she did this weekend. She said: “We went to the park”, and I said: “What did you do there?” and she said: “We lay down.” I said: “You lay down?!” She said: “Every time we go to the park, my Mom lies down and looks at the clouds.” And there’s a scene in *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros, there’s one scene where they’re looking at clouds, and there’s another where they’re just laying on their backs eating jelly beans. So I told her about that, and now she wants to read it.

Katie was supportive of Margaret's ability to relate academic learning to Gloria's life:

You make such good connections with your students. (Afternoon tea,
11.01)

From the first day of the school year, Alexandra made a special place in her classroom for students' family lives by posting a class "mantra" on the wall:

I honor my family

I honor my history

I honor my self.

(Field notes, 09.09)

Within the first few weeks of class she had also made mobiles that displayed photographs of students with their families. She believed that drawing in background knowledge provided students with a motivation to engage:

"They have to have some reason to talk, some reason to communicate, a reason to put words together."

Alexandra sought to support students' abilities to express themselves by ensuring that a motivation for expression exists. She also encouraged children to talk about their home cultures and share the wisdom and values that they brought to the classroom. This discussion of a Cheyenne folk tale illuminates for us the complexity of talking about culture:

"The biggest discussion has been about how in the cheyenne culture, children's spirits are free ... So this little girl says, "Mum, I'm only 8 years old, but I have this vision that I belong with this other family, so I'm going." And the Mum says, "Well, bless you, and bless your journey."

And the Korean boys raise their hand and say “No way!” And the Taiwanese boy raises his hand and says “No way! My parents make every decision for me. If I were to say I wanted to do this, they would say no, sit down and shut up and do your homework.” And the same in the Vietnamese culture. But it was interesting, I have a boy from Spain who’s very quiet in the class, and he was explaining how there’s some similarity but mostly differences. But why we follow our parents is because they’re older and wiser and we should respect them. Which is interesting because my social stereotype is this is how the Asians feel. But since these kids have one foot in each culture, I think they’re leaning this way, which is towards the American culture. I just thought it was an interesting ... And then the girl from Guatemala was saying how similar her culture is to the Cheyenne culture, and how children are free. And hers is all based on religion. (Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 01.24)

Attempting to legitimate home culture knowledge was not a simple strategy for the teachers. It posed many new problems, not the least of which is the question of what counts as a specific culture. Alexandra struggled with this tension by, for instance, describing what Taiwanese boy and the Korean boy said but not generalizing the assumptions to all Taiwanese or all Koreans. Nonetheless, the difficulty of talking about home cultures without universalizing is palpable in this and many other incidents. Seeking to legitimate home culture knowledge can encourage teachers to develop or represent limited and simplistic understandings of cultures, for instance to associate certain traits with certain cultures. In seeking to draw on students’ home cultures, it was

difficult for the teachers to escape clichéd definitions of what it means to be a member of a given culture. A further problem presented by attempts to value home cultures was the notion of legitimating practices of a given “culture” simply because they were representative of that culture and not because they warranted legitimacy. For instance, the practice of allowing children the choice move in with a family other than their own, as was the case in the Cheyenne folk tale, is a practice that many educators might hesitate to legitimate too enthusiastically, particularly with impressionable teenagers who romanticize the idea of running away from home. Similarly, other practices that support racism or gender oppression may be associated with individual and specific cultures, but it may not serve students well to see these legitimated in their classes.

Challenging Negative Images of Difference

Legitimizing student knowledge and supporting connections between students’ lives’ in school and out of school were both strategies that the teachers believed to be helpful in their attempts to cast difference in a positive light. Another way of guiding the construction of difference in their classrooms was to challenge negative depictions of difference. In their attempts to challenge negative images of difference, the teachers encountered several tensions, including: (1) a tension between encouraging student knowledge and hesitating to draw attention to difference and (2) a tension between supporting ethnic pride and a wish to respect student agency to self-identify.

As was apparent in the preceding example, any discussion of cultural identity runs the danger of disintegrating into essentializing discourses because it is difficult to talk about culture without veering towards generalizations and hence, categories. Labels therefore carry inferences. When we label a culture, we assign it a signification, a

meaning. In navigating these tensions, the teachers sought to develop pedagogies that were respectful of students' individual strengths and simultaneously of their heritage.

Tension between Drawing Attention to Difference and

Encouraging Student Knowledge

As they began their first year of teaching, the teachers began to face a subtle tension between supporting the inclusion of home cultures in the development of their students' identities and drawing unwanted attention to students' cultural and ethnic difference. While the teachers' previous coursework and the ideologies they articulated during the afternoon teas all provided for increased interest in students' cultures and home lives, other factors clashed with this intention. For instance, a stigma was associated with certain types of difference, so that the teachers' attempts to draw attention to difference might have the effect of embarrassing their students.

Alexandra expressed a reluctance to assign a specific cultural association to an individual student, giving the example of a girl from India, Sanobar. In particular, she disapproved of the practice of singling out students as representatives of a particular culture:

“We were talking about mendi the other day. The kids draw on their hands, so I suggested: “Why don't you use mendi? Can anyone tell us about mendi?” And the Indian girl raised her hand and said: “I can tell you about mendi.” And she was very happy to tell everyone about it. She was able to contribute, but *I* didn't ask her specifically to contribute.”

(Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 01.24)

Alexandra sought to create a space in which students could share information specific to their individual cultural history, but she hoped to do so without attracting attention to ethnic difference. The sheer might of normative power is illustrated clearly in this example. The social stigma associated with cultures that are different from the dominant culture (and particularly cultures in which the majority of the population is not white), is so potent that to even single out an Indian student as more likely to know about *mendi* is to risk shaming her. This places teachers such as Alexandra in an awkward position. To ignore difference, pretending that students' races and national identities are homogenous, may make students more comfortable in the short term but does nothing to challenge the stigma of difference and in fact underscores dominant constructions of identity. However, Alexandra's responsibility was not only to a global desire for transformation, but also towards her individual student, Sanobar. As a caring teacher, she was unwilling to risk betraying and stigmatizing her pupils. Her strategy of asking the class in general about culturally specific information provided Alexandra with a way to integrate her desire to create space for students' culturally specific knowledge and her reluctance to betray Sanobar by pointing out her difference. The relationship between difference and identity was important in this study. Constructing difference necessarily implies constructing norms (to be different-from). The effect of the construction of difference on identity is explained by Minh-Ha (1989) in this way: "Difference ... is that which undermines the very idea of identity, deferring to infinity the layers whose totality forms 'I'" (Minh-Ha, 1989, p. 96). In Minh-Ha's opinion, identity is eroded by the

concept of difference. She quotes the Editorial Collective of *Questions Feministes*, led by Simone de Beauvoir: “The very theme of difference, whatever the differences are represented to be, is useful to the oppressing group ... to demand the right to Difference without analyzing its social character is to give back the enemy an effective weapon.” (quoted in Minh-Ha, 1989, p.101). While Jane, Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie sought to avoid “giv[ing] back the enemy an effective weapon” by underscoring difference, they also needed to support the facets of their students’ identity that did not represent the dominant image, their “difference,” in an effort to avoid ignoring and smothering their cultural and linguistic identities.

Rather than embracing the stance referred to by Valli (1991) as “color-blindness” and by Frankenberg (1993) as “color-evasion,” Katie endeavored to recognize her students’ difference and then to put a positive spin on the whole business of being different. This involved both challenging negative constructions of difference and actively seizing opportunities to cast difference in a positive light. In her own experience as a woman of color, difference was inescapable and impossible to disregard because of reminders by others. She told us that:

“Sometimes I forget that I’m Asian, but it’s always brought back to me, the difference is always pointed out to me.”

She experienced consciousness of her racial difference as problematic:

“Sometimes it’s a bad thing because my racial appearance shouldn’t have an effect on what’s going on, but in my idea it does.”

Katie briefly struggled with discourses that cast color-evasion as appealing and synonymous with anti-racism before conceding that difference cannot and should not be ignored. She turned her attention to how this difference should be addressed.

Sometimes I wonder if my students feel the same way. Their difference from other students is constantly being pointed out and they're going to feel the same way I did. So I'd rather have them feel positive ... reinforcing the fact that being bilingual and bicultural is very special and very unique and very important. And reinforcing that and having it seen as an asset rather than having this nagging, almost fear ... nagging thought about what this person is thinking of me, am I going to be the subject of gossip. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Katie believed that in view of the fact that racial difference will not be ignored by the rest of the school population, ESOL students will experience their racial difference as alienating if a special effort is not made to highlight its advantages. Like Alexandra, Katie tried not to single out children by drawing attention to their home cultures, but for an opposite reason from Alexandra. She sensed that her students were less concerned with the stigma of difference and more vulnerable to the isolation of not finding a culture to belong to. She sought to be sensitive to students who might experience a sense of disconnect with the culture of their heritage:

"I'm thinking of the students who were born here but are in ESOL because Spanish is their native language. You know cultures are very fluid, and when there are two cultures in a country, there's some influence. I'm very

conscious not to pinpoint one person. You know, I'll say: 'Has anyone had this type of experience?' And if not we'll go on.'" (Katie, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Like Alexandra, Katie refrained from singling out students on the basis of their ethnicity, but while Alexandra wanted to insulate her students from the shame they might associate with their first culture, Katie was concerned about the possible shame of ignorance about their heritage culture. The constructions of difference in Katie's classroom are tightly connected to her own cultural identity and meanings of difference. She explained that her pedagogy was informed by her life experiences as a Korean-born child adopted during infancy by a German-American father and an Irish-American mother. As a child, Katie had limited knowledge of Korean culture and was uncomfortable, even embarrassed, about her lack of awareness about Korea.

"I've had teachers do that to me in elementary school: 'Katie, what they do in Korea?' And I've been like, 'I don't know. I grew up here.'" And all of a sudden I feel ashamed that I don't know anything about Korea!" (Katie, Meeting, 11.01)

Katie had a further reason for wanting her students to self-define. She placed a high value on respecting students' constructions of their own cultural identities.

"Teachers are very well meaning [... but ...] they're making the assumption that so-and-so is Japanese, but they haven't taken the time to find out if they were born in Japan, the circumstances of their journey here. ... That's as bad as not allowing the child to share their experience ... I think the opportunity needs to be there for ESOL children to share

what they know and share their experiences, but not to purposely single them out.” (Katie, Meeting, 03.21)

A common theme in teaching for diversity, particularly in liberal multiculturalist models of teacher education, is the teaching of abstract information about specific cultural groups in a “heroes and holidays” approach (Banks, 1993). Melnick and Zeichner (1997) characterize this ideology as a “culture-specific,” as opposed to “culture-general” approach to teaching. Culture-specific approaches prepare teachers to teach specific cultural groups in particular contexts, such as rural Mexican immigrants to suburban Pennsylvania. The result is a superficial, stereotyped, and possibly inaccurate conception of the target group, which increases the likelihood of teachers who see a Japanese face and assume a common experience among all of their Japanese students. Teacher preparation that focuses on culture-general approaches seeks to support the development of teachers who are more likely to be successful in any context that includes interactions across cultures. Rather than seeking to generalize and universalize cultural groups, culture-general approaches seek to identify the various cognitive approaches that mediate cross-cultural understanding. Wong (forthcoming) believes that cross-cultural understanding is insufficient, advising that it must be accompanied by a structural analysis of power. She suggests that rather than focusing on discrete and abstract “cultural” information, teachers should be teaching all children “about the ways in which racial, ethnic, and religious minority cultures have been oppressed and have struggled for their humanity, for example, the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, the internment of Japanese Americans in the U.S. during WWII, and the heroic struggle of the schoolchildren in Soweto, South Africa, against apartheid”(p. 36).

Like Alexandra, Katie was reluctant to ascribe *a* culture to a student, but her motivation was to create space for the different possible meanings of ethnicity, for instance “Japanese,” that a student might embrace or reject. This discussion reveals Katie as thoughtful about the complications raised when teachers help students to connect with their home cultures, and in particular the tendency towards universalizing cultures. She linked her pedagogical practice in part to her empathy. She spent many years experimenting with and exploring the many facets of her cultural self and continues to embrace a culturally fluid identity:

“You can’t always know what a child is experiencing ... You can presume that my heritage is Korean, but what if I don’t identify with that? Teachers do this, you know: ‘Katie, we’re going to read a book about Korea and you should be able to identify with this.’” (Katie, Meeting, 11.01)

Katie believed that the majority of her elementary-school-aged students were psychologically connected to the countries of their heritage:

“Some children don’t see themselves as American. Some of them don’t identify with a culture. But some students are very heavily identified with their native culture. They’ll take special interest in finding out other students’ countries, especially if they’re the same. Like Leo, when he met Jae Ling, he was like: ‘You’re Chinese? I’m Chinese!’ I’d say most of my students are very proud of their culture.” (Katie, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

She also gave the example of a student whose classroom teacher discouraged the use of Spanish in his class:

He just sends Diego out for ESOL. And Diego speaks a lot of English, he won't speak any Spanish at all. If I speak Spanish to him to clarify, he just says, 'okay, okay'. Everything's in English, he wants to hang out with his English-speaking friends." (Katie, Afternoon tea, 10.11)

Katie made a connection between the teachers' diffidence towards Spanish and the student's reluctance to speak his native language with his ESOL teacher, a fluent Spanish speaker. She assumed that the boy had constructed his linguistic difference negatively. She also noted a more complex identity dynamic in the case of a boy who identified with his language, French, but not with his home country, Cameroon.

The same thing with Frank. Frank likes things in French, he associates with his language, but not with his culture. He's from Cameroon. He wants to be American so he plays American games, video games, watches American television shows. A lot of my students will say: "In my country, blah, blah, blah" but he never does. I think a lot of these fifth-graders are into these computer games, and that's something he can do, so it's something he can buy into. I think Frank uses the games as a way to fit in. He's very into fitting in. He won't do anything that will keep him apart from other people.

At such a young age, Frank interpreted his Cameroonian heritage as affording him no status or privilege, but he was connected to his linguistic identity. The history of Cameroon is a history of oppression, colonization, and enslavement. Like the historical constructions of racism that spawned them, modern day racialized discourses spin many

African countries in a negative light and contribute to unattractive stereotypes of Africans and African Americans (Rushton, 2000). Frank, being well-connected to popular culture, had likely been exposed to unflattering images of blacks through television and other forms of media. Katie suggested that Frank never laid claim to his Cameroonian heritage because he wanted to ignore traits that accented his difference from his classmates. However, his pride in his connection with the French language suggests that he welcomes difference if he believes it elevates him. Although he was only in fifth grade, he appeared to have deduced that French, a language associated with white colonization, prestige, and civilization, was connected with social power.

Cultural Pride Versus Agency in Self-Naming

As Alexandra, Margaret, Katie, and Jane sought to teach in ways that supported their students' first cultures and lives beyond school walls, they faced a challenge. They had to strike a balance between their desire to push for a society that appropriately celebrated the merits of its young immigrant children and, conversely, their acknowledgement of the established stigma of difference and the need to respect students' agency to self-define. The teachers developed pedagogies that mingled activism with caring accountability to their students.

"Where are you from?" a professor once asked a peer of mine in a class that related to cross-cultural communication.

"New York," responded the student, whom I later learned had immigrated to New York from Taiwan.

"And your family, where are they from?"

"I'm American," replied the student, adamantly.

This student, like many immigrants, tried to leave his ethnicity at the immigration counter, and this professor, like many teachers, wanted the reassurance of knowing where his student came from. Was the student's refusal to share this information induced by shame of his Taiwanese culture, of his difference? Did the professor want to know where he came from in order to pigeonhole him, to place him into a cultural category? The notion of national identity has the power to place people into categories. Tajfel (1981) believes that humans observe each other's behavior and language use during social interaction in order to categorize ourselves and each other. He also suggests that in learning this classification scheme, we learn to appraise the value that corresponds to each human category. In the light of these human tendencies, how do teachers support pride in their students' first cultures while still respecting students' agency in selecting and experimenting with their cultural identities? As they strove to instill in their students a pride in their first cultures, the teachers in this study were forced to make decisions between validating first cultures and encouraging agency in cultural identity development.

There were times when the teachers clearly supported students' independence and agency in constructing their cultural identities. For instance, when her students seemed to dance on a hyphen between their first and second cultures, Katie expressed a desire to allow them the space to explore independently. She told the story of a student who had two names, her American name Jessica and her Chinese name Ten Ying. Katie asked her which name she preferred, and the student expressed a preference for Ten Ying. However, when Katie referred to her as Ten Ying a few days later, she replied: "No, Jessica." Katie did not challenge this choice, but responded: "Okay, Jessica." Rather than

using one name consistently or even encouraging Jessica to choose one name, Katie decided to follow the preference that Jessica herself modelled: “I alternate. Sometimes I call her Jessica, sometimes I call her Ten Ying.” (Katie, Afternoon tea, 11.01). Katie acknowledged the dynamic nature of self-identification and the mutability of the processes of being and becoming. Charles Taylor (1989) writes: “The issue of our condition can never be exhausted for us by what we are, because we are always also changing and becoming.” (p.47). Katie sought to support this process of changing and becoming and to allow the possibility of multiple identities.

There is power involved in choosing labels for oneself, and power is relinquished when a label is forced onto someone: “Whereas self-naming can be an affirmative act, labeling and categorization are forms of subjection to the power of others” (Weedon, 1999, p.46). Similarly, for Katie to label Ten Ying had the potential to be an act of subjection, whereas for Ten Ying to choose the same label for herself was empowerment.

However, encouraging students to self-name did not always work in their favor. The teachers were making complicated pedagogical moves that appeared to be productive, but examining students’ responses sometimes revealed the teachers’ pedagogical acts to be fused with tremendous tensions within power relations. Self naming, for instance, can serve students but can also inadvertently work against students by reinforcing marginalization. All of the teachers cited examples of students who chose to assimilate, to identify as American to the exclusion of their heritage culture, to cast aside their first languages. For the teachers to coerce their students into accepting the labels chosen by the teachers themselves might be considered a tyrannical abuse of power. If an immigrant ESOL student chooses to identify as American, does her teacher

have the authority to decide what constitutes the student's authentic self? Even this notion of an authentic self is an artificial construct, assuming an unrealistic and naive compartmentalized tidiness in identity.

From the teachers' pedagogies arose recognition that for ESOL students, accepting just one label is not an option. ESOL students are necessarily multicultural by virtue of their experience. To assign a label onto them would be an easy but falsely one-dimensional solution. Instead, the teachers' demonstrated a belief in their students' ability to negotiate their multiple identities and a faith in their agency to manage competing discourses, languages, and cultures. The teachers helped students overstep the simplistic American-Other dichotomy by giving rise to the possibility of cultural complexity, what Katie termed "hybrid" identities:

It was in college that I really started to think that maybe I could try to make like a hybrid. After I did my thesis, I concluded that I was my own unique culture, I wasn't American, I wasn't Korean, I was kind of a meld of the two. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 03.21)

Katie made a distinction between coercing students to connect with their heritage and creating an environment in which students can safely own multicultural identities:

I think that it is important to create a multicultural atmosphere giving voice and space to all cultures and ethnicities. Perhaps in this way, the child may come to not only recognize her ethnic heritage, but to respond to it, learn from it, and begin to take pride in it. Our job is not to "make" the child express her heritage, but to create the space for it and encourage her to take part. If she doesn't feel comfortable, she doesn't. That is

something she will have to work it out on her own. We as teachers should be there as a support and resource and create a "safe" multicultural environment. (Katie, Webchat, 04.27)

Katie's rejection of the dichotomy between first culture and second culture was representative of an evolved ideology. Rather than viewing her students as passively waiting for authoritative direction towards one culture or another, she sees them as agents able to negotiate and use to their advantage their multiple identities.

When exercised by a teacher, authoritative direction is not always obvious. Margaret identified a relationship between the name used by a classroom teacher and the students' subsequent appropriation of the new name:

"I have these two brothers, Jin Dae and Jin Yung who are from Korea. My neighbors across the street are Korean. Right when the two boys came to the school, I went to my neighbors and made sure I pronounced the name properly and I went to the classroom teachers and said 'This is how you pronounce it'. And the first-grade teacher started calling him "Yin" and I kept saying Jin, but she kept calling him Yin. So in ESOL, I would call him Jin. And he flew into a rage and said: 'No, it's Yin' ... I think it's because that's what his classroom teacher says, so he wants to be called Yin, like that's his American name." (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

The classroom teacher, who carries authority and with whom the student spends most of his time in school, called him "Yin," and he adopted that name for himself. This could be interpreted as a gesture to please his classroom teacher, as deference to authority, or as an

assimilative break from his own history. Names can carry inferences and identities, and losing hold of a name has the power to make a person lose parts of themselves.

Margaret's story brought to my mind *Gifts of Passage*, a story that resonates loudly with my own childhood experience, in which Santha Rau (1961) describes how on her first day of class in America, her teacher declared that her name would be Cynthia. Rau accepted the name silently and went on to describe the prejudice and discomfort she faced in her new American life, poignantly ending her narrative with: "...it all happened to a little girl named Cynthia, and I never was really very interested in her" (p. 676). Margaret didn't know why Jin was accepting the new name used by his teacher, but she chose to be respectful of his choice and to call him by the new name he had chosen.

However, agency was not always the most important trait to nurture as the teachers observed their students develop. There were times during the year when the teachers chose to challenge the stigma associated with being culturally different, particularly those that students internalized themselves and those planted by students' families. I watched, intrigued, as Hyung-Taik's father approached Alexandra at the Back to School Night, an opportunity for parents and teachers to meet one evening during the first week of school.

Parent: I would like my son English name.

Alexandra: Oh.

Parent: He wants that.

Alexandra: He does?

Parent: Yes, he calls himself Tony.

Alexandra: Okay.

Parent: Tony is okay name?

Alexandra (pausing): Anthony is the long name. Tony is the short name for Anthony.

Parent: The name Hyung-Taik is confusing.

Alexandra: Do you think so?

Parent: Yes.

Alexandra: Okay.

(Alexandra, Back to School Night, 09.09)

Alexandra saw Hyung-Taik's name as representative of his cultural identity and his choice in self-identification as a choice about assimilation. Parents, as significant social actors in a child's life, are a force that can encourage students to assimilate or resist. In *Hunger of Memory*, Richard Rodriguez (1982) writes of his absorption into dominant culture. His parents encouraged a clear delineation between his public and private selves, which translated into his Mexican and American selves, with no middle ground. When Rodriguez reached his thirties, his mother reinforced the wisdom of this partition: "Do not punish yourself for having to give up our culture in order to 'make it' as you say. Think of all the wonderful achievements you have obtained" (p.178), implying that Richard's Mexicanness and his achievements were mutually exclusive. The stance adopted by Hyung-Taik's father and Rodriguez's mother can appear quite logical. If we believe that assimilation implies social success, it is only natural for us to encourage children to conform. However, if teachers support the choices of children who are conforming to the wishes of the parents, whose agency is being reinforced, that of the child or of the parents? Should teachers present an alternative perspective or respect the

choices of the child's family? At the Back to School Night, Alexandra indicated agreement in the crowded classroom full of parents and students, but she later addressed the issue during class:

Alexandra: Are you Tony or Hyung-Taik today?

Hyung-Taik: Tony.

Alexandra: But Hyung-Taik is the name that your mother and father gave you. Your Mom calls you Hyung-Taik, why do you want to be called Tony? Tony's an Italian name, why do you want to be called Tony?

(Alexandra, Field Notes, 10.20)

I asked her about the incident later, and she explained:

“You know, I asked him why he wanted to be called Tony, and I gave him a wrinkle of my nose. He just sort of shook his head and he never brought it up again. Now the students call him Hyung-Taik.” (Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 04.10)

The wrinkle of her nose was intended to indicate disapproval of his choice of the name Tony. Remembering her earlier resolve to refrain from drawing attention to her students' cultural differences, I asked her why she encouraged the student to embrace a Korean name. She explained:

“When the change is in an ESOL class, because the name is part of the mainstream culture, it is almost like saying that the mainstream will not accept you unless you begin a new identity that is easier for "it" to understand.” (Alexandra, E-mail, 04.26)

When Alexandra made the choice to influence Hyung-Taik towards his Korean heritage, she was responding directly to mitigate the forces that constructed his difference in a negative light. Jane had expressed support for this position earlier, reminding us that the culture of the parents is not always identical to the culture of the student whose experiences have been different:

It is important to remember when advocating for our students to take not only the culture of the parents into account, but also the idioculture of the student, and what he or she values. (Webchat 06.08.98).

Although Jane and Alexandra wanted to see their students having the freedom to define their cultural selves, they were positioned to discourage them from assenting to Americanization. Similarly, Margaret became concerned when she observed what she suspected might be a child's rejection of his first culture:

So I got the book *Counting in Korea* ... On the cover, there's a picture of a [boy wearing a] traditional Korean outfit. All the kids looked at it and said: "He looks like you." So he looked at it and said: "He's stinky! Stinky boy." And he pushed it away. So I just said: "Oh no, he's handsome, look at him!"

(Margaret, Meeting, 11.01)

I asked her later why her response was to describe the boy on the book cover as 'handsome'. She explained:

"I told my student the boy was handsome because I assumed that he was noticing and regretting his difference from his peers. He and his brother are the only Asian boys in the kindergarten/first grades. My young charges

are so quick (as are their elders) to see and fear (?) the different.

(Margaret, E-mail, 04-25)

Margaret was unsure of whether she was interpreting the student's reaction correctly, but she was sufficiently concerned to voice her contest of what might have been shame or aversion to Korean identity. She connected her pedagogical reaction to her life:

A dear friend of mine from Cambodia moved here when she was seven.

There was a time when she colored her face with a white crayon, stretched her face before the mirror, wanting to look differently. To not like what you inherently and beautifully are is dangerous, scary to me. I assumed the beginnings (incorrectly?) of this in my student." (Margaret, E-mail, 04-25)

Her perturbation was intensified by her life experiences, she had become more familiar with and disturbed by the process of internalized shame through observation of her childhood friend. While she had supported Jun's choice of the name Yung, she challenged her student's insult of the boy in traditional Korean garb.

I noticed that when Katie talked about students negotiating the boundaries between their cultures she, like many ESOL professionals, spoke of "their" (heritage) culture versus "American" culture. At the time of the study, I saw first and second cultures as disparate from and even in conflict with each other, and in the context of that conceptualization I asked Katie whether her word choice had the potential to validate students' ownership over their heritage culture more than American culture. Katie saw greater middle ground between first and second cultures. She replied that she valued students' familiarity with their first cultures insofar as having an adequate understanding of their cultures placed them in a position to define themselves, rather than being coerced

into assimilation. More importantly, she explicitly challenged my binary construction of first and second cultures:

“I think that tension can be negotiated. In order for children/students to fully understand, develop, and establish their identities, I think that they should know at least where their families come from and the culture they were born or raised into ... Whether the children reject their families' cultural heritage or incorporate it into their identity is up to them. But I think that the students should know what their options are first.” (Katie, E-mail, 04.25)

Katie saw her position not as discouraging agency but as supporting informed decisionmaking. For Katie, true freedom to construct a cultural identity can be reached only when a child has knowledge and understanding of her history and when she lives in an environment that legitimates multiple cultures:

I also think that this must be accomplished by guiding the students to think for themselves, to see ALL cultural options as positive and fluid, and "identity" itself as a constantly changing, evolving "entity" (for lack of a better word).

While I was unable to see first and second culture as anything but fixed during this conversation, Katie's emphasis was on hybridity, on the fluidity and constantly changing nature of identity. The teachers highlighted the importance of an emphasis on home culture identification in the process of nurturing fluidity and developing multicultural identities. Canagarajah (1999), too, notes the importance of a connection with home cultures in the process of becoming multicultural, making the link to effective acquisition

of additional cultures and literacies: “Research in language acquisition and cognitive development confirms that a thorough grounding in one’s first language and culture enhances the ability to acquire other languages, literacies, and knowledge.” (p. 2). While his emphasis is on linguistic choice, he also makes reference to the important role of grounding in first culture.

A glance at the pedagogy of the four teachers revealed them to be integrating complex forces and ideas in order to develop pedagogies that were respectful of their students’ social needs. The teachers do, indeed, influence their students towards identification with their home cultures, but it would be overly superficial to examine this ideal without also taking into account the terrain the students stand on. The teachers understood the school environment to be biased towards assimilation and the unduly heavy social pressure toward conformity as encouraging their students to lean in that direction. They developed teaching practices that encouraged home culture identification in order to neutralize the pressure on students’ to make cultural difference invisible. Alexandra counteracted the coercion to assimilate applied by Hyung-Taik’s father. Margaret wanted to wipe away the veil of undesirability that she perceived her student had ascribed to the boy on the cover of *Counting in Korea*. And Katie wanted to ensure that her students acquired adequate knowledge about their first cultures before making decisions about whether to reject them. ESOL teachers are required to achieve a difficult balance. Underscoring students’ home cultures telegraphs messages that can accentuate cultural difference and keep students positioned as Other and as separate from “mainstream American culture.” However, an absence of attention to students’ home cultures in a world that values conformity to dominant images encourages students to

assimilate. Alexandra saw acceptance of Americanization as a type of default option in her students' lives:

... if we do not encourage an understanding of identity and accept the new patterns that students will create, we will subject them to an "American" definition of identity that may or may not suit their reality. (Webchat, 04.13)

She considered ESOL teachers to be responsible for encouraging critical questioning for the sake of their students but also because individuals' quests for identity contribute to the progress of "culture" at large:

When there is dissonance, the individual will seek an understanding of the self in order to strengthen themselves within that context. I honestly believe that our cultures would not survive without dissonance. It is through questioning and exploring that we either confirm our perspective or change it to one that is better suited to the context. And the more we question and redefine for ourselves, the more we "own" our collective destinies. (Webchat, 04.13)

While the possibility of hybrid identities is an important element in moving beyond the dichotomy between static representations of "home culture" and "new culture," there is something to be said for an intimate and comfortable knowledge of one's roots. When I was in my late teens, I read Koori (aboriginal) author Ruby Langford's *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. In this work, she described the concept of a b'longin' place. Everybody has a b'longin' place somewhere on this earth, a geographical point to which they are inextricably linked. In the context of

my own nomadic personal history, I found this idea compelling and reassuring. It is only when we really know our (perhaps metaphorical) b'longin' place that we are in a position to embrace the diversity surrounding us. Canagarajah (1999) tells us that: "The very fact that we are ever rooted in the primary community of socialization is what enables us to appropriate other languages (and cultures) more effectively" (p. 2). Rather than discounting the possibility of multiplicity, encouraging students to know about where they come from actually increases their ability to navigate among multiple cultures.

Defining Immigrant, Defining American, and the Norm of "Whiteness"

Beyond attending to the individual ethnicities and nationalities within the definitions of cultural identity available to their students, the teachers were faced with the task of helping students to understand what it means to be an immigrant. The varied definitions of "American" became salient because they were frequently juxtaposed with constructions of "immigrant." That juxtaposition in itself is problematic as it establishes "American" as normative and the term "immigrant" as necessarily deviant from standard. The teachers' pedagogy was interesting because they sought not only to help students to understand meanings of "immigrant" but also encouraged them to be critical of mainstream and accepted meanings. This distinction is important because it represents the difference between students on one hand being devoured by a new culture and on the other actually becoming a part of it and contributing to its change.

Katie problematized the definition of "immigrant" and questioned the historical understanding of an ESOL student as one who has crossed national boundaries. The new

ESOL curriculum she was piloting sought to connect to students' migratory experiences, but many of her elementary school students were born in the United States:

“Something interesting about ... the new curriculum – the first unit is about new beginnings, like starting over in a new country or a new school or whatever. And this has become an issue because a couple of my students were born in the United States ... We read this book called *How Many Days to America*. It's about this African family that fled to America. It's realistic fiction. Some students were like, “Well my uncle had to do that,” and they could relate. But some students are like, “Well, I was born here, and I don't remember coming to America.” (Katie, Meeting, 11.01)

The county curriculum quite logically presents an immigrant as someone who has immigrated. Katie noted the variety of meanings associated with the word “immigrant.” Even the process of migrating cannot be assumed for all immigrants; second-generation immigrants have usually not migrated themselves but are often part of immigrant communities. A countywide curriculum that assumes one common immigrant experience presents a challenge to teachers and serves as a reminder of the conflict between the needs of diverse school populations and the intention to use one curriculum to reach them all.

For Alexandra, deconstructing the label “immigrant” and problematizing what it means to be an immigrant is one way to confront the inferences associated with the label:

“I'm also trying to convince these kids that in some place in history we're all immigrants to this country except for the natives. And so the real American folk tale is a Cheyenne folk tale. I talk to them about how

important it is to respect the natives. Some of them actually are coming from cultures in which they are native but it's not their country anymore.”

(Alexandra, Interview, 01.24)

This analysis allows us a window onto Alexandra's conceptualization of American and immigrant. For Alexandra, “real American” was native American, for instance Cheyenne, and sat in contrast to “immigrant,” including those who immigrated on the *Mayflower*. She saw a real American folk tale as one untouched by the influence of immigration, one that is “native.” Alexandra's was calling into question the colonial construction of “American,” which legitimates the Americanness of white invaders and treats as invisible (or less-than-human) the native American women and men who lived here before they arrived.

However, her desire to encourage respect for Native American folklore evokes a complicated tension. If “real American” is antonymous with “immigrant,” then her immigrant students are not authentically American, and their children will be less American than the children of someone born and bred in this country.

Connecting length of American ancestral history with authenticity therefore actually has the potential to construct the Americanness of more recent immigrants as spurious. In this discussion, Alexandra is also struggling to discuss cheyenne culture while resisting sweeping generalizations about either Cheyenne culture or “the natives.”

Another complication was the connection between authenticity and identity. In discussions of “real natives,” “real Americans,” and “real cheyennes,” the question of realness is academic or theoretical only. Minh-Ha (1989)

deprecates the legitimacy of the concept of “real” when applied to a cultural group: “The *real*, nothing else than a *code of representation*, does not (cannot) coincide with the lived or the performed” (itals in orig.) (p. 94). She quotes Vine Deloria exclaiming: “Not even Indians can relate themselves to this type of creature who, to anthropologists, is the ‘real’ Indian.” (p. 94) The daunting task that lay before Alexandra was to dislodge representations of white as normative without typecasting other groups.

I will illustrate that both Margaret and Alexandra struggled with the socially embedded association between whiteness and neutrality. The two teachers addressed this connection in different ways, with Margaret challenging it and Alexandra tentatively accepting it but seeking to challenge the hierarchy that privileged white authority.

At Alexandra’s suggestion, the faculty at her school were toying with the idea of introducing a class in multicultural literature. Alexandra saw herself as an inappropriate choice to teach the class because she was white and therefore “not multicultural.” She told us about a conversation she had had with an African-American administrator:

I said to her, “Who am I to teach this course?” and my ideal would be just to coordinate parents coming and discussing a piece of literature with the kids. (Alexandra, Conversation, 01.26)

I asked her why she thought she, a well-read and well-travelled teacher, lacked the qualifications to teach the class, and she responded:

“I might do the reading strategies, I might do the work around it, but the actual discussion is not coming out of a white face. I feel really inadequate saying to people, think of it in terms of this, when that’s not my

experience with my very narrow view of the world.” (Alexandra, Conversation, 01.26)

Alexandra’s situation is fraught with complexities. The first concern about a multicultural literature class is that if it is marked as multicultural, it assumes that unmarked literature classes are somehow not multicultural. It sets mainstream and multicultural classes in opposition to each other, thereby excusing literature classes that are not multicultural from including diverse voices. It then follows that authors highlighted in a multicultural literature class will be those excluded from mainstream classes, that is authors from oppressed cultures. And it similarly follows that the mainstream literature classes offered are not multicultural.

In leaving the teaching of the class to those from oppressed cultures (assumed to be nonwhites), Alexandra is challenging the troubling tradition of allowing white authorities to present nonwhite perspectives, a practice that has been challenged by theorists including Lisa Delpit. Delpit’s (1988) article, appropriately titled “The Silenced Dialogue,” quotes the poignant words of a black principal:

“[The professor] asks for more examples of what I’m talking about, and he looks and nods while I give them to him. Then he says that’s just my experiences. It doesn’t really apply to most Black people. It becomes futile because they think they know everything about everybody.” (p. 281)

Delpit’s work highlights the perils associated with Alexandra’s “white face” presenting minority perspectives. The situation is complex: on one hand, using the terms “minority voices” and “multicultural voices” as synonymous underscores

the construction of white as normative by juxtaposing it against multiculturalism. If “white” and “multicultural” are opposite, then “white” cannot be a component of “multicultural.” When white is accepted as the norm, nonwhite can only become Other, and normative standards of whiteness become “the yardstick by which to encode and represent cultural Others” (Mohanty 1991 p. 55). Alexandra pursues an anti-racist pedagogy and in this instance is thinking critically about racism as she relates this incident. She is working in terrain that is messy because it is mired by the legacy of colonial discourse. Frankenberg (1993) warns us that: “one effect of colonial discourse is the production of an unmarked, apparently autonomous white/Western self, in contrast with the marked, Other racial and cultural categories with which the racially and culturally dominant category is co-constructed.” (p. 17) On the other hand, Alexandra’s thoughtful consciousness about the power ascribed to her race led her to an effective decentering strategy. There is no simple answer to this dilemma, but Alexandra has managed to integrate both sides of the tension into an uneasy solution: she agreed to participate in the course development and even teaching, but would acquiesce to teaching only such material as reading strategies and would leave the actual discussion to someone whose face was not white.

In addition to conceptualizing white as counter to multicultural, Alexandra made an effort to present white and American as separate. When her students were selecting folk tales to read, she said:

I gave them a couple of choices, but I really encouraged the Native American perspectives because I think that unfortunately the American

folk tales are very me, rather than what America really is, they're very white America and they're not representative of America at all.

(Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 01.24)

According to Alexandra's categorizations, America is well represented by Native American perspectives. Her contention links back to her claim that "Native American perspectives" are more legitimately American than "white American perspectives." Alexandra is aware of the weight of white privilege and eager to discount its authority, but she faces the task of balancing her desire to redistribute power with a limited definition of the category "American." At the same time, in saying that white Americans (who make up the majority of the American population) are not representative of America, but that Native Americans (who are a small minority of the population) are representative of America, she made an important statement: she rejected the notion that larger groups carry greater representative power and affirmed the value of minority perspectives.

In their discussions of the literature they chose to read with their ESOL students, the teachers explored their understandings of multiculturalism. For instance, Katie questioned whether some of the materials touted as multicultural were masking abstruse messages about racial and ethnic norms:

I really want to make it a true multicultural library, but a lot of the multicultural books are not about their culture. It's about a person who looks different in American culture. Some books, the people in it may be from another culture or may have the appearance of another culture, but the lesson or the storyline or whatever is American culture. Like that book,

Jamaica's Find, they classify that as multicultural. It's about this little girl who comes to a new school. She makes a friend, she does some things, it's about an American child. Her name is Jamaica and she's black. It's nothing about black culture, but it's classified as multicultural. I mean, they're stories about American people, but they're basically just painting them. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

One practice that contributes to the normalization of dominant culture is to color caucasian characters to resemble racial minorities and to then name them multicultural, contributing to an understanding of racial difference as relating simply to color and not at all to culture. This practice pays lip service to multiculturalism without actually transforming and sends messages about how people of color should *be* by contributing to a culturally homogenous metanarrative. Sarup (1991) in fact suggests that some liberal multicultural practices are the instrument of capitalist government and were introduced to diffuse minority resistance.

Katie expressed similar concerns about the dominance of Anglo culture being infused under the guise of bilingual literature:

Sometimes in the catalogue, they'll say this is bilingual, but it's just American stories translated into Spanish but it doesn't really speak to the culture of the students who are learning. It's American stories written by an American author translated into Spanish. So a child with American background knowledge will understand these books more readily than a child who doesn't. 'Coz I think they're saying it's bilingual and therefore it's bicultural. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

The literary practice Katie described is a form of linguistic tokenism, purporting to support the development of multilingualism and, consequently, multiculturalism, when in actuality it surreptitiously suppresses a variety of Spanish-speaking cultures by falsely implying that they are represented.

Furthermore, the teacher expressed concern with the practice of translating American books into Spanish and presenting them as multicultural because this overtly disregards the background knowledge of the native Spanish speaking children. It contributes to the loss of their cultural resources and results in their exclusion from the discourse if they are not able to connect with the material:

And I know that with the readers, some readers are totally irrelevant to a Spanish-speaking child's experience. I'll read it, but it'll have no meaning to them. For example, there's a little reader about Halloween, or Halloween costumes, and if the child doesn't celebrate Halloween, it has no relevance.

Suhanthie: Or what if the child celebrates Halloween, but not in the American context? Like going trick-or-treating as opposed to going to the cemetery?

Katie: Yeah, the experiences are different, and translating doesn't mean that it's going to speak to the child's experience. As we know, the readers all try to draw on the child's background knowledge, but that's an American child's background knowledge. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Presenting as "bilingual" or "multicultural" material that was actually generated by and representative of members of Anglo culture has the effect of reinforcing normative

constructs of all culture as Anglo and is dismissive of the presence of immigrant students within American culture.

Margaret also discussed the complicated associations among the terms “Anglo,” “American”, and “neutrality”. She conceptualized “neutral” in opposition to “specific” and “meaningful” and later equated “neutrality” with “culturelessness.” She disengages the terms Anglo and neutral from each other:

[I]t's hard for me to realize that although I am Anglo, my family and their heritage is *specific* and *meaningful*.”

And then describes the ways in which being Anglo does not, for her, mean being cultureless:

“Alexandra asks what it means, culture. For me, culture is my mom making popovers in cold weather as her mother did. It's my grandmother's childhood diaries at the bottom of the Chinese cherrywood trunk. And it's the poems my grandfather still remembers. It's the piano etudes my father has played all my life. And the soft blanket forts my sister and I would make on rainy days... And now *my* culture also includes things and ways Chinese that my husband has shown me. (Margaret, Webchat, 04.21)

For Margaret, Anglo is not neutral because she had multiple cultural experiences that were not neutral. The difference between the two teachers’ conceptualizations is interesting because the similarities in their life histories were noticeable: both were white American teachers who grew up in neighborhoods they defined as primarily white. Both had taught English for at least a year in an East Asian country, and both were married to East Asian men. They had both attended public schools near their current homes, in fact

as a child Margaret had attended the elementary school at which Alexandra student-taught.

Jane, too, experienced her Anglo heritage to be less marked than the immigrant cultures she observed around her: “I know even for myself, I have always longed to feel culture more strongly” (Webchat, Jane, 04.23). She perceived cultural difference, whether acquired through identity or experience, to be desirable: “I was always jealous of those with an accent, or those who had living relatives they could visit in other countries, or those who without blinking an eye could define ‘what are you?’” (Webchat, Jane, 04.23). While she knew where her ethnic roots lay, they were not satisfying because they didn’t provide the element she considered to be important, connection: “I have chosen to define myself as Irish, but I don't feel strongly connected to that as I've seen many of the ESOL kids strongly connected to their heritage” (Webchat, Jane, 04.23). Although she doesn’t specifically describe American culture as unmarked, Jane’s linguistic choices indicate that she positions “culture” in opposition to “America”. Her conceptualization of culture includes accent, meaning an accent that is not American, and relatives in other countries, meaning countries other than America.

This returns us to the binary American/Other thinking that pervaded the four schools in the study. The teachers were concerned when their young students chose to identify as American to the exclusion of their “home cultures” or when they chose anglicized names over the names that had been given to them at birth. They sought to encourage students’ linguistic and cultural connections to their histories as grounding for their appropriation of second languages and cultures. However, a tension exists between encouraging students to take pride in their home cultures, downplaying their students’

connections with dominant (read “American”) culture, and being proprietary about what it means to be American. The question that then arises relates to the definition of American. To discourage ESOL students from identifying as American is to underscore limited definitions of “American,” to imply that a student can only be American if they look like the dominant group, have exited ESOL, have become fluent English speakers. This assumption accepts ideologies that constitute “American” as white, monolingual, and culturally static and rejects more fluid understandings that rewrite and reconstitute “American” in more socially just and encompassing terms, with ESOL students belonging and being American by mere virtue of their presence here.

Tension Between Conformity and Cultural Difference

The subject of teachers’ struggles to address the tension between cultural difference and conformity with peers drifted frequently into the afternoon tea conversations. Katie noted a difference between her elementary-level students and those she had student-taught the previous year at the middle-school level. She observed that the longer students remain in this country and in schools, the greater the focus they place on conformity, to the exclusion of a celebration of their differences:

“And very rarely have I seen [elementary-school aged] students who are proud that they’re American. It’s always with their culture. Which I think is interesting because with older students, like when they get to high school, eventually there comes a need for some students to be as American as possible. And I don’t see that with my [elementary-level] students.”

(Katie, Meeting, 11.01)

Katie noted the influence of desire for peer acceptance over time. As students' time in this country lengthens, their willingness to associate themselves with their first culture dwindles. Furthermore, younger students are less susceptible to pressure to conform than middle-schoolers and teenagers. The dominant mores of middle- and high-schoolers celebrate conformity:

Katie: With elementary school, it's a little tough. When they first come in, they'll completely identify with the culture that they came from. I have this Korean student, Jennifer, she's completely into Korean things. And Tarkan who's completely into Turkish things. And John, he's completely into Turkish things. So when they first come here, they're into their own culture as they discover how to survive in the US. Then as time goes on, for the newcomers, they want to fit in to the Americans, but they still hold on.

(Katie, Meeting, 03.21)

Katie speaks with personal understanding. When she was a child, she was profoundly affected by her peer relations:

Katie: When I was younger, I just tried to fit in.

Suhanthie: Where did you get that from?

Katie: I don't know, I think because I was teased.

Suhanthie: When were you teased?

Katie: In Kindergarten. I remember it. My Mom told me how when I was little I came home from school and I was really upset because this other kid was making fun of my eyes. She said I was really upset. You know

how little kids do that thing [pulling at outside corners of eyes] and they say “Chinese, Japanese”, I think that he was doing that and it was driving me crazy. I think I just didn’t want to be Korean because it was cool to be something else.

Suhanthie: Something white?

Katie: Something white.

It was admittedly my loaded questioning that led Katie to the topic of race.

However, her story shows us how her classmate’s teasing about difference led directly to her belief that “Korean” and “cool” were mutually exclusive and to her desire to be something other than Korean. The teasing of her classmates helped her to construct Korean features as somehow defective or inferior. Her personal experience heightened her sensitivity to the factors that compelled her students to want to assimilate.

Katie expressed concern about the powerful influence that teachers have on their students. She noted with some distress that one classroom teacher’s conceptualization of the position of ESOL students in the school was incongruent with her own. The teacher advocated segregating ESOL students until they achieved a desired level of English-language fluency, noting that: “They don’t even belong here.” (Katie, Meeting, 10.11). Katie became concerned about the effect that the teacher’s views were having on a student’s relationship with his heritage:

“[The classroom teacher doesn’t] recognize culture in their classrooms. In the classroom, he totally ignores the fact that his students are multicultural or have special needs.” (Katie, Meeting, 10.11)

Teachers carry tremendous power in the ESOL classroom, benefiting from the firmly entrenched student-teacher power imbalance. They have closer proximity to insider status in the dominant culture, regardless of their ethnic origin, because they inevitably have more knowledge about America than their recently arrived young students. Recognition of classroom teachers' ability to sway the development of students' cultural self-concepts, for better or worse, surfaced periodically among the teachers.

Alexandra believed that teachers have a responsibility to support the maintenance of non-American names.

“I get angry when teachers Americanize children's names. When the teacher does it, I think it's just a slap in the face. Like there's this girl from Hong Kong ... and her teacher kept calling her Chris. She'd never respond. And I'd walk over and say Christina, let's go, and she's come. So the child was trying to tell her teacher, that's not my name.” (Alexandra, E-mail, 04.26)

Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie all noted students adopting American names for themselves and expressed disapproval of the practice and curiosity about the factors that prompted the changes.

In a seemingly unrelated conversation about place names, Alexandra one again made the connection between naming conventions and power:

Even my level 1 students ask me, who named all of this, which is an issue of power ... Somebody in that class asks, if it's called this in the book, why is it called Northern Colorado? Who calls it Northern Colorado? I had

to look it up, so I'm learning too. I never knew we called it America after Amerigo Vespucci, and that anything under exploration is called an America. And it's the West Indies because they were looking for India and they were travelling West. And then they asked, "Why is it the Mississippi, why wasn't that name changed?" (Interview with Alexandra, 01.26)

Fairclough (1995) has claimed that language learners can only challenge oppression if the relationship between language and power is explicit to them. In his work *Critical Discourse Analysis*, he outlines suggested teaching methods that highlight this connection. Ironically, in Alexandra's classroom, as in Jane's, it was the students who stimulated their teachers' awareness of the ways in which power relations are implicated in language.

Events in Alexandra's classrooms emphasized for her the ever-changing nature of culture and more importantly positionalities. For instance, to be a black man in one county has a different meaning from being a black man in another, and understandings of identity become entangled further with the process of migration. Two young black men, whom Alexandra said had occupied positions of prestige and power in their home countries of Ghana and Jamaica, moved into a very different place as black men in American society. Because an individual's societal power wavers with her environment, border crossing requires re-learning about social positionality. Alexandra sensed a responsibility to communicate with the boys about race and oppression in U.S. society. However, she extended the discussion to attend to the complexity of her students'

identities; she provided the opportunity for students to examine the ways in which their experiences and self-perceptions change with migration. (Alexandra, Interview, 01.26).

Katie was critical of ideologies that force students to make choices between one “culture” or the other, oblivious to the multicultural and rapidly hybridizing state of the world, what Canagarajah (1999) refers to as “the creative processes of linguistic mediation, interaction, and fusion that take place in social life.” (p. 3). Katie had been deeply affected by a class on cultural identity taught by a latina scholar that she had taken as an undergraduate student. As a first-year teacher, Katie deplored the absence of attention to multicultural experience in the world surrounding her students. She noted a societal unease with the notion of cultural hybridity and advocated for a place for people to be comfortable without having to ascribe to a specific culture:

I discussed in my [honors] thesis how in America there seems to be a need to associate a person with one particular culture or maybe two particular cultures. And the identity crisis seems to come when the person doesn't fit into one or the other category. And then the person has to decide, are you black or are you white? So I peg that as one of the things that make people go through cultural identity crisis. You know, checking the box. Some people will say I'm this, and that works for them, and some people will meld the two, and some people will do their own thing. (Katie, Meeting, 03.21)

The teachers in this study wanted their students to experience a sense of belonging in their new communities without feeling ashamed of and compelled to relinquish the parts of their selves that made them different.

Construction of Stereotypes

Alexandra's black and hispanic male students saw themselves painted in ugly hues in their social order, in the grand metanarratives of the world. She, like other teachers who wrestle with stereotypes in the lives of their students, had to make decisions about whether or not to acknowledge these controlling images. She related her discussions with two black students, Gamma and Rafe, and one Latino, William. Gamma in particular posed classroom management challenges:

Alexandra: But every now and again I try to get him to see how intelligent he is but he has to show that, and unfortunately he has to show that more than others because he's battling this thing in the United States where black boys are not seen as intelligent.

Suhanthie: That was actually addressed aloud? That a black student has to work harder because of racism?

Alexandra: He has to know what he's doing. Like if he wants to show how intelligent he is, he has to show it. He can't be playing the stereotype one moment and then going against the stereotype the next minute. We talk about, if you want people to think you're intelligent, act intelligently.

William was saying that everybody's unfair to hispanic boys too, and I said, I recognize that, and that's why I want you to show how intelligent you are. They do that all the time, they say, fine, I won't do it because it's easier not to do the work. And they make me angry when they do that because they even do it in my class. I think the consistency with which I

I've been giving them my perspective that you have to work on these things, that that's the only thing that's going to level everything out.

In their new worlds, Gamma, Rafe, and William, and saw black and Latino boys represented as lazy and unintelligent. Alexandra hoped that the three boys could demonstrate to the world the incorrectness of these stereotypes. Stereotypes are a form of hegemony, they contribute to metanarratives that sustain the existing social order. Gramsci described "hegemony" as the dominance of ideological norms of the ruling class over the subordinate class (in this case, immigrants and racial minorities) through intellectual persuasion. Those who are the subject of stereotypes, for instance immigrants, often respond in reaction to stereotypes by either fulfilling them or constructing themselves oppositionally to them. Teachers need to be cautious as they tread around stereotypes, since in concretizing them—for instance in supporting the notion that black and Latino boys need to prove themselves more than other students—teachers risk underscoring the established social order by making these stereotypes and norms appear natural. Alexandra used a strategy I term *disarming*, that is she presented the stereotype to the boys, assuming that they would absorb it elsewhere if not through her, and she positioned them, indeed defied them, to challenge the stereotype. Alexandra perceived a conflict between her intention to create authentic classrooms and her desire for social justice. She recognized that the assumed association between race and intelligence is unfair and that the stereotype of unintelligent blacks (and in the case of William, unintelligent Latinos) has served to oppress racial minorities. However, the teacher saw racism and racist stereotypes as a reality in the new lives that Gamma, Rafe, and William

were living, and she believed that learning to deal with them was part of their adjustment to life in the United States.

For Alexandra, “playing the stereotype” was equivalent to becoming discouraged by these higher standards and ceasing to make an effort, a reaction that Gramsci would classify as *resistance*, an unconscious display of discontent, as opposed to *agency*, which he sees as explicit political opposition with the intention of inducing social change. Resistance without agency can serve to reinforce hegemonic practice, as was the case with Gamma, Rafe, and William. In becoming discouraged and refusing to participate in their academic contexts, the three boys opened themselves to school failure, thus fortifying the stereotype. Alexandra encouraged her students to move from resistance to agency by evading norms, urging them to: “[s]how how intelligent you are.”

According to Bhabha (1994), the third space is a site for challenging fixed categories of identity, and fixity must be challenged because it sustains stereotypes. Bhabha (2001) in fact claims that the stereotype is a form of knowledge that relies on being “anxiously repeated” (p. 370) for its perpetuation.

A Latino in Jane’s class voiced a similar concern about the place occupied by “hispanic kids” in the grand metanarrative:

The school newspaper came out last week. This one kid flipped through it and said: “Ms. Fitzpatrick, this paper is racist!” I said: “Okay, why?” and he said: “Forget it” like he thought I was going to yell at him. I said: “No, no, no, I pretty much agree with you, but I want to hear why you think that.” And he said: “It doesn’t reflect anything about the hispanic kids, it’s all about the American black kids and their music.” I said: “Okay, I agree,

now what are you going to do about it?" You have to find these small pieces and let them be able to do something with it. I said: "Who are the kids who write for the paper? Do you write for the paper? Do your friends write for the paper?" He said: "No. I should complain." I said: "Do you want to write a letter to the editor?" He hesitated. I said: "Jorge, if you want to write a letter, I'll edit it, I'll help you with the grammar changes." And I said: "You and your friends need to be represented on that paper. You can't sit back and complain about it. That's the first step, realizing there's a problem ... but you can't stop there."

When Jane heard her student's critical analysis of his own representation (or lack thereof) in his larger school culture, she moved quickly to encourage his reticent expression and his equally hesitant agency in affecting change. For Jane, it is not enough for her students to merely adapt to life in the United States. She wants them to become a part of the composition of life in this country and consequently part of movements for transformation. Both Alexandra and Jane were encouraging their students to be critical of stereotypes by highlighting the area between the incontrovertible existence of the stereotypes and the students' agency to challenge them. In this instance, Alexandra highlighted the reality of stereotypes while Jane encouraged students to change the reality by challenging the stereotypes. However, there were times when Alexandra, too, challenged the grand metanarrative being presented to her students. In a fairly parallel incident, she discussed the importance of students being able to see their countries on a map:

I have a Ukrainian student now. We couldn't even find the outline of his country on the map. So I asked the [appropriate staff member] for a new map. I mean, I have students whose relatives have died over the establishment of these countries! This man said: 'The countries change every day, just change it on the map with a marker.' ... I wanted to say: 'Don't you see how important it is to see your own country? Are you crazy? You're really stupid.' I wanted to him understand why I need a new map ... I said: "That's a really interesting response" and I ducked into the bathroom to get a hold of myself. (Alexandra, Conversation, 01.26)

Alexandra's solution to the quandary was to provide her students with a copy of a Newsweek map that showed all countries that had become independent since 1945.

Teachers face a paradox: while our understandings of social identity development indicate that much is to be gained from the resources we bring with our first cultures and languages (Moll, 1992), teachers work within a society that continues to privilege dominant culture and stigmatize certain constructions of difference. Like Alexandra, Jane was concerned about meanings of race constructed within her school walls. Alexandra's boys were considering the ways in which negative racial stereotypes affected their school lives. Jane's students complained not about the negativity of racial stereotypes but about their transparency in the school culture. They simply didn't see themselves in the school newspaper.

Summary

As Alexandra, Margaret, Katie, and Jane reflected upon and struggled with the role they played in the construction of their students' identities and positionalities, they

raised questions that problematized the dominant discourses of the literature surrounding teaching language minority students. For instance, seeking to strengthen students' connections to their home cultures had the potential to encourage stereotyping and wakened the possibility of unintentionally reinforcing hegemonic constructs of culture. While the teachers indicated that it was important to connect home and school cultures, they also agreed that they needed to do so without universalizing "culture." Highlighting difference for the sake of difference can lead to exoticizing students and their histories and can ignore the complexity and subjective nature of culture. Blindly legitimating all student knowledge can give rise to the possibility of valuing knowledge that is not desirable for the teachers or the class. The teachers' pedagogy indicated that the principle of making connections, while helpful in creating a space for home culture identification, was simply insufficient. Similarly, encouraging self-naming was supportive of students' agency, but it can create the possibility of students choosing assimilationist or self-oppressive identifications, and furthermore could potentially encourage limited and monocultural interpretations of identity.

The teachers did not seek to reject these strategies, but rather to use them thoughtfully. They sought to find a balance between seeking, for instance, valuing home cultures and supporting students agency to self-define. The study highlighted awareness of the failure of ESOL curricula to challenge the "fixity" (Bhabha, 1994) of ways in which knowledge is coded. Curricula should be flexible. The intention is not to replace school knowledge with student knowledge but rather to redefine knowledge in a way that accommodates both in the context of a fluid and ongoing reconstruction of identity. The importance of moving beyond fixed and limited definitions of culture, the "holy trinity"

(ref.?) of race, class and gender, became apparent, with teachers considering cultures as disparate as mental illness, foster families, and life in Appalachia.

The teachers explored ways to make space for student knowledge without reinforcing the stigma associated with difference. They discussed the need for multiple labels, identifications, and identities. An element that became visible was the ways in which norms are constructed, for instance norms of whiteness. The importance of questioning associations between white and neutrality surfaced, as did the necessity of examining how stereotypes are constructed and sustained. In reading over the transcriptions, I came to develop an understanding of how difference is discussed and the importance of overcoming silences that allow discrimination to exist.

Teachers' positionality towards their students' contributes to the shaping of students' identities. Canagarajah makes the distinction between a reproduction orientation, in which "subjects are passive [and] lack agency to manage linguistic and ideological conflicts to their best advantage" (p. 2) and resistance perspectives, in which "students have agency to think critically and work out ideological alternatives that favor their own empowerment." (p. 2). For teachers, negotiating the line between supporting students' home cultures and gatekeeping around what counts as American culture was murky; for students, a fine line existed between surrendering to dominant culture and appropriating it as a tool in their own destinies.

Chapter 6. Negotiating Normative Bodily Practices

Introduction

“The Body, the most visible difference between men and women, the only one to offer a secure ground for those who seek the permanent, the feminine “nature” and “essence” remains thereby the safest basis for racist and sexist ideologies.” (Trinh, 1989, p. 100)

*“She has a beautiful nose, but it's not like Barbie's. It's pointy and it sticks out. And she has beautiful cheeks but her face is round, not long.”
(Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 11.04)*

Examining normative ideals of physicality in the context of gendered constructions helped me to understand the ways in which the teachers, and in particular Alexandra and Katie, understood the relationship among pedagogy, gendered identity, and power. This theme became important to me because it drew my attention to important but almost imperceptible silences that were not evident in the afternoon tea transcriptions or in my field notes.

During the course of the study, my own intense discomfort with classroom references to female students' physicality prompted me to ask questions about my own discursive habits and the practices of the sociocultural communities I had belonged to. In particular, as Alexandra's verbalized her consciousness of dominant norms of female, I began to notice that physical appearance, particularly female physical appearance, was for the most part unmentionable. Gender is one of the lenses with which physicality is

almost always viewed, and because messages about female beauty are a constant in my life, as they were in the lives of the teachers and their ESOL students, I feared that allowing a discursive space for female bodies would reinforce oppressive norms of beauty. However, Trinh (1989) reminds us that it is separating women from their bodies that contributes to their construction as sexless or even masculine: “Women must . . . not let themselves be driven away from their bodies. Must thoroughly rethink their bodies to re-appropriate femininity. Must not however exalt the body, not favor any of its parts formerly forbidden” (p. 36). To strike an appropriate balance between “re-appropriat[ing] femininity” and “exalt[ing] the body” is a tall order for classroom teachers seeking to teach for social justice. While physicality was not a dominant theme for all of the teachers, the seemingly minor interactions among some teachers and students in the course of their daily interaction had a summative value that merits further exploration.

Bourdieu (2001) rather deterministically suggests that the presence of bodily norms ensures that women remain on a permanent quest for the unachievable: “Continuously under the gaze of others, women are condemned constantly to experience the discrepancy between the real body to which they are bound and the ideal body towards which they endlessly strive.” (p.67). Because identity is relational, with humans constructing their gendered nature only in relation to other femininities and masculinities, the teachers in the study faced the daunting challenge of guiding their young female and male students as they tried decide how to position themselves in relation to normative definitions of female beauty. It was Alexandra and Katie who spoke of how troubled they were by the oppressive nature of the norms of beauty being presented to their young female students. Both had misgivings about pervasive societal perceptions of their female

students' external appearances. However their concerns led them to different pedagogical intents from each other: Katie downplayed female appearance, while Alexandra sought a revision of the definition of "beauty" offered by society at large. This chapter problematizes the meaning of the place that the body occupies pedagogically. I compare the different approaches taken by Alexandra and Katie to explore the complex relationship among the physical body, language pedagogy, and socially constructed understandings of beauty.

As I began to think and read about the relationship among gender, language, and physicality, I found little in the literature to help me think through the pedagogical decisions that the teachers were having to make. Studies of language and gender to date have been important in highlighting how males and females use language differently (Lakoff, 1975; West and Zimmerman, 1983; Pica et al., 1991; Oxford, 1995), how linguistic practices contribute to—or counteract—oppression (Cameron, 1990), the relationship between multilingualism and gender (Gal, 1978; Pavlenko et al, 2001), how language learning is connected to gendered access to the public world (Goldstein, 1997; Kouritzan, 1999; Norton, 2000); and how discourse shapes and is shaped by gender (Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2002). However, within the context of language pedagogy, the physical body and normative bodily practices have been notably absent from discussions of gender identity. Over the past two decades, sociologists, educational theorists, and scholars from other fields, influenced by postmodernism and feminist theory, have begun to challenge the conceptualization of humans as bodiless minds in interaction with each other and instead are examining how the body carries meanings that are crowded with social and historical relevance. Educators are examining the location of

the body within school walls and, conversely, asking about the place schooling occupies within the body and the social meanings that schools and other institutions have inscribed upon the body. Nonetheless, examination of the body has yet to gain currency within the context of language learning.

Exploration of specific, local knowledges, referred to by Foucault (1978) as subject knowledges, have focused attention inwards to the local, the immediate, and the personal, stimulating an interest in exploring that very local site, the body. Foucault's (1981) concern about bodies revolved around power in relation to social control of the body and sexuality. In 1984, Turner challenged the mind-body dualism of Cartesian thought and encouraged sociologists to consider the ways in which the body is socially constructed. Educators including hooks (1994) and Grumet (1998) theorized the social meanings written on the body and examined ways to invite the body into learning spaces.

In the 1990s feminist theorists, many of whom had previously worked tirelessly to construct female bodies as transparent, allowed the body to materialize and began to look at its relationship with identity. The discourses surrounding the admittance of the body into the theoretical arena are tentative and tinged with fear that essentialism will increase within all branches of feminism, that women will be once again reduced to their physical selves. Butler (1990) shifts our focus from the actual gendered biological body to the way the body is made to be gendered by the acts it performs in the construction of identity. For Butler, there is no biologically based sex, only socially constructed gender. Her notion of performativity conceives the various acts that humans perform as inscribing the body with gender. Like Butler, Grosz (1994) critiques mind-body dualisms, calling

instead for "embodied subjectivity" and "psychic corporeality," but unlike Butler she claims that gender is inevitably biologically rooted and predetermined.

In schools and classrooms, meanings of gender are not passed cleanly and unidirectionally from teachers to students but rather are co-constructed within communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1998) through social interactions in the classroom as "...individuals produce themselves (or are produced) as 'gendered' by habitually engaging in the social practices of a speech community that are symbolically and practically associated with masculinities or femininities or some combination thereof" (Erlich, 2001, p. 120). The extent to which the students accept or reject new identities or even new constructions of gender is part of the negotiation of identities in ESOL classrooms. However, it would be naïve and even misleading to ignore power relations within classrooms (Morgan, 1998). Although teachers do not single-handedly define gender for their students, they have pedagogical power because teachers' dominance in the classroom is socially legitimated (Bourdieu, 1982). The negotiation of identities is therefore not carried out in a neutral context. For ESOL teachers, acknowledging the body is not a simple undertaking in the light of all of its attendant baggage. Recognizing female students' bodies is particularly complicated because once females are associated with their bodies, that connection can become indivisible, and they can become trapped in the realm of the body (Gallup, 1988).

Negotiating a place for the body in the ESOL classroom was intricate work. The topic of students' physical appearance surfaced repeatedly during the year and was evident in a variety of contexts. In the afternoon tea discussions it appeared always, without exception, in reference to standards of beauty for female students. In theory, a

discussion of gendered pedagogies should explore constructions of masculinity and constructions of femininity, asking what does it mean to be male? What does it mean to be female? What does it mean to be both or neither, accessing a range of masculinities and femininities? However, in this analysis, I discuss the gendered body only in relation to female identity because the connection between gendered bodies and male identity was absent from the afternoon tea conversations. While it is indisputable that masculine identity (in relation to forms of femininity) was being constructed in the classroom, I had made the methodological decision to privilege the afternoon tea transcriptions and to introduce data from other sources only when I could do so in the context of the teachers' voices. Connections between masculinity and the body will therefore not be discussed here, but their absence is important and will be addressed further later in this chapter.

Fashioning meanings of gender in this study proved to be a complex and dynamic process because Alexandra and Katie both sought to teach transformatively, and their critical perspectives contributed to the identities that their students formed. The teachers therefore undertook a two-pronged task: (1) guiding students' social understandings of what they considered to be normative constructions of femininity and masculinity within their new home communities and, simultaneously, (2) challenging those normative constructions. This discussion centers not around actual normative constructions of gender, the meanings of which defy definition because they are so subjective and fluid, but rather around what the teachers' *believe* to be normative constructions. Alexandra and Katie were analytical about the relationship between beauty and meanings of gender. Because physical appearance is often the first impression a person presents, it is tightly connected to identity and in particular gender identity. However, the relationship between

identity and the body is unclear because meanings of being a woman or being a man, which dictate how we present our physical selves, are ambiguous. For Katie and Alexandra, part of being a woman is the quest to conform to socially determined standards of beauty. Within this theme, I explore three major issues: (1) negotiating normative constructions of beauty, (2) separating individuals from their bodies in order to resist objectification, and (3) the constitution of women as *percipi* “being-perceived” (Bourdieu, 2001).

Negotiating Norms

Alexandra and Katie carried with them images of essentialized constructions of gender, and they were uncomfortable with the dehumanizing nature of these images. Consequently, when situations arose that reproduced those images, they challenged them, although in contrasting ways from each other. Katie tried to avoid mention of the physical appearance of the girls in her classroom, while Alexandra deliberately referred to her female students’ bodies in the context of challenging narrow definitions of beauty.

Alexandra worked consistently and analytically to identify and then critique normative standards of beauty. In talking about her young female students, she frequently mentioned their beauty, drawing specific attention to differences between what she herself termed “beautiful” and what she perceived to be mainstream conceptions of beauty. For instance, of one student, she said:

She has a beautiful nose, but it's not like Barbie's. It's pointy and it sticks out. And she has beautiful cheeks but her face is round, not long.

(Afternoon tea, 11.04)

She used the word “but” to separate her description of the students’ physical characteristics from what she considered to be dominant ideas about beauty, indicating a gap between the two. In describing another student, she told me:

... the girl I was talking about from Senegal. She has very beautiful one-toned skin and it's just very beautiful, it's such smooth color, you know?
... Her face is all one tone, and when she smiles ... it's just ... she's beautiful. She's just a little bit rough around the edges, you know? She talks too tough, and she wants to beat everyone up, you know? But she's so beautiful. (Conversation at school, 11.04)

Alexandra noted how the student’s gender performance differed from that which would be a part of beauty, an acceptable and “beautiful” performance of feminine beauty.

The teacher perceived long faces and Barbie’s nose as conventionally beautiful. A pointy nose that sticks out, a round face, talking too tough, wanting to beat everyone up, and being rough around the edges, while not inconsistent with Alexandra’s construction of beauty, were in direct contradiction with what this teacher perceived as a normative definition of beauty. As she highlighted the distinction between her ideas and those of society, she was constructing herself as a teacher who embraced multiple-layered, heteroglossic (Bahktin, 1981), and hybrid definitions of beauty (Wong, 2003), forms of beauty that did not conform to the mainstream. She sought revised definitions of beauty for her students because she wanted to challenge the idea “that middle-school-age kids ... still want to be the magazine beautiful.”

Alexandra displayed a vigilant consciousness of the power of norms in the making of meanings of gendered bodily practices and worked to reinforce the gap

between social norms and her own standards. Foucault (1978) believed that the practices of “disciplinary power,” an alluring and potent form of social control, are harbored in regulatory institutions including schools and are practiced not only by representatives of these institutions (including teachers) but by individuals passing through their prosaic daily routines. Disciplinary power derives its effectiveness by attracting humans to certain desires, norms, and identities. For instance, the continued popularity of Mattel’s Barbie doll among parents and girls is an example of a way in which disciplinary power exerts itself, repeatedly underscoring the desirability of the doll’s physical appearance as a bodily ideal. Teachers and school culture contribute to the shaping and reshaping of appropriate bodily norms, but individual teachers can choose to produce or subvert disciplinary power. Alexandra’s position was complex. She was clearly critical of Barbie dolls, suggesting that the dolls contributed to a grand metanarrative that constructed whiteness as normative, and she explicitly sought to stimulate her students to be critical of Barbie’s whiteness:

And the girls were like, well, I don't know, I like Barbie. I've always played with Barbie. And I was like well how does it feel when you don't see a black Barbie? When you don't see a Bangladeshi Barbie?

She was pleased to note the girls indicating that they were developing broader notions about beauty and in particular ideas about beauty that included their racial selves: “...So the girls were like ‘yeah, yeah, I am beautiful,’” and she perceived this change as the first step: “It was really just a beginning. It was just saying I think you're beautiful, everybody else should think you're beautiful.” (Alexandra, Interview, 11.04).

Alexandra seeks to create possibilities for multiple meanings and interpretations of beauty. Her argument was complicated because it initially seems to challenge the myth of white beauty (Wolfe, 1992) without denouncing other systems of oppression, for instance the doll's unrealistic bodily proportions. However, I interpreted this discussion as one step within an incremental, concerted approach to the many-layered task of critiquing multiple norms of beauty around her. For instance, at other times during the year, Alexandra expressed concern about her female students' attempts to become unreasonably thin. Early during the school year, upon learning that some young women in her class were on extreme diets, she planned a unit on food that included a section on "talking about food and what is healthy and unhealthy" (Alexandra, Interview, 10.07). She invited a counselor to talk to the female students in one class when she suspected that one might have an eating disorder (Alexandra, Interview, 05.02). In this way, she sought to discourage the girls' attempts to conform to normative standards of beauty, including those pertaining to race and physical size.

Separating Individuals from Their Bodies

Like Alexandra, Katie was concerned about her students feeling pressure to conform to media-controlled definitions of female beauty. However, Katie's approach differed significantly from Alexandra's: she took exception to the value structures of students who placed too great an emphasis upon appearance. While Alexandra believed that the definition of "beautiful" should be broadened to include a greater variety of bodies, Katie sought to teach her girls to appreciate themselves apart from their physical attractiveness, their bodies. In class one day, the students were discussing their career goals:

Katie: Jennifer, what do you want to be when you grow up?

Jennifer: A doctor. No, a supermodel.

Katie: Are you sure you want to be a supermodel?

Jennifer nods.

Katie: You know, you're certainly pretty enough to be a supermodel, but is there any other ambition that you have?

Jennifer: Maybe a doctor. No, a supermodel.

Katie: Maybe it'll change when you get older.

(Field Notes, 03.21)

We discussed the incident with the other teachers at an afternoon tea, and Katie shared:

“This one girl, Jennifer, she's so bright, and she said that when she grows up, she wants to be a supermodel ... I didn't want to impose my beliefs on her, saying you can be so much more than a supermodel!” (Afternoon tea, 06.19).

Katie perceived supermodelling as unsuitable for an intelligent girl. She was conscious of the authority associated with her teacher-status and hesitant to abuse it, but she was similarly reluctant to support Jennifer's choice. Alexandra felt that imposing in this instance was justified, responding: “That's one I don't mind saying.” At this point, Alexandra was supporting Katie's criticism of modelling. Katie explained that while she had questioned Jennifer's choice, she hadn't sought to direct her away from it because she concluded that the sixth-grader's ambitions would evolve as she grew up: “... Because I know it'll change.” While not directly dissuading her from modelling, she

stimulated her to think about alternatives. I asked Katie: “Why don’t you want her to be a supermodel?” and she replied:

“Because I don’t think it takes brains to be a supermodel, and I think it places too much emphasis on a woman’s looks. And I think she has a lot more talent and brains to be more ambitious than that. I just think she can be so much more than her looks. I want her to feel like she can do so much more than just be a pretty face.”

Katie believed that talent and brains were more valuable than appearance.

Alexandra noted that although it doesn’t take “brains to be a supermodel,” intelligence and modelling are not mutually exclusive: “You might need brains to survive it, though. It’s a hard life.” Katie elucidated on why she objected to her girl students aspiring to be models: “Modelling kind of emphasizes the whole idea that women are valued for their beauty, and once other people think you’re not so beautiful anymore, even if you are, it just seems very sad for me.” The teacher challenged what she perceived to be a social tendency to value women’s physical appearance to the exclusion of other qualities, and she specifically critiqued the fleeting nature of this value system. As she had done throughout the earlier part of the school year, Alexandra valued appreciation of female physical appearance but objected to the narrow confines of the traditional definition of beauty. She expressed a preference for redefining and broadening society’s definition of beauty to include multiple definitions rather than minimizing the importance of physical beauty:

“Just to give you some hope, I think that’s changing. I mean, supermodels are being demographed at age 50 now and pregnant and things that are not traditionally thought of as beautiful.”

Katie, however, believed that an disproportionate emphasis on physical beauty would detract students from focusing on what she perceived to be more important facets of their selves: “Well, I also wanted her to recognize the importance of inner beauty and not just external beauty, and how inner beauty is so much more important.” For Alexandra, physical beauty was a valuable attribute that needed a more all-inclusive definition, whereas Katie believed that physical beauty was simply overvalued socially.

Separating the girl from the body provides a sense that she can be appreciated apart from her physicality. However, the tendency toward “disembodiment” has been criticized. Jackson and Scott (2001) have called for the body to be socially situated and socially mediated. Realistically speaking, it is bodies that classify humans at first glance by conveying sex, age range, race, and other loaded social markers, so it may not have been practical to imagine that Jennifer could be conceptualized apart from her physical appearance. The situation that Katie faced was messy: she objected to modelling because it disassociates individuals from their bodies and then values the bodies, which results in their objectification. Katie didn’t challenge the disassociation itself but rather reinforced it and sought to instead value the individual apart from her physicality.

Establishing body and mind as independent from each other creates a new tension: if an individual can be conceptualized apart from her body, then conceptualizing the body apart from the individual is a natural progression. Disembodied minds create the possibility of mindless bodies including, for instance, models, slaves, and prostitutes.

Conversely, acknowledging the physical body implies the possibility and even necessity of disciplining the physical body into conformity, a necessity that Katie was loathe to underscore.

Esse as Percipi

“Masculine domination, which constitutes women as symbolic objects whose being [*esse*] is a being-perceived [*percipi*], has the effect of keeping them in a permanent state of bodily insecurity, or more precisely of symbolic dependence. They exist first and through the gaze of others, that is as welcoming, attractive, and available *objects*.” [itals in original]

(Bourdieu, 2001, p. 66)

What responsibilities do teachers have towards their male students as they grapple with the location of female beauty in relation to gender identity? ESOL teachers face the daunting task of finding the middle ground between teaching male students to critique normative standards of beauty and appearing to seek their male students' approval for nonstandard forms of beauty. The relationship between body and identity is ambiguous because identity is an essentially social concept. Who one is evolves in relation to others. To a limited extent, every human is objectified by the gaze of others, but similarly every human is constructed by the gaze of others. However, the normalization of certain female bodies (but not others) particularly underscores the *percipi* (being perceived) status of women. For instance, Alexandra sought a revision of her female students' self-concepts, emphasizing that their beauty, while unconventional, was nonetheless beauty. However, she wanted to teach all students, and not only girls,

to think critically about media-generated images of beauty. As such she wanted her male students to rewrite their definitions of beauty and to see the female students as beautiful:

“ ... the boys were just kind of taking it in. I like the co-ed setting because the boys are all after the girls, but I think that discussion, I'm hoping, is making the boys see the girls differently.” (Interview, 11.04)

Because the boys had sexual interest in the girls, Alexandra was concerned about how they defined female beauty in general. She therefore specifically focused on their assessment of the appearance of these female students. It was important to Alexandra that the boys see these particular girls as beautiful.

Similarly, later on during the school year, when Alexandra became aware that her female students were skipping meals and developing unhealthy eating habits in order to lose weight, she invited a counselor to speak to all of the girls in her class in her absence and then continued the discussion during class time. She told me:

But when they came back the next day, we talked about it in a co-ed setting. And I thought it was very interesting because the boys were listening. (Alexandra, Interview, 05.04)

This concern about the boys is a challenging problem for teachers who seek to raise the consciousness of all of their students, not only their girls, without privileging the opinions of the boys. This tension draws on what Simone de Beauvoir (1949) described as the distinction between the objective self and the subjective self. De Beauvoir believed that when girls reach puberty, they cease being the subjects of their own lives and become instead the objects of others', they “stop being and start seeming” (p. 370).

Whereas once girls lived their lives for themselves, after puberty, they live under the gaze of others and are focused not on how they are but on how they appear to others. De Beauvoir's delineation may be excessively stark, but it captures the ways in which a preoccupation with the gaze of others keeps young females focused on their image and therefore dependent on others, in this case on their male peers. Teachers like Alexandra seek to negotiate complicated terrain. They want to help all students to recognize and challenge the power of normative ideals of beauty. They strive to encourage their males to be critical of social norms but they must do so without appearing to seek approval for the appearance of their female classmates and thus contributing to the objectification of their girls.

In a conversation about appropriate dress, Alexandra asked her class why some girls wore revealing clothing. A male student responded:

“Because it looks good.”

“Why do you like it?”

“Because she looks naked when she's wearing clothes like that.”

Alexandra nodded at him but didn't respond. (Field notes, 10.12)

When I asked Alexandra about this exchange, and she told me:

“They were being totally honest ... I asked the girls later, how do you feel when they say things like that? The girls were like, it doesn't matter to me,

I don't like them.” (Conversation during planning period, 10.12)

In the context of a strong historical taboo on discussion of physicality and its connection to sexuality, my initial reaction to this incident was that the boy was speaking inappropriately. Alexandra was concerned about how the young women would be

affected by the male students' attitude towards revealing clothes. This account revealed Alexandra's female students as indicating that they could be influenced by the young men's opinions only if they "liked" the men. However, while the girls claimed to be ambivalent towards both the boys and their opinions of revealing attire, Alexandra made a connection between the boy's endorsement of sexually revealing clothes and the young women's investment in attaining these standards:

Because you know some girls go into the bathroom and change into clothes their parents wouldn't approve of. And then change back at seventh period before they get back on the bus. (Alexandra, Interview, 10.12)

Alexandra believed that whether or not the girls "like[d]" the boys, the boys' reaffirmation of dominant standards of beauty had an influence on the girls, since most individuals want to present bodily appearances of which others approve. Furthermore, it is important not to ignore the role of power in this dynamic: the boys' power to contribute to the construction of standards of beauty is highly legitimated because males, for the most part, are constructed as the primary consumers of female beauty.

Summary

"I am really asking whether women cannot begin, at last, to *think through the body*, to connect what has been so cruelly disorganized (italics in original)." (Adrienne Rich, 1976, p. 284)

Alexandra, Katie, Margaret, and Jane faced the challenge of finding a way to invite female students' physical bodies into their classrooms without also creating space for them to be objectified. Rich calls for thinking and physicality to be brought back

together, referring to their division as “cruel.” The split is indeed unnatural, but it has served a purpose over the years. Critically thinking teachers and educators have (usually unconsciously) supported the evolution of mind and body apart from each other because the body’s ostensible invisibility has promised to give greater visibility to intellectual selves, liberating girls from a focus on their outer appearance. Reuniting mind and body is more difficult than it sounds. It is not possible to simply pick up a needle and thread and effortlessly stitch the two back together again, since their separation served a purpose in the first place: concepts of beauty keep women positioned as consumable, and the detachment of body from mind was one way to thwart that positioning.

The fact that I saw no data connecting gendered bodies to the construction of male identity is important. Male identity was indisputably being constructed in the ESOL classrooms, but its connection to male students’ physical bodies was never the explicit topic of discussion at the afternoon teas. Male bodies were simply never discussed. Although representations of the male body have certainly been transformed in recent years by more objectified and sexualized media representations of male physicality, the association of women with their bodies and men with their minds has been pervasive for much longer. Bourdieu, in fact, claims that the female experience of the body is of the “body-for-others, constantly exposed to the objectification performed by the gaze and discourse of others” (p. 63). The implications of the binary are different for men and women, and Gallup explains that it is simultaneously harder and easier for men: “Harder because men have their masculine identity to gain by being estranged from their bodies and dominating the bodies of others. Easier because men are more able to venture into the realm of the body without being trapped there.” (Gallup, 1988, p.7)

Both Alexandra and Katie were caring and felt a responsibility towards their students. Both sought to teach in ways that simultaneously responded to their students' social needs and rejected restrictive social messages about gender. One teacher sought to minimize the conceptual space occupied by the physical body in the classroom, the other to guide the body into the conversation.

Chapter 7. Institutional Constructions of ESOL Identity

“Some of the central ideologies of current English Language Teaching have their origins in the cultural constructions of colonialism. The colonial constructions of Self and the Other, of the ‘TE’ and the ‘SOL’ of ESOL remain in many domains of ELT [English Language Teaching].”
(p. 2, Pennycook, 1998)

Introduction

Pennycook draws attention to the historical context of English language teaching and the legacy that colonialism has imbued into every ESOL classroom. Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret’s pedagogical processes cannot be considered apart from the historical social construction of English speakers and English learners within the United States and globally, which has a powerful effect on how the school category of ESOL is constructed. This chapter explores the teachers’ perceptions of how ESOL student identity is made within their schools and how the American, native-English speaking teachers negotiate the role that they themselves play in molding the meanings of ESOL within their school cultures.

At the beginning of the school year, the teachers noticed that students in the upper elementary grades, the middle school, and the high school were ashamed of their ESOL student status. They cited numerous examples of students trying to hide their relationship with the ESOL department and perceiving the end of their need for ESOL services as a desirable victory because it freed them from the stigma of ESOL. Crossing borders

usually implies a radical adjustment to societal location and status and therefore social identity, and for students arriving in this country, one of the first of those adjustments comes with their placement in ESOL classes and their consequent adaptation to the identity associated with being an ESOL student. Being in ESOL carries social meanings within the culture of American schools, meanings that immigrant students are called upon to adjust to. The fact that ESOL was constructed as deficient was not exclusive to the four schools in the study. ESOL programs across the United States occupy an inferior status in schools' pecking orders (Olsen, 1997). To understand the evolution of the inferior status of ESOL within schools, we need to examine it in relation to its larger context because the relationships among ESOL, schools, and identity are imbued in ideology, an ideology that is constructed collaboratively by all who participate in the making of a culture. ESOL did not become subordinate by chance, it was made to become subordinate by a legacy that extends beyond the four schools of the study and even beyond language learning in the United States. The ideology that constructs ESOL is connected to the historical terrain of the construction of non-native English speaker identity and of the dominance of English world-wide.

Pennycook (1998) connected ideologies underpinning modern-day ESOL teaching with the backwash of colonialism and with colonial constructions of Self and Other. Despite the binary social construction of ESOL/nonESOL, Alexandra, Jane, Katie, and Margaret seemed to develop rich and complicated pedagogies that moved away from the conceptualization of students as passive and oppressed and teachers as liberating benefactors. They asked critical questions about meanings of ESOL, challenged separatist practices within their school systems, and supported their students' attempts to challenge

hegemonic representations of ESOL. The teachers' various practices were necessarily contradictory because there were so many contradictions within their circumstances.

According to the four teachers, ESOL was constructed as deficient, with only occasional exceptions, by most of the students and many of the teachers and parents they interacted with. The superiority is crucial to the maintenance of the status quo: ESOL students' difference was supported by the school constructions of ESOL, but it was the type of difference referred to by Trinh (1989) as: "...the very kind of colonized anthropologized difference the master has always granted his subordinates" (p. 101). This is a difference without authority, a benevolently conferred and exoticized difference, and a difference that bore a deep stain of stigma.

Part of the construction of ESOL as deficient included its construction as separate from the dominant school culture. The four ESOL teachers themselves explicitly condemned the inferior perception of ESOL student identity and constructed pedagogies that integrated their responsibility toward their students with their desire to reframe institutional meanings of ESOL. The ways in which ESOL came to be produced as subordinate and the ways in which the teachers and sometimes students challenged this framing will be scrutinized in this chapter.

Shame about ESOL

Alexandra described the role played in stigmatizing ESOL by students who were not in ESOL classes. A short hallway separated her classroom from its door, meaning that someone standing in the doorway could not be seen from the classroom. She often left the door ajar in order to ventilate the classroom. Students would "pass the door and shout: 'You can't speak English' into the classroom and play with the light switch at the door"

(Afternoon tea, 04.10). Alexandra was able to catch one of these students on one occasion and reported him: “I caught a guy one time, and he got into all kinds of trouble, so that was good.”

“How often does this happen?” I asked.

“At least once or twice a week.”

She encouraged her advanced-level students to discuss these incidents during class time, and she related their responses:

“Some of them just shrug it off: ‘It’s ignorance, it’s their problem’.” However, she added that the students were nonetheless not indifferent to the harassment: “These are kids that *do* take it personally.” She perceived a relationship between the taunting of non-ESOL peers and the ESOL students’ shame of their ESOL standing, adding: “They pull the shades in the windows so that no one across the courtyard can see them because everyone knows [this classroom] is ESOL” (Afternoon tea, 04.10). In drawing the shades and hiding their presence in the classroom, the students are acknowledging the subordinate status of ESOL within the school and are also affirming—even perpetuating—it. The teacher herself was placed in a difficult position. She cared about her students’ comfort levels and wanted them to associate a sense of safety with their ESOL classroom. If she agreed to the drawing of the shades, she could potentially reinforce the portrayal of her classroom as shameful and interrupt her attempts to transform the image of ESOL within the school. However, forcing the students to open them would have blindly ignored that the perception of ESOL held by the larger school culture differed from her own.

Alexandra negotiated the terrain between her responsibility towards her students and her desire for transformative practice. She faced competing representations of ESOL: the

schoolwide understanding of ESOL students as inferior, and her individual construction of ESOL students as “bilingual and talented” (E-mail, 11.10). To stubbornly open the classroom blinds would be to assume that her own understandings of ESOL were the only possible meanings of ESOL available to the school community and would have disrespectfully left her students open to ridicule. The teacher chose what was in the best interests of the students at the moment.

However, there were times when Alexandra questioned her students’ choices to reinforce oppressive and discriminatory norms. For instance, she told us of a student’s self-directed linguisticism:

One of my students who’s Chinese started making fun of his own language. The Korean student was asking him how to pronounce something in Chinese, and started mimicking some of the kids who make fun of his language. I said: “Why are you making fun of your language?” I don’t mean to tell him he’s stupid, but I’m sure it gives him a little bit of shame, that I bring it out that way. He’s picked on an awful lot. His accent is very heavy. People say to me all the time, how can you understand him?
(Interview, 05.21)

She felt that in that situation, within the safety of the ESOL classroom, running the risk of embarrassing the student was justified.

Alexandra’s students were on a continual quest to move from their ESOL classes to the English class for native English speakers. One student refused to participate in ESOL and even distanced himself by asking to sit in the hallway:

He said he wanted to sit in the hallway in the class. So I said: “You’re fine to sit in the hallway.” So he sat in the hallway through the period. It wasn’t anything he needed to participate in, his ability level is pretty high. I held him after class. I said “Why don’t you want to be in the class?” “I don’t need ESOL.” “You might not need ESOL, and we’re going to find that out really quickly if you do what I ask. You’ll be in the regular English class as soon as your ability shows me. But you’re not showing me your ability right now.” (Alexandra, Conversation during planning period, 09.11)

If she were to be overzealous about challenging negative constructions of ESOL, Alexandra could have chided the student for his recalcitrance, demanded that he participate, and been forceful about her rejection of the inferior image of ESOL. Instead, she chose to respect his concerns and explain the swiftest way for him to exit ESOL, indicating a caring for her students’ happiness. She explained some other motivations the students had for exiting ESOL.

“Some of them really want to be there and learn. Well, they may not want to be in ESOL, but they want to do what they’re told to do because that’s an ethic that they have. Some of them don’t want to be there because it’s too hard and they’re afraid to admit it. And some of them don’t want to be here because it’s too easy and they’re mad that they didn’t get the exit from the testing last spring.” (Alexandra, Conversation during planning period, 09.11)

And a month later:

I have students who are also in a regular English class. And they have the belief that what they're doing in that class is English, so they feel like why come to this class, it's remedial. Instead of seeing it as "How can you improve on what you're doing in your English class?" Some students just want to be with their friends who have already exited ESOL. Or it might be their misunderstanding that if they can speak English, then they are able to read and write it as well. (Alexandra, Interview, 10.07)

The construction of ESOL as inferior was not spawned by students but rather reflected broader societal influences, including an understanding of NNES as deficient and as only remediated once native-like proficiency has been achieved, which for many high-school students never occurs. This construction of ESOL was sustained beyond school walls and contributed to by NESs and NNESs. For instance, Alexandra described her twin students' understandings of ESOL as antithetical to "macho," an understanding constructed collaboratively with their parents:

Alexandra: I have a set of twins. Their parents came to family night and asked why their sons were still in ESOL ... they're not ready for regular English, but they want to be in it. They're very into being the men. They just want to be macho, they're very into being macho ... well, as macho as a 12-year-old can be. They want to be tough, they want to show that they can deal with all these hard-edged classes.

Suhanthie: And ESOL is not macho? ESOL is handholding?

Alexandra: Well, it can't be anything but when there are only 15 kids in the class, and in the regular English class there are 32 or 35. But if they

were all doing their work, just doing it and showing me what they know, I might have a different perspective on what it is they do know. But all they're showing me now is that they don't know enough to be in a regular English class because they're not willing to do the exercises that are prescribed by the curriculum, no matter how creatively I put a twist on them. (Alexandra, Conversation during planning period, 10.07)

In this instance, the gendered construction of ESOL as handholding contradicted the “macho” nature of the identity the twins wanted to embrace. For the two students, being “men” implied functioning without the support or scaffolding related to ESOL, being “tough,” and being competent to attend “hard-edged classes,” so that receiving ESOL services was constructed, for them, as in conflict with being “men.” This quest for an identity of adult masculinity was reinforced by their parents, who wanted to see their boys exiting from ESOL. The incident highlights the interesting ways in which individuals construct school subjects. In this case, ESOL was constructed as babyish and also oppositional to “macho.” The twins’ parents appeared to be concerned less about the content of the class and more about the identities that ESOL implied, since the class the twins’ were registered in were makers of their identities within and even out of school. This exchange allows a glimpse onto how meanings of ESOL can be created and maintained within linguistic minority communities. This construction of a desirable male identity as tough and rejecting of support has several ancillary effects. One result is the construction of female as dependent and unable to deal

with mainstream classes, the other is the construction of ESOL as appropriate for students who lack toughness and independence, which is a deficit representation.

In her quest to provide her more proficient students with the support they needed, Alexandra established a “bridge class,” a transitional class between ESOL and mainstream English classes. She didn’t form the bridge class for the specific purpose of combating shame about ESOL, but it was, for this teacher, a happy and welcome consequence. Alexandra’s students typically clamored to take the ESOL exit test and move to the regular English classes:

Alexandra: Some of them were upset that they either weren’t tested because it wasn’t their turn to be tested or because they didn’t get the score they thought they’d get.

Suhanthie: Why are they so keen to get out of ESOL?

Alexandra: Because of the stigma. (Afternoon tea, 04.10)

However, with the establishment of the bridge class, the teacher noted that while leaving ESOL services had traditionally been a desirable goal, the students were now happy to stay in the bridge class:

“So it’s getting to be a status symbol to be in the bridge class, even though the bridge class is still ESOL. It’s so funny, I like how it’s made a turn of events because the kids wanted to be out of ESOL so badly, but now that there’s a bridge class, they want to stay in it. It’s like a cocoon, it’s like a soft transition. They’re all taking English anyway, but it’s like a soft transition to being totally without services.”

Alexandra perceived the bridge class as a way for students to obtain the language support they needed without the associated stigma. Her happiness about the effect of the bridge class represents yet another example of the unsteady tightrope the teachers walked between reinforcing and challenging the accepted conception of ESOL within the school. On one hand, the bridge class allowed students to save face by releasing them from ESOL status. It was also important in blurring the distinction between ESOL and nonESOL, between English speaker and non-English speaker, which blurs the “fixity” of the categories and allows space for inter- and intra-group membership. On the other hand, it reinforces the stigma of ESOL by acknowledging the undesirability of ESOL and providing them an escape from it. The reason that the bridge class was preferable to ESOL was that it moves students a step away from ESOL and its intrinsic disgrace. Some students even applied the stigma to the bridge class, which comprised only former ESOL students and was taught by an ESOL teacher:

Even some of the World English speakers who have tested out make fun of some of the ones who are in the class, they walk by the classroom and go ah, you’re in that English class. They’re very aware of levels and immediately want to go to the next level.

The students were eager to emphasize their own detachment from the class and its lowly status within the school culture.

Margaret, too, noticed that when she joined the school community, some of her students were ashamed of their enrollment in ESOL classes. She told us about one fourth-grade student who ignored her when he was outside the classroom unless the hallway was empty: “If no one else is in the hall, he’s very happy to see me. It’s like something out of

a movie. [If other students are present] he doesn't want anyone to see him!" When class was over, he would surreptitiously look through the doorway, and if he saw other students in the hall, he would hang back and wait in the classroom. Margaret would explicitly dispute his shame, telling him: "You know, you're bilingual and this is great. You're so talented!"

Margaret was troubled by her students' reluctance to be associated with ESOL. She noted that this trend started with her third grade and carried through the higher grades at her school. She wanted to challenge the tendency: "I'm trying to think of things to do." One creative example sparked a noticeable change. She kept dialogue journals with the three ESOL students in one third-grade class. On days that she picked students up for ESOL, she would stand silently at the classroom door until her students saw her, gathered their pencils and books, and moved quietly to the door to walk to the ESOL classroom with her. On Fridays, when she taught in an inclusion format in their regular classroom, she would collect the journals. She responded over the weekend and returned the journals the following week. As she collected journals one Friday (12.03, Field notes), the students who were not in ESOL asked her: "What's the journal thing?"

"We write letters back and forth," she explained.

"Can I have one?" asked a native-English-speaking boy.

"Me too?" clamoured another student.

"Me too?"

"Well, I'll have to see about that," replied Margaret.

The following semester, she told me that the dialogue journals had become a tool in her quest to elevate the status of ESOL within the third-grade class:

So I have three ESOL kids in that class but 15 dialogue journals. And it's really good because I'm always wondering, how do I explain ESOL, and I usually only have one sound-byte to explain ESOL [when I'm picking them up from their classroom], but now kids are asking in the journals!

Margaret used an inclusion format twice a week and pull-out on the other three days. On the days that she went to collect her three ESOL students, an obvious change had come over the class. Her presence evoked great interest among other class members, and the native English speaking students would ask to attend ESOL, calling out "Pick me!" and "Can I come?" On one occasion, a boy who was not in ESOL tried to persuade Margaret to take him and instead leave one of his non-native English speaking peers, asking: "Why can't we go with you? Why? Why?" and then telling her: "Mrs. Chan, Juan speaks perfect English, why is *he* in your group?" (Afternoon tea, 04.10)

Using a fairly simple and serendipitously discovered format, Margaret had managed to change the status of ESOL within her tiny microcosm of society.

A pervasive shame about subscribing to the category of ESOL student was omnipresent in all schools of the study, and this shame was repeatedly reinscribed by many participants in the school community, including ESOL students themselves, students who had exited ESOL, native English speaking students, classroom teachers, and parents. However, the teachers developed innovative strategies on a number of levels—including curricular, interactional, pedagogical levels—to counteract or at least diminish the stigma of ESOL status.

Classroom Teachers Role in Construction of ESOL Identity

Katie and Margaret both noted the role of teachers in shaping students' and other teachers' understandings about ESOL. Margaret was surprised to hear some teachers openly express reluctance to work with ESOL students:

“They had three teams for each grade level, and all the ESOL students were on one of those teams. And the staff were like: ‘Next year I don’t want to be on the ESOL team.’ From teachers who I thought were pretty open-minded!”

Suhanthie: Like who?

Margaret: Like one teacher who was a contributor to the [county curriculum revised to reflect diversity training].

Suhanthie: Why didn’t she want to be on the ESOL team?

Margaret: I think it stretched her too much to try to differentiate. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

To be unwilling to work to meet the special needs of second language speakers implies that ESOL students require an unreasonable or unjustifiable level of effort. It suggests that ESOL students require but don’t deserve special attention.

One fifth-grade teacher at Katie’s school held exclusionary views about the participation of immigrants in U.S. society. Within classroom walls, he supported segregation of ESOL students and was opposed to inclusion-model classes. Katie arrived at one afternoon tea upset about a comment that Mr. Mecclesfield had made during a conversation with a special education teacher: “And he said, ‘Well [ESOL students] don’t even belong [in the United States] anyway’” (Afternoon tea, 11.01). Katie was particularly distressed about the subconscious messages that might be telegraphed to his

young students through his teaching: “Those were his words! He’s teaching them, and not only that, this attitude . . . is going to be conveyed through his teaching. Kids are pretty smart, they can pick up on what a teacher feels through his nonverbal signals.”

Katie was concerned not only about ESOL students internalizing negative ideas about their own status, but also about non-ESOL students absorbing jingoism towards ESOL students. In expressing his ideas and thereby acting upon the identities of his young students, Mr. Macclesfield was shaping meanings of ESOL for the entire school community through the kids he interacted with. Katie made a direct link between veiled bigotry and the fostering of prejudice against ESOL students within the school culture:

“And they wonder why it’s so hard to combat racism, combat intolerance.

It’s because these attitudes are being conveyed to the other students. Not only are [ESOL] kids being marginalized, but the attitude’s being conveyed to the other students that having an attitude like you don’t belong here is okay. This man is in a very powerful position with children.

Children are very impressionable.” (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Katie faced a difficult task. She wanted to alter the status of ESOL at her school by provoking the teachers to question their assumptions about immigrants. She had a limited amount of time, was aware of the difficulty for teachers to find the time to read anything extraneous, and was afraid of appearing to lecture or preach. Given these constraints, her first step was to ask for two minutes at the end of a staff meeting. She read an article from the New York Times that simply tells a story about the author’s discovery of his own prejudices about immigrants. She offered no synopsis or conclusion but merely read the story, telling us at an afternoon tea later that day: “I think people need

time to process it. I said, ‘I’m not going to say too much about it’” (Afternoon tea, 12.06). She was unsure about whether she had achieved what she had set out to do, but she planned to continue to offer reflection-stimulators such as this one:

I want to start a little ESOL corner. With ... thought-provoking stories like this one. I want to share them with everyone, but if I photocopy them and put them in mailboxes, they won’t read them because teachers get a lot of mail. So I was thinking I’d have like two minutes at the staff meetings every month and pick out a story or a piece. And not have any discussion about it, just hand out a copy and read it aloud, like at the end. I’d just be like, this is a story from the ESOL corner. And then if they want to talk about it they can, but it’s more personal. So there’s no risk to them at all, they just listen and if you want to talk to other people you can.

Margaret: I like that.

Katie: It’s relevant for not only the ESOL population ... you know ... children who live in the homeless population, children with special needs.

It intersects everything. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Alexandra had opened her school year with a similar approach. She believed that within her school walls, the construction of ESOL student identity left teachers unappreciative of, and even uninformed about, the hardships that her students faced within their family lives. She wanted to highlight these “family strifes,” presenting ESOL students as having faced dramatic struggles in order to immigrate. At the first staff meeting of the year, faculty were discussing the challenges of African American families but appeared to be oblivious to the hardships of some immigrant families. Alexandra was particularly

concerned that attention to the needs of diverse learners would neglect ESOL students in favor of other minority groups: “Why are they only talking about African American children?” she asked. She asked the presenter for three minutes at the end of the meeting. She then directed an activity that led her fellow teachers through a “thought process,” asking them to list the three things they thought they would always do, the three people they loved the most, and the three achievements they were most proud of:

“And then I told them the scenario, the rebels are knocking on your door, you’ve gone for your visa, and the visa officer says you can have it next week but you have to give me one thing from each column. The rebels are knocking on your door and they’ve taken your daughter and your wife is screaming. You go back to the visa office and they say, okay, you can have your visa next week but say but you have to give me one more thing from each column. Then they come for your son – the whole dramatic story that you’re running from something.”

Alexandra wanted to emphasize the struggle that is part of the journey to this country for some ESOL students: “It’s not a picnic coming to this country. Why does an African male, who is somebody of status in Africa, choose to come to the US and have no status whatsoever? Why would you do that to your son?” She conducted this activity “to help the teachers understand the family strifes [ESOL students] are going through. They had totally forgotten the ESOL families. I got a standing ovation. Everybody was like, they’d lost their PhD, their beautiful house in the country, their father, their mother.” She believed that “just taking them through that process” helped the teachers to “imagin[e] losing all of those things. (Alexandra, Interview, 01.26). Alexandra, like many other

ESOL teachers, wanted to challenge the invisibility of non-native English speaking students within attempts to pay attention to the needs of diverse students.

In drawing attention to the needs of her ESOL students, Alexandra once again faces the challenge of representing, within a short period of time, the experiences of ESOL students without universalizing “The ESOL Student Experience.” The method she chose, an imaginative role-playing activity, enabled other teachers to glimpse alternative perspectives and perhaps even access some degree of empathy without Alexandra needing to specifically name a given experience as representative of all students. The tension is nonetheless visible and possibly inevitable, but Alexandra has chosen a strategy designed to mitigate it.

Alexandra’s experience brings up another frequent theme in ESOL teaching, that is the sense that minority groups are competing against each other for limited resources. In schools that are grudging about paying attention to minority groups and in contexts that esteem the construct of competition (tightly associated with Western and patriarchal ways of thinking), it is not surprising for minorities and their advocates to develop the impression that the resources available are finite, that giving to one group implies taking from another. Wong (forthcoming) in fact refers to this experience as “historic discursive patterns of divide and rule,” which she characterizes as “one of the key features of colonialism.’ She points out that oppressed people have historically been compared to each other, pitted against each other, and used to police each other in order to sustain racism and to contribute to divisions between former slaves and colonized subjects in modern contexts. Historic patterns of divide and rule extend beyond racial minorities competing for resources. This colonial legacy seeks to keep other oppressed groups

invested in the construct of hierarchy by encouraging them to police each other. For instance, classroom teachers, who are socially undervalued (Biklen, 1994, Acker, 1984), are encouraged to use their teacher-authority to police and reinforce norms of whiteness, native English speech, and standard English in their classrooms.

Decentering the Center, Advocacy for the Periphery

Part of being an ESOL teacher was being critically mindful of the periphery-center relationship that ESOL departments have with the larger school culture. For instance, as the five of us discussed the idea of a single standardized national curriculum, we connected our discomfort to the potential marginalization of students who do not represent the center, in particular, ESOL students. Furthermore, even discussion of a standardized national ESOL curriculum was unsettling because ESOL students are not homogenous, and a curriculum that seeks to globally attend to their needs necessarily creates a hypothetical “standard” ESOL student. In this discussion, our ideas evolved as they encountered each others’ opinions. Katie was the first to arrive at one afternoon tea on June 19th, and she told me of a discussion with an ESOL colleague, Tracy, who believed that a national ESOL curriculum was essential to maintaining “high standards” for learning. Katie initially expressed tentative support:

I agree with it as long as people are creative in their teaching and are going to modify their teaching to suit their students’ needs. (Afternoon tea, 06.19)

I expressed my own concern about the ability of a national curriculum to attend to the needs of diverse students:

I also worry ... I mean, there are many different students, is it possible to have one textbook or one curriculum that responds to them all?

Katie offered further information and in the process began to express some reservations:

Tracy was saying that ESOL students all need to know the same things around the country, I guess about the language. I don't know, something is not sitting right with me with having a national thing.

When Alexandra and Margaret arrived a little later, Katie brought up the subject again:

Katie: Before you arrived, I was telling Su about a conversation I had with Tracy at Jump Street Elementary School. Our discussion was about standards across the nation. She was saying she wanted every ESOL student to know what their goals were and have [the same] textbook.

Margaret: Like a national curriculum?

Katie: Like a national curriculum. I told her I had a problem with standards.

In relating her thoughts, Katie's perspective shifted a little from an initial, if tentative, support for a national curriculum to a clear conflict. Alexandra supported the part of Katie that expressed reservations, pointing out that different students have different needs, particularly depending on their geographic location. Alexandra's ideas about national curricula were clear and defined. She perceived a national curriculum to be in opposition to attending to the diverse needs of ESOL students:

If I didn't listen to what my kids wanted to learn, they wouldn't have wanted to learn. But if I were teaching ESOL in Missouri, *Huck Finn* would make sense. But I'm not teaching ESOL in Missouri, I'm teaching

it on the Murray River. It makes a difference. I don't think that *Huckleberry Finn* works on the Murray River. If you're talking about standards in which everyone comes out speaking the same language at the end, I think that's an impossible idea for ESOL. I know I couldn't teach under those circumstances. I don't think neighborhood schools are the same or have the same needs.

It was important to Alexandra that she "listen to what my kids wanted to learn," and she saw a national curriculum as interfering with her ability to do so. A fundamental principle of Alexandra's language teaching is personal relevance for students, and she believes that no one curriculum can be personally relevant for every student in every class in the country. A national curriculum that is aimed at all students inevitably treats students monolithically, and in doing so contributes to the construction of a norm. In seeking to address the elements that the majority of students have in common, a national curriculum cannot help but have a centralizing effect, neglecting the multiplicity of identities represented in the national ESOL population.

Margaret wondered whether the variously socially constructed meanings of language learning fluctuated across national borders. She remembered that in China, language learning was conceptualized and assessed in more lexical terms than in the United States.

I wonder how much it has to do with the nature of English. When I was in China, there was such a concept as how many characters you should know, like they all knew how many thousand characters you had to know to read this newspaper or that newspaper. And they'd ask me, 'How many

English words do you have to know to read the New York Times?’ And I’d say, ‘I don’t know, a lot probably.’ They’d ask, ‘How many words do you know?’ I have more of a sense of the grammar, but I don’t have it tiered, like you would approach the language this way, with these words first and these characters first and then these. That would make it much easier to standardize a teaching approach.

Margaret observed that in her Chinese experience, language acquisition was expressed in quantitative terms according to knowledge of characters. For Margaret, the more abstract conceptualization of English, which is considered in terms of less definable qualities such as proficiency and fluency, makes language teaching less conducive to standardization. Margaret’s story illustrates the subjective nature of representations of language learning, with different groups internalizing different understandings of language that vary with context.

“How Rich the Students Are in Knowing”

A large part of ESOL teaching was advocating to classroom teachers on behalf of ESOL students. Margaret conceptualized this work as supporting classroom teachers “so they can see the kids succeed,” suggesting that ESOL teachers could contribute by making the possibility of students succeeding explicitly visible for those teachers who might otherwise not see it. The teachers were sometimes frustrated when they worked with classroom teachers who indicated, either explicitly or through their actions, that they believed that ESOL students were not able to succeed. Some of the ESOL teachers in this study took specific and intentional steps to alter representations of ESOL within the school. Margaret described some of her efforts:

I think I've been focusing a lot on ... so many different hats you have to take, and one hat that I've decided to take is to do extra things so they can see the kids succeeding. For example, in third grade and all my kids in the upper grades are having a hard time spelling words. So I've started spelling journals. Their teacher on Friday gives me their lists for them and then we do all these activities, like little sentences with their names using the words, or cutout the letters from catalogues and fit them in. Part of it is doing little things for the teachers so they see me not only as showing them different ways to be with the kids but somebody who's also softening things for them because I know they're stressed that they don't know what to do, especially with the beginners.

Margaret was sympathetic towards the classroom teachers and took it upon herself to increase the visibility of ESOL students' success. For Alexandra, teachers have a responsibility to envision every student succeeding. The perception that success is incompatible with the lives and experiences of ESOL students could be interpreted as the innocent oversight of overburdened classroom teachers too busy to look beyond the surface. Alternately, it could be viewed as a hegemonic representation of ESOL teachers and ESOL students spawned by the classroom teachers' desire to underscore their supremacy as legitimate teachers and the superior worthiness of their native-English-speaking students'. Alexandra was angered by classroom teachers who failed to see and support their students' achievement:

Alexandra: You're so sensitive. I get angry that they don't try.

Margaret: Well, it's hard because they have more years of teaching than me, and they sometimes they say things that do make me angry. I think a lot of our training ... I don't realize it's a different way of knowing or seeing things. I think that's natural, that's the way it is, that's what you should do, can't you see that? Like one teacher came up to me, this is beginning second grade, and she said they are not passing their spelling tests, I'm very concerned. (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 05.07)

She rummaged in her bag and pulled out a list of words:

oat

boat

coat

float

goat

throat

any

could

should

She explained that she was dissatisfied with the classroom teacher's lesson.

Margaret: For beginning second graders but with no visuals, so I think they're just memorizing them.

Alexandra: But are they working on the phoneme? Are they working on oa?

Margaret: A little. It didn't make me upset because she's a very gentle person. But I just think a lot of teachers don't have the perspective of having learned a second

language. The phoneme is important, I think, but they're out of context. I said have you shown them pictures of any of these words? Or brought in any of them? And she said no. And I said I'm sure they don't know what an oat is. You should bring in some oats ... I want the classroom teachers to believe in how rich the kids are in knowing. (Afternoon tea, 05.05)

Margaret saw one of her "hats" as making visible the potential and valuable knowledge held by ESOL students so that classroom teachers can believe in their abilities. Rather than simply criticizing teachers who failed to reach ESOL kids, Margaret sought to support teachers' ability to see their students succeed. The result of this strategy would be that the classroom teacher would be able to have a vision of an ESOL student succeeding, Margaret would be viewed as an effective ESOL teacher, and the ESOL student would be attended to. Margaret took a positively nuanced and activist position. Teaching lists of lexical items out of context was counter to what she had learned about the importance of teaching language in context, but rather than looking down on the teacher for it, she explored ways to help the teacher contextualize and made specific suggestions: "You should bring in some oats." By taking on some of the extra responsibility, she helped classroom teachers to see "how rich the kids are in knowing."

Parents' Role in Construction of ESOL Identity

The entire communities of the four schools in the study contributed to meanings of ESOL, including not only staff and students but also parents of ESOL and non-ESOL students. Margaret sought to challenge dominant conceptions of ESOL by forming relationships with nonESOL students. She spent spare periods and lunchtimes with native English speaking students who had asked to spend time with her and even agreed to

exchange homework assignments with some. She used these opportunities to share information about and demystify ESOL. However, one native English speaking student whom she befriended was the son of the PTA president:

“His mother came up to me and said: ‘Is something wrong with Patrick? ... He doesn’t need special services.’” (Afternoon tea, 04.10)

Margaret responded “no” and explained that the boy had requested special time with her. The deficit orientation of ESOL was so engrained within the school culture that even the PTA president perceived students needing ESOL as having something “wrong” with them

ESOL as Separate

In all four schools in this study, ESOL was repeatedly and insistently constructed as separate within the school culture. The tendency to both enforce the segregation of ESOL students and to underscore the actual construct of ESOL as separate played an important role in the conceptualization of ESOL as inferior and shameful. It is important to note that simply constructing as separate alone does not automatically cause ESOL to be understood as inferior. Other school categories are conceptualized as separate without becoming inferior, for instance gifted and talented programs. ESOL is constructed as separate because of the inferior status of non-native English speakers, and constructing it as separate merely reinforces its inferiority. Alexandra’s students made a clear distinction between language proficiency and segregation, experiencing pride in the former but feeling marginalized by the latter. They easily discussed the benefits of having two languages:

Rafael: You can call someone a garbage can in front of his face and he doesn't even know it.

Sofia: You can have a personal [conversation].

Claudia: You can talk about boys that don't speak Spanish. (Field notes, 11.11)

In reference to this discussion, Alexandra told me: "They realize that it's great to be bilingual, to be able to speak Spanish. But some of them just don't like being separated." (Afternoon tea, 11.15)

Historically, across this country ESOL students were placed in separate classes and didn't interact with their English-speaking peers until they had achieved a degree of English fluency and, parenthetically, of assimilation. Like many schools across the English-speaking world, the public school systems in both of these counties had separate ESOL "centers" in the 1970s, schools that were attended by only ESOL students. Segregating ESOL students from their English-speaking peers is detrimental to all students for many reasons. It underscores difference within a system that perceives divergence from the norm as inferior. It limits ESOL students' access to English language experience. It deprives dominant-group students of interaction with the knowledge and experiences of new immigrants. And it is a poorly veiled form of tracking that keeps ESOL students isolated and then legitimates the resultant hierarchy.

In 1981, a federal court ruling, *Castaneda v. Pickard*, determined that the segregation of limited English proficiency students was permissible only when "the benefits which would accrue to LEP students by remedying language barriers which impede their ability to realize their academic potential in an English language educational institution may outweigh the adverse effects of such segregation." The ruling

acknowledged that segregation presented potentially “adverse” consequences and placed some limitations on the unnecessary exclusion of ESOL students from mainstream classrooms. Despite these federal protections, the teachers in the study still noted both flagrant and covert resistance to the inclusion of ESOL students. As noted earlier, a fifth-grade teacher at Katie’s school, Harry Macclesfield, would have preferred not to teach ESOL students and openly supported segregation. Katie told us of a conversation she had with Mr. Macclesfield and a 6th grade teacher:

They were talking about having sheltered classes to transition the children into the mainstream. And Harry’s like, ‘Well I’ve been saying that for years. Just put these kids in their separate class. Have a separate program for them!’ He didn’t want them mainstreamed at all, just put them in a corner somewhere and keep them very segregated. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

ESOL students were also kept separate in more covert ways. Alexandra noted that classroom teachers’ popular practice of withholding a grade for ESOL students inhibited their motivation. Furthermore, because it establishes separate expectations and requirements for the ESOL students, it sets them apart from the other students and amounts to a subtle policy of exclusion:

A lot of teachers there have a habit of giving the ESOL kids no grade. I think that undercuts their desire to progress, their self-esteem in the classroom, their feeling of: “Why should I bother?” They get things back with no comments because the teacher thinks: “If I write something they’re not going to understand it.” Well, if you write something, they’re

gonna want to read it, so the motivation is there to read it (Phone conversation, 01.26)

Neglecting to assign a grade to ESOL students' work can be interpreted as a reasonable accommodation, but it might also appear as dismissive and as signaling to students that their work doesn't matter. Furthermore, the stark disparity between expectations for ESOL students and for the rest of the school population contributes to the construction of ESOL identity as Other.

Alexandra also noticed that some ESOL students were receiving high grades for sitting silently in class. Her classroom teachers would tell Alexandra: "Oh, she's very good, she just sits there and does her work" (Phone conversation, 01.26). Alexandra was dubious:

Is she really doing her work is my question or is she just not being a problem in class? Because she's not an outstanding student by any means because she doesn't understand anything. She can't be earning an A for anything but behavior. She can't understand the role of the Catholic church in medieval Europe because she doesn't even know what 'role' means.

Rewarding ESOL students for being silent in class discourages their participation (and hence language development) and encourages them to remain on the margins of the class. Furthermore, it contributes to the construction of an outsider ESOL identity and diminishes the degree to which ESOL students belong to the classroom community. Teachers of linguistic minority students face tension. It is unfair to grade them in the same way as their English-speaking peers, but it is simultaneously unfair to keep them

separate. The tension points to the problematic nature of the traditional grading systems revered in public schools. The most popular grading systems establish one global standard, are embedded in a competitive hierarchy, assume uniformity of experience, and encourage homogeneity in learning. It discourages teachers from leaving room for complexity of experience instead of always trying to simplify it so that such experience can fit on a grade scale or percentile.

Similarly, Katie noted the attempts of some classroom teachers to bar ESOL students from entering into the classroom conversation until their rate of speech was sufficiently fluent to ensure that their participation would not slow down the pace of instruction: "...[s]ome teachers will put them in a corner and say, "Okay I'm not going to let you participate until you can learn enough English to participate" (Afternoon tea, 01.24). One teacher at this school consistently had the ESOL students play on the computer while she taught the rest of the class, and Katie told us about the exclusionary tactics of a 4th grade teacher, Rosemary:

Katie: [Rosemary] complains to Sheila [the speech teacher], she went to ask her for some stuff to give to this new student from Pakistan. She's complaining to Sheila that I don't provide enough worksheets for her to give to Sima. So Rosemary said, you know I really need some work for Sima. So I said well what are you doing with her? So I went up there and other teachers told me that what's happened is Sima gets stuck in the corner on the computer or on her own with worksheets. So I said, you know I'm not going to give you any more work sheets, I think we should plan in the morning and talk about how to modify instruction. So we met

one morning and after that she's always too busy! So I don't know what to do, so this poor girl's just sitting there! And she's always complaining about her, like: "Sima doesn't even know her colors yet." I'm like, the poor girl's been here like a month and a half. She's like, "I think she has a learning disability." I'm like "I think it's too early to tell" and she's like she doesn't do her work and she falls asleep and she refuses to do any of the work. She frustrates me.

The use of worksheets kept Sima isolated and her focus diverted from her classroom peers. It closed her off from the language learning that could result from her interaction with more fluent speakers of English, and it similarly deprived the other students in the class from her perspectives and her ability to influence the shape of the class's learning. Even having Sima silently observe was too much for Rosemary:

They had a career day, some of the presentations were really good, they were very interactive. So I left my kids in there so they could benefit from the different presentations. So I went in there to drop off the report cards and she was like: "Can you take Sima out, Sima's not getting anything out of it." and I'm like: "How do you know?" so I was just like: "No, I'm going to leave her here."

Alexandra: And what does taking her out solve? (Afternoon tea, 05.07)

On some level, Rosemary sought to limit Sima's access to English language practice, exposure, and interaction. Both Katie and Alexandra were watchful for and critical of unofficial tracking and segregationist practices and advocated for their students in order to ensure fair access to classroom interaction. In these classrooms in both Alexandra's

and Katie's schools, ESOL interacted with gender to keep the student out of the path of classroom events—the absence of scaffolding and criticism has been associated with gender inequity in classroom interaction. For instance, the teachers in Sadker and Sadker's (1994) large-scale study gave boys constructive criticism, remediation, feedback, and help while their most common response to girls was acceptance, an "okay," a response that fosters neither further effort nor student achievement.

At Alexandra's school, the ESOL department had been so isolated from the mainstream school culture that Alexandra wasn't informed about a schoolwide International Night.

Alexandra: At my school, they had an International Night. I didn't even know about it ... Why wouldn't you include ESOL? Hello?!!!

Suhanthie: Who could be more international?

Alexandra: And it's a nice way to bring those families into the school.

A distinction was made between forced segregation of ESOL students and pride in group identification. In some instances, the ESOL students, particularly those more recently arrived, implied that their constructions of ESOL identity were preferable to non-ESOL identity. Some of Alexandra's students welcomed the line separating them from the students who were not in ESOL classes because they saw non-ESOL students as disrespectful of authority, particularly of parents and teachers (Afternoon tea, 01.24).

Alexandra sensed a degree of pride about being in ESOL from these students, whom she characterized as "probably com[ing] from more traditional forms of schooling where you sit down and shut up and listen to the teacher." Rather than feeling excluded from the mainstream school culture, "those kids are less bothered by feeling separate from the

crazy kids in the school.” Alexandra described their attitude as implying that: “I don’t want to be part of that group because they’re loud and obnoxious and get into a lot of trouble with their parents and they’re always getting yelled at by the teachers.” Margaret noted the same pattern in her elementary-school-aged children: “I see that even in kindergarten, they’ll tell me, we’re the ones that sit and listen and they’re the ones that are too noisy.” (Afternoon tea, 01.24).

Katie emphasized the importance of distinguishing between separation enforced by dominant group members and separation initiated by minorities seeking solidarity. She perceived the former as exclusionary and the latter as preservation of group identity within the larger school culture, making the distinction between “celebrating” and “isolating” themselves:

... when people talk about the cafeteria, you know all the hispanic students sit here, and people says that hurts the school, but maybe that’s a way for them to find strength and to find their own identity and be comfortable in an area where they speak Spanish and celebrate themselves for who they are rather than seeing them as isolating themselves. You know, one single voice is a lot weaker than ten. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

In thinking about ESOL identity, Katie complexifies the interchangeable use of the terms “ESOL” and “immigrant” within school walls. She notes the incorrectness of the construction of an ESOL identity that assumes all ESOL students to be immigrants. She provided us with an example. The new ESOL curriculum she was piloting sought to connect to students’ migratory experiences:

“Something interesting about ... the new curriculum – the first unit is about new beginnings, like starting over in a new country ... We read this book called *How Many Days to America*. It’s about this African family that fled to America. It’s realistic fiction. (Afternoon tea, 11.01)

In both counties included in the study during the relevant academic year, the most popular country of birth for the elementary-aged ESOL students was, surprisingly, the United States. American-born students made up the largest group in Katie’s classroom. The new curriculum, which sought to draw students’ life experiences into the ESOL classroom, assumed erroneously that students were first-generation immigrants.

Some students were like, “Well my uncle had to do that,” and they could relate. But some students are like, “Well, I was born here, and I don’t remember coming to America.” (Afternoon tea , 11.01)

The teacher noted the role played by county curriculum developers in constructing ESOL identity as synonymous with immigrant identity. She problematizes the definition of “immigrant” and questions the historical understanding of an ESOL student as one who has crossed national boundaries. This is an important line of questioning for several reasons. It acknowledges the fluid nature of immigration and identity in a globalized world in which travel is more accessible, people are increasingly nomadic, and notions of national identity are more elusive. Additionally, in interrupting the development of normative understandings of various categories (in this case, the socially constructed category of ESOL), Katie highlighted the possibility of multiple meanings of various

categories of difference and the importance of turning a critical eye towards assumptions about difference.

Margaret believed that the status of ESOL could be improved upon if the knowledge of the ESOL students were validated: “I want the classroom teachers to believe in how rich the kids are in knowing.” This teacher also found other ways to promote a positive image of ESOL. One step was to “talk up” other ESOL professionals, such as a bilingual counselor and the parent specialist. When she sensed that an ESOL professional, Enrique, was being underappreciated by a classroom teacher, she tried to encourage interaction between the two so that the teacher would know Enrique better and develop respect for him.:

And also for example Enrique Alvarez, do you know him? He’s one of the ESOL bilingual counselors. He came to work with one of my 4th grade students who’s having a hard time. The 4th grade teacher, she said, “Oh yes, he was at Mossy Valley. I don’t think he does much.” I think he also sensed that from her, that she didn’t have respect for what he was doing, so I think he kept her at a distance too, he didn’t really try to tell her what he was doing.

Margaret worked to improve the teacher’s perception of Enrique:

I said, “Oh he does this and that with Garry.” And then once we had a staff party that the parents put together for us and he happened to be there so he came and sat at our table and we started talking about Garry and those two started talking. So I left them and I guess they talked for like half an hour. And then I noticed she started asking him for advice, she was like: “I

started Garry on a contract and he's not really responding, he's like hot and cold." And he was like, "Well that's the way it's going to be, he's going to slip, he's going to be up and then slip back. You just have to be with him and be very consistent." And then she'd come back and say, "You're right, he slipped, then he came up a little higher." And now when I see her, she says, "That Enrique, he's great, he's doing such great things with Roger."

Margaret took similar steps to enhance the image of the parent specialist:

"The same, Olga Thompson, our parent specialist, I'll talk her up. She came and sat in on [a meeting to assess a student for special education services] and afterwards all the teachers were like, oh she's great."

Margaret's multi-pronged approach to elevating the status of ESOL students in the eyes of the other students and the regard for ESOL professionals by other school staff is part of this teacher's quiet but consistent struggle to push against the established conceptions of what it means to be in ESOL that she found in the school culture when she started teaching. Alexandra found herself in a similar situation:

At both the schools that I've worked for, I've struggled with the reputation of ESOL. That really bothers me a lot, because I step into a reputation rather than being allowed to build my own and I have to undo before I can build for myself. That's really hard. It's been a lot easier at (the middle school level) than at (the elementary school level) because at (elementary school) you're taking kids out of their class, so the teacher sees you

differently than if you're a teacher with your own class, not that you're a real teacher. I find it harder to be in a pull-out program.

She went on to explain how her assistance with students' homework served as an entrée for her to both support classroom teachers and to communicate and model accommodations and scaffolding for ESOL students:

... Another way that I've known that the advocacy is working is that the kids will ask me for help with their homework. I'll write notes on it showing where the kid is needing some assistance from their teacher, 'coz I'm not a math teacher or a science teacher. And I've even sent back materials with the teacher that has the same content, but at a lower level. I just put a sticky on it saying if you have any other ESOL students, they really want to do the homework, but they can't read what you've given them, try this. So just giving them materials if I happen to find them. But it's hard because you're always like planning. It's exhausting. But I think it's building the reputation of the program.

Suhanthie: Of the ESOL program?

Alexandra: Yeah.

Although she was exhausted by the level of attention she needed to give her work, she felt that the investment was worthwhile because it was improving the position of ESOL within the larger school context.

Katie associated the investment of some classroom teachers in excluding ESOL students with their inability to understand the challenges of learning a new language. The white privilege of a fifth-grade teacher at her school was so invisible to that teacher that

he was unable to conceptualize a life in which White and American was not the norm and was not his privilege:

Katie: Some teachers don't realize how much a kid can pull through or how difficult it is to learn not only a new language but a new culture.

Harry is a tall white male, he's in power. He doesn't have to think about struggle or having people judge you because if you don't live up to the standard, then it's your fault. He doesn't see the strength in the ESOL students, he thinks they should go to ESOL and come back to the classroom fully integrated, fully American, speaking English perfectly.

Alexandra: We have teachers from other countries who aren't patient with their kids.

For Katie and Alexandra, an important part of teaching marginalized students was the ability to adopt their perspective or at least to recognize that dominant perspectives might not seamlessly become an immediate part of their lived realities.

As Katie supported her colleague's attempts to teach her ESOL students, she advocated for attending to students' whole selves and not only their linguistic proficiency:

Katie: Ms. O'Donnell came up to me, all in a panic: 'I have a new ESOL student!' I was like, 'First of all, don't panic!' (laughter). She can't speak any English or write English letters. But then when I got her, she could write English sentences, she knew basic vocabulary.

Suhanthie: Oh, is this Julia? (referring to a student I'd seen during an observation that day)

Katie: Yeah!

Suhanthie: She was totally proficient... she knew her colors, she knew her adjectives, like she knew happy, sad.

Katie: Her listening comprehension is excellent. She knew a whole lot more than the teacher thought. Rosemarie [O'Donnell] was like, she doesn't understand a thing in class. So I'm like, how do you know she doesn't understand a thing? Actually, she knows quite a bit of English. She has a very quiet personality, and that has an effect on how much language she produces. (Afternoon Tea, 11.15)

Katie was aware that the initial, superficial assessment of a student's English proficiency may be affected by any number of factors, including students' individual style, personality, and response to their new school environment. Furthermore, teachers' impressions of how much language a student comprehends are based primarily on the student's output, which is unlikely to correspond directly to her level of understanding. Katie recognized this, but Rosemarie O'Donnell, who was managing a large class of students with a variety of learning needs, did not. Her interpretation of what students could do depended entirely on what she chose to look at. As the teacher, she had significant power in the classroom. On some level, her judgment that Julia didn't understand anything in class effectively kept Julia on the periphery of the class:

Katie: I said, what do you do in class? Do you include her? Rosemarie was like, she sits with students who talk to her! I said, that's good because that'll help her to socialize and feel like part of the class. And then I asked her about accommodations, what she does with materials to accommodate

her. She said that usually she doesn't do anything, and then Julia sits there and draws pictures. I said, you can give her work to do and modify it. She said, I don't know, she doesn't understand a thing, and then she walked out of the door.

Alexandra: I hear that all the time. When I say "modify," the conversation's over. (Afternoon Tea, 11.15)

Katie's concern for Julia extended beyond a narrow definition of language learning to include respect for Julia's social self and her ability to mingle and connect with her peers. Alexandra noted that for teachers teaching towards a hypothetical norm or center, modifying instruction for those on the periphery constitutes an extra burden, one that is sometimes considered too heavy to lift. However, when teachers view an ESOL student's need for accommodations as something they can either choose to provide for or ignore, they are constructing accommodations not as a right but as a privilege. As teachers present their ideas, they let us see what they believe is normative. The dominant construction of ESOL students' needs was that they exceeded what could be realistically provided by an overburdened classroom teachers. Two months later, Katie met a newly arrived student who actually did not know any English:

I have a new student, she's from Colombia at Carroll Hills [Elementary School]. This is the first time they've had a student come in who doesn't speak ANY English. Her classroom teacher, who is a great teacher, she was like, 'I don't know what to do.' And I said, 'Make her feel comfortable, the most important thing in the first few months is to make her feel comfortable, get her into the routine, include her in everything that

you can.’ She was like: ‘Okay, I can do that.’ So this little girl is very lucky because some teachers will put them in a corner and say, ‘Okay I’m not going to let you participate until you can learn enough English to participate.’ (Afternoon tea, 01.24)

Katie’s understandings of students’ language learning needs is broad. Rather than focusing on, for instance, the alphabet or verb conjugations or even vocabulary lists, Katie suggests strategies that are designed to attend to students’ social identities and emotional well-being.

Margaret told us the following story. It exemplifies her resolve to question institutional structures that did not serve her students well, and even to work her way into these systems in her pursuit of reform:

We were given a list identifying the GT (gifted and talented) kids, so of course I started combing through looking for my kids. This one kid, Esmeralda, she’s having a really hard time reading, but she’s very bright and inquisitive ... There was an asterisk next to her name, and it said *yes*. So it came up in a meeting, and this one teacher was saying: “Can you believe Esmeralda is GT? She can’t even read and write.” So I went down to the chairperson of the committee and asked her to explain all of this data to me. She said Esmeralda wouldn’t have been recommended for GT testing on the basis of her scores, but that she was parent referred. So I just started seeing all of the ramifications of parent awareness of the referral process. And I thought: “Hmmm. I wonder how you get on the GT committee. This sounds like a committee I should be on.” And I asked the

chairperson: “Can I be on this committee?” and she said: “Yes.”

(Margaret, Afternoon tea, 03.21)

A recurring theme among the teachers was their structural analysis of access. The underrepresentation of ESOL students in magnet and GT programs is no revelation—a well-worn groove runs from ESOL classrooms to those of the less “academic” subjects (Valenzuela, 1999), but Margaret’s sociological scrutiny of systemic barriers to the GT program is, for her, a way to make a difference for not only one child but on a policy level. Margaret was effective in keeping her antenna up so that when she saw structural organization that ought to be challenged, she recognized it as such. All four of the teachers continually developed an ongoing structural analysis of discrimination and power, which allowed them to position themselves appropriately in the places that allowed them to generate change.

In another example of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), the administrators at Alexandra’s school encouraged her to provide her students with only a cursory sweep of the material that native English-speaking students would be covering:

It’s a multiage group and they have the state curriculum. They were like: “You don’t even need to bother with the curriculum, just teach them map skills.” Marguerita asked: “Why do people in this country think they’re the only Americans?” She’s from El Salvador, I think. I was like, why do I have to teach them map skills, why can’t I teach them the higher order skills?

Whether or not the intention was to disadvantage ESOL students by making only a perfunctory education available to them, the effect of this unofficial policy would have

been to underscore the message that ESOL students either do not deserve or are incapable of benefiting from the same quality and depth of education as their native English-speaking peers.

“The More Language You Have The More Power You Have”

The relationship between ESOL and bilingual identity is situated along a slippery spectrum of power. When Alexandra talked to her students about their bilingualism, she drew explicit and immediate connections to the power that bilingualism afforded them:

Alexandra: I always talk to my kids about how much power they have because they have language and the more language you have the more power you have.

Suhanthie: When you say ‘more language’ are you referring to English proficiency?

Alexandra: No, I meant because they’re bilingual. Like when they use Spanish and keep people outside of their group away by only using Spanish. And how they completely took over international night last night even though they were only invited at the last minute. They came in and they were the dancers, they got the crowd going because they could get up and tell their stories in Spanish with so much feeling and so much flower in the language that kids who are learning Spanish in school just don’t have.

Alexandra challenged the deficit perspective of ESOL, replacing it with the term “bilingualism” and its association with power. She sought to impress upon her students the benefits of having more than one language. She cites several forms of power—the

power to exclude others, the power to “[get] the crowd going,” the power to “tell their stories in Spanish with so much feeling and so much flower.” Alexandra offered her students a redefinition of their ESOL status, emphasizing the power of their bilingualism and reconstructing the dominant orientation’s embedded focus on lack of English language proficiency. Simply using a word that is positively nuanced, “bilingualism,” instead of “ESOL” with all its connotations of inadequacy, offers a subtle shift in how that category is conceptualized. She was simultaneously supporting their awareness of the political and social implications of their language use, referred to as critical bilingualism by Walsh (1991): “the ability to not just speak two languages, but to be conscious of the sociocultural, political, and ideological contexts in which languages (and therefore speakers) are positioned and function, and the multiple meanings that are fostered in each.” (p. 127).

Summary

The stigma of ESOL across all four schools of the study both resulted from and contributed to its construction as deficit. ESOL students clamored to exit ESOL because they were embarrassed to be associated with the category. The deficit construction of ESOL was connected to the likelihood of school failure among ESOL students. Students who were in ESOL were excluded from participating in class, were denied resources, were assumed to be less able than they actually were, and were absent from the grand metanarrative offered within school walls. Ironically, while multilingualism, the reason for students’ placement in ESOL, itself is an asset, the ways in which ESOL is constructed as a school category establishes conditions for school failure among ESOL students.

In the literature on schooling, much attention is paid to developing communities. However, in the schools in this study, some voices were often not audible in the school communities, most notable the voices of ESOL students. In his defining work *Orientalism*, Said (1978) outlined multiple discursive ways in which colonized people are dehumanized. The parallels between orientalism as a discourse and the construction of ESOL as a discourse, also steeped in the legacy of colonialism, are striking. The deficit construction of ESOL is tightly linked to the deficit construction of NNES. In this larger social and political context, the teachers faced a significant challenge. They needed to challenge the negative understandings of ESOL that were pervasive in their schools by also challenging the global construction of speakers of languages other than English. They needed to do so in a way that did not stigmatize their students and indeed that included their students as agents.

What Said's colonized/colonizer dichotomy paid insufficient attention to is the heteroglossic nature of oppressed subjectivity—even if ESOL students are constructed as oppressed, no one is exclusively oppressed or oppressor in all dimensions of difference, and it is within the complexity of these layers of variation that alternative conceptualizations can be conceived. More importantly, Said's framing did not allow for the role of self-determination among both ESOL students, conceptualized (simplistically) as they are as colonized, and ESOL teachers in their complex dual roles of colonized and colonizers. Through their teaching, Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra challenged the Self-Other construction of native and nonnative English speaking ESOL students and demonstrated a belief in the agency of their students. They encouraged them to act on their own behalves by, for instance, writing to the school newspaper to critique the

invisibility of linguistic minority students and the invisible norm of whiteness. Said has suggested that first step towards dehumanizing the Other is the reduction of the Other to a few images or words. Price and Osborne's (2000) conceptions of humanizing pedagogies offer an alternative construction, one in which students are humanized through a fleshing out of their identities and a contextualization of their environments. Rather than submitting to the Self and Other constructions available to their students, Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Jane excavated the third space in which students could explore and interact with the dominant discourses, disabling the discourses and leaving the students free to explore alternative subject positions.

PART III. Teacher Identity

Chapter 8. Making Practice, Shaping Identity

Introduction: Images and Identities

Before I started learning from the lives that Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret were sharing with each other and with me, I understood an “image” to be something like a mask, or perhaps a knight’s armour, fixed and distinguishable, disguising and concealing the fleshed human inside. After listening to them for over a year, however, the term “image” calls to mind the fluidity of body painting, with ambiguous delineations between what *is* and what *is observable*. Within this framing, the interpretation of “identity” offered by the Shakespearean character Jacques in *As You Like It* seems overly simplistic: "All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Jane, Margaret, Katie and Alexandra were not merely actors, slipping into costumes and giving themselves over to dramatic creativity. Over the course of the year, the distinction between ‘image’ and ‘identity’ became more blurred to me. At the beginning of the year, it seemed that the teachers felt compelled to offer a public representation of themselves that was detached from who they “truly” were. Often, the afternoon tea discussion centered on how to construct an appropriate identity in the context of interactions with other adults. As time wore on, I began to perceive the space between ‘image’ and ‘identity’ to become progressively murkier. In theory, *images* are generally understood to

not be necessarily real, they are constructed for the consumption of others, while *identities* are assumedly more closely aligned with the part of a person that is authentic, genuine. However, this understanding is problematic because the conception of a ‘real’ self, an authentic self that lurks under images publicly presented, is fundamentally naïve. The nature of human agency is too potent to allow for one “real” self; humans are in a constant process of constructing, revising, and revisioning their identities. The notion of a single authentic self echoes an ideology that universalizes people and experiences. This notion suggests an absolute and unchanging Truth that discounts the power of individual agency in the shaping of identity. I propose instead the conception of identity on a spectrum that stretches, as Margaret suggested, from discovery to creation, “a marriage of what we are and who we choose to be.” (Margaret, Webchat, 04.21) Rather than thinking of identity as something to be uncovered or revealed, I looked to the role that the teachers were playing in actually constructing their professional images and began to perceive the images they crafted not as ruses hiding their selves but rather as constituent of the teachers’ identities. The primary instrument they wielded in the creation of their identities was language. As the teachers circulated through their multiple contexts, rehearsing, representing, experimenting, and becoming, they relied on their critical understandings of linguistic practices to discursively construct themselves.

Positioning Practice, Practicing Positioning

One of the central issues in Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra’s processes of becoming ESOL teachers was the relationship between their teaching identities within their classrooms and larger institutional interpretations of their classroom practice. How did they construct their teaching practice in the context of ideologies of teaching that

were omnipresent in the schools, particularly in relation to their interactions with other adults in the school? The teachers seemed to be struggling to reconcile competing meanings of practice within their teaching environments: they were caught between a narrow institutional definition of practice as simply teachers' technical and behavioral actions in the classroom and a broader understanding of practice as produced in multiple contexts, as always in the making, and as inseparable from teacher's intellectual consciousness and identities in and out of schools. This chapter explores the ways in which the teachers made sense of the terrain between these two incongruous definitions of practice in relation to the making of their ESOL teaching identities.

Because the focus of the study was on meanings of teaching, I imagined that much of the teachers' discussions about their first year of work would revolve around what went on within their classroom walls. However during the afternoon teas, it soon became apparent that the teachers' practice was not constructed only by what they did in the classroom. Rather, Katie, Margaret, Jane, and Alexandra were active in making meaning of their practice in many different contexts: in their classrooms; in their discussions with other adults—that is faculty, administrators, other teachers, and parents; at the afternoon teas with each other; at home with their partners; at social gatherings with colleagues; and also with friends who were not teaching professionals. For instance, Katie told us of a conversation she'd had with her friend, Bill, to whom she showed a poem that her students had written. She told us: "He was like 'Wow, this is really good.' I was like, 'I know, they're a bunch of freethinkers.' And he was like, 'Freethinkers in school?! My teachers never encouraged me to be freethinkers.' And I was thinking, I want my kids to be freethinkers." (Afternoon tea, 06.19). Although she was engaged in a

conversation that was not on school grounds, let alone in her classroom, and with a friend who was not a teaching professional, she was making teacher identity and developing her philosophy and her practice. In another example, Alexandra was making decisions about whether to support a child's choice to adopt an anglicized name, and she said: "Now that I am pregnant I feel even more strongly about the power behind giving a child a name. It is wrapped up with your hopes for your child. I learned through my husband and my [master's thesis] research the symbolism behind name giving in some Asian cultures. It often shows belonging in a family (where you belong). There is security in a name. It shows your relationship to others" (E-Mail, 04.26). Alexandra was developing her practice in interaction with me, in relation to her pregnancy, her husband, and her past experiences as a researcher. It became apparent to me that a broader conceptualization of 'practice' was necessary, one that was not confined to classroom walls.

Why is it important to think about how practice is defined? While meanings of practice are constructed in different sites, some sites are more influential than others. Meanings of practice are not socially constructed within neutral environments, they are constructed within a set of power relations within institutions and relationships that privileges certain representations of teaching over others while situating beginning teachers and ESOL teachers on the margins. In order to understand why some images of teaching persevere in school culture and some are submerged, it is important to examine how these ideas are positioned within power relations.

Isolation of Teaching: "A Cushion of Air Around You"

Like many beginning teachers (Lortie, 1975), Katie, Margaret, and Jane expressed a sense of privacy surrounding their teaching and an appreciation of the space offered by

the isolation of teaching alone. Margaret, for instance, appreciated the order that came with solitude, telling us that: “I think for me the isolation is good. Like being alone in that room and having a space to organize.” (Afternoon Tea, 11.01). Katie explained that she perceived acculturation into the culture of schooling to include “teaching people to work the system, but work it in a way that you can be free to do your own thing.” Margaret agreed that: “It almost kicks up a cushion of air around you.” Even when she wasn’t teaching, Margaret felt crowded by the repeated intrusion of another teacher into her space: “A teacher who comes to eat lunch in my room, I’m so used to being alone in my room. I don’t want her to come. I’m not used to having anybody there. It makes me nervous.” (Afternoon Tea, 11.15). Jane, too, noted that isolation relieved some of the pressure to appear a certain way. At the end of the school year, she commented: “In some ways, working in isolation can be bad and in some ways—poor Margaret—I would look at her and think, oh God, I don’t have any of that pressure. In some ways, I never felt pressure from my department head or my principal or some of the other people breathing down my neck.” (Jane, Interview, 05.07).

What did privacy represent to Katie, Margaret, and Jane? Katie and Margaret’s metaphors of space and freedom indicated that these two teachers found the time alone to be liberating and perhaps nourishing, but, as Jane noted, the isolation of teaching can pose difficulties because it requires teachers to forgo support they could be getting from colleagues in their school building. Jane was explicitly aware of this dilemma: “Again, isolation can be very bad because you don’t have feedback, but on bad days when you clearly know they’re not getting it ... there’s no one making me defend.” (Jane, 05.07). Because Katie and Margaret were the only new teachers at their schools, all of their

colleagues were more experienced than them. Katie's discussion of the inclusion model of ESOL, in which ESOL teachers teach alongside classroom teachers in integrated classrooms, is revelatory of what it means to her to teach cooperatively: "When a teacher walks in the room, they're making judgments, sometimes unconsciously making observations about you" (Afternoon Tea, 11.01). Katie's consciousness of judgment as she is viewed by more experienced teachers draws attention to the power behind the "gaze" (Sartre, 1957), which has been understood to be a tool of power because it objectifies—the observer wields power, and a person is subjugated by merely being looked at (Lacan, 1994). In Katie's situation, observers held power that extended beyond their looker status, they were situated within a power relation that assigned Katie a subordinate status as both an ESOL teacher and a beginning teacher.

Undergirding Katie's response to the gaze was an irony: "Sometimes I like it, I try to teach my class as if someone were watching me so I can be more alert." Although she didn't refer to it in this exchange, Katie had a highly developed consciousness of the relationship between self-perception and social perception. Months before the study began, she wrote: "Our identity is shaped not only what we think of ourselves but in how we perceive how others view us. What we attribute to our own identity reflects/includes what others have attributed to us. We can either accept, reject, modify these attributes to fit our own image." (Webchat, 04.13). There is a difference between being seen and seeing oneself seen (Copjec, 1994): the former refers to the power of the gaze imposed by the person watching Katie, the latter is self-imposed by Katie. The self-imposed gaze can lead teachers to fashion themselves in the image of what the (hypothetical) watcher desires. If teachers make a habit of always shaping themselves into what others want

them to be, they run the risk of losing touch with the distinction between what they want for themselves and what others desire of them. The area between the identities desired by the teachers and the identities that the teachers *believe are desired of them* by those who hold professional power over them consequently becomes indistinguishable.

Furthermore, Katie's sense of being watched has gendered meanings in a world that has historically evolved as patriarchal, in which "... men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at." (Berger, 1972, p. 45). Gender is always salient as humans formulate our representations the world, and it is relevant in a school setting for many reasons, among them the fact that historically most teachers (those being watched) have been women, and most watchers, that is school officials and university researchers, have been men.

Katie's response could be read as compliance, resistance, or some construct between the two. It could be understood as Katie passively constructing her identity in Lacanian fashion and reframing her desires in the shadow of what she believes is desired of her. However, Katie was not simply an inert pawn in her own acculturation. Nor does she position herself to resist the gaze by ignoring its power. Rather, I believe that Katie was exploring the middle ground between compliance and resistance, harnessing the gaze and redirecting it for her own purposes, using it to sustain her practice. The conceptualization of the gaze as singularly oppressive blindly ignores Katie's powerful role in constructing her audience. Katie's imaginings of being watched are not equivalent to *actually* being watched because it was Katie who created her hypothetical watcher, and Katie who chose the criteria to ascribe to this watcher. As a result, the practice she consequently crafted was not a conscious display adapted for an audience, but rather a

search for affirmation and an effort to identify ways to support her developing practice. As the creator of the audience, she was positioned to provide herself with the support she was seeking. However, constructing her own imaginary watcher was not an uncomplicated act of liberation because her imaginings were rooted in a world that privileges certain representations of teaching, including teaching practices that don't coincide with those that Katie embraced, and her construction of her watcher could not be oblivious of these values.

Britzman has criticized the traditional view of teaching as an isolated activity, noting that: “[i]ndividualizing the social basis of teaching dissolves the social context and dismisses the social meanings that constitute experience as lived. These forces are displaced by the autonomy and very real isolation of the teacher in the current school structure” (Britzman, 1991, pp. 237-8). It could be argued that, throughout history, teachers seeking to protect themselves from evaluative eyes have upheld the isolation of teaching, reconceptualizing it in more positively nuanced terms as “autonomy”. The legacy of the isolation of teaching establishes a contradiction between collaboration and autonomy, primarily because of the inequitable power relationship between beginning teachers and those watching them. The teachers in this study identified little or no space within school walls in which they could embrace less solitary forms of teaching that would allow them to exchange support with other teaching professionals because the potential for judgment from someone more established seemed inescapable. The dominant images that Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret felt called upon to produce as they passed through their first year of practice, and their acute consciousness of these images, contributed to their acculturation into a culture of teaching. However, the

teachers were not passively indoctrinated but rather found other contexts in which to develop their practices and sustain the ideologies that they sensed were not embraced in their respective cultures of schooling. That is, they practiced with each other, at afternoon teas, and at home with their friends and families. They constructed the isolation of their classrooms as offering them privacy, and privacy for the teachers meant a space in which to *become* teachers. It gave them the opportunity to rehearse their practice and afforded them the luxury of unfinishedness (Freire, 1998) in a schooling context that they believed expected them to be finished, to *be* teachers. Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra's experiences raise questions about how teachers can challenge the engrained indivisibility of collaboration and evaluation and build for themselves autonomous teaching contexts without relinquishing access to the potential support of collaborative experiences.

Practicing their Practice: Façades

For each teacher, certain images associated with beginning teaching appeared to dominate at certain times, and each teacher worked on the development of her own professional identity in relation to these dominant images she pictured. The ways in which the teachers approached their construction of their teaching selves differed. Alexandra, Katie, and Margaret often sensed certain expectations from the staff at their schools, and they described their efforts to construct themselves in opposition to expected images. Jane, the only high school teacher, conversely felt that her novice-teacher status allowed her the freedom to be herself for the most part, although she, too, experienced areas in which she was not comfortable presenting herself openly.

Alexandra, Katie, and Margaret frequently visualized their professional selves relationally and even oppositionally to the teaching identities that they believed were

expected of them, referred to by Katie as a *façade* (Afternoon tea, 12.06). The form of the necessary façade varied among the teachers. Cues from administrators, other teachers, parents, and even students motivated Katie and Margaret to construct professional identities that they believed were more “expert” than the two teachers actually believed themselves to be. Alexandra, who was 36 at the time of the study and had two master’s degrees, one in educational administration and one in TESOL, had a different experience. She felt pressured to be mindful of her subordinate place as a first-year teacher in the school’s pecking order and to therefore present herself as less knowledgeable than she actually was. To an extent, the afternoon teas served as a forum in which teachers experimented, rehearsed, and actively and consciously constructed their teacher identities with each other’s assistance, a space in which to “practice” their practice. The experimentation they were comfortable engaging in as we sat on my family room floor sipping tea was quite different from the possibilities they perceived to be available to them with school faculty, administrators, and students. They sensed that the images of teaching reinforced in schools differed significantly from those supported as they chatted with each other around the coffee table in my family room. Furthermore, power circulated differently within the school building than in the afternoon tea setting, and the teacher’s perceptions of how power was institutionalized within schools affected their willingness to assume certain identities in certain contexts.

Katie, a second-semester teacher, began the year of the study with an already established sense of presenting a false image. At one afternoon tea she told us about her feelings the previous semester:

The first semester I taught, I'd go home and say what did I do today. I had this façade. I didn't like myself at all as a teacher. I thought I was the worst teacher. I'd tell Su, my poor kids, I didn't know what was going on and I thought the principal hated me and I didn't know what I was doing ... I'd go home, I'd think I was a bad teacher. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Her sense of being called upon to present a façade continued into her second semester. In the context of conversations with other teachers or administrators, she sometimes felt the need to appear more professional:

“That’s when you pull the professional façade. My boyfriend Chris told me if you don’t know the answer you do the pause. Hmmm. Well, let me think about that. “ (Katie, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

Over the year, Katie devoted a great deal of thought to school situations in which she didn't have “answers”. The identity of a novice teacher in the process of learning to teach was not usually present in this teacher's discussion of the range of identities available to her and her first year peers, and she identified little if any space for not-knowing. In her experience, knowledge arising from her practice was not highly valued, and she did not believe that she was in a position to negotiate space for the process of becoming a teacher, of learning to teach. Katie sensed that, within her public school system, first-year teachers were expected to graduate from their programs and start teaching, with the assumption that they have achieved mastery over a complete and fixed body of material that is necessary in order to teach. Katie repeatedly indicated that she believed that a

teaching self who did not have “answers” was not valued within school walls. The school culture she witnessed embraced a conception of knowledge as absolute, as either acquired or not acquired, and as detached from the knower and her practice.

The teachers sensed that they were receiving cues from administrators, other teachers, and even students about the images they were expected to present. Sometimes these cues were helpful, for instance when administrators provided specific guidance about their expectations, but sometimes they engendered confusion and frustration, such as when parents expected the ESOL teachers to place a greater emphasis on grammar. Furthermore, these messages were not equally audible—some came from positions of greater power than others. For instance, the teachers were compelled to hear instructions from a principal more than a request from a kindergartener because the principal typically carried more power in a school context than a kindergarten-aged student. The teachers discussed their interpretations of these cues and worked together to make meaning of the process of professional identity construction that they were engaged in.

Old-Timer Newcomer Interaction: “Aren’t You Trained?”

A significant event in Margaret’s identity development transpired as the school year opened. Margaret sought to establish a connection with a fourth-grade boy, Roger. An exchange that she had with Roger’s classroom teacher, Phyllis, left her feeling that she was being perceived as less expert than she should be:

In terms of classroom teachers there's one little fourth grader I'm working with, Roger. His teacher, Phyllis, kept coming to me to talk about Roger. He was the first one I started seeing. So I was building rapport, a relationship with him, but she came up to me after meeting and she said:

‘Roger needs more help. What are you doing?’ I’d really only seen him twice thus far, so I was telling her that basically I was trying to build rapport with him so he’d trust me, and that kind of unhinged her and I didn’t have anything that I had done with him that I could give her. So basically she started questioning my training. She was like: ‘Aren’t you trained?’ She asked all of these questions until I started crying. (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Margaret opened the school year believing that the first step in building a teaching relationship with Roger was establishing a rapport. This orientation was consistent with the pedagogical identity the teacher had been crafting over the course of her preservice work. She sought to practice what she had referred to earlier in the year as “connected teaching” and in her master’s thesis as “a pedagogy of compassion.” She had expressed admiration for Nel Noddings’ (1984) work on the importance of caring in teaching. During the two years before the study began, I had perceived caring and compassion as central in Margaret’s ideas about teaching and in her classroom practice. As I continued to learn from Margaret I heard her express reservations about the public school system that stemmed from its failure to attend to children’s “spirits” and “souls.”

The preceding interaction was similar to many others over the course of the year. It was useful in helping me to understand what gets learned as beginning teachers interact with what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as “old-timers”. A central question here concerns “intersubjectivity,” defined by Wertsch (1998) as “the degree to which interlocutors in a communicative situation share a perspective” (p. 111-112). To what degree did Margaret and Phyllis share their understandings of teaching? Margaret said

that she was trying to build a rapport with the student, and Phyllis' response was: "Aren't you trained?" Implicit in her response was the message that all trained teachers share a common understanding or common level of "accomplishment", that is, training. Phyllis intimated that Margaret's primary focus on developing a rapport with Roger was not characteristic of the first steps taken by "trained" teachers. Therefore, a metanarrative about what it means to teach was being constructed and possibly even imposed in this exchange and Margaret's approaches did not comply with this metanarrative. I frame the metanarrative as imposed (rather than merely constructed) because the dialogue was not taking place within an equitable power relationship—Margaret commands less authority within the institution of schooling both as a beginning teacher and as the school's sole ESOL teacher in a world that marginalizes the field of TESOL and stratifies teachers according to years of experience and credentials. Her first-year status subtracts credibility from what she says.

What did Margaret do with this message? She was not naïve, and she had an understanding of how schools work, so she quickly realized that her approach would not be legitimated by the more experienced teacher. She interpreted Phyllis as being interested in more product-oriented schooling that was not mindful of the place of relationship and process, and she perceived that in order to construct a more acceptable identity, she had to display what she thought would be accepted as a *product* of her teaching, in other words, evidence that Roger had done some work. She was unable to do this, however, telling us regretfully: "I didn't have anything that I had done with him that I could give her."

At first glance, this incident might have implied that Margaret had been socialized into models of pedagogy that were disconnected from her students, but what ensued was a much more dialogic construction of meanings of pedagogy. Although Margaret sensed that she had failed to present the image Phyllis sought, she did not unquestioningly accept the old-timer's meaning of teaching as her own, but rather entered into a negotiation and coauthoring of meaning of teaching. She continued her project of developing a rapport with Roger, all the while communicating with Phyllis. Over time, Phyllis' perception of Margaret's teaching changed. As she saw Roger making progress, she appeared to become more accepting of Margaret's methods:

But now that I have a relationship with her that she respects me more, it's strange. I think she was very worried about how he was doing and she was pushing that on to me. I think she sees that he's happy to come to me, and his behavior changes when he comes back from ESOL. And she's come to me and she's said: 'Yes, it's important that you build a relationship with him first.' (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

The catalyst for change was not Margaret's persuasive discursive powers but rather her actions in the classroom. Phyllis changed her beliefs because she saw Roger making progress. This is important because it demonstrates how practice can be convincing even when words are not. In this example, Margaret's role extended beyond that of simply an observer ingesting the new knowledge about how to teach, or of even being pushed towards traditional forms of teaching. She was actually participating in and acting upon the culture that she was entering by, for instance, influencing Phyllis' understandings of teaching. The literature on beginning teaching is replete with stories of

teachers who enter the schools with clearly articulated progressive philosophies of teaching only to be socialized into the more established and traditional ways (Waller, 1932; Lortie, 1975; Blase, 1985; Veenman, 1984; Merton, 1975; Kettle and Sellars, 1996). This was not the case with Margaret, who played a much more interactive role in the formation of the community she had entered. She was not simply absorbed into the community as a passive consumer of school culture but was actually active in shaping the community as she entered it. Although she was concerned about how she appeared to Roger's teacher, the following discussion suggests that she had not changed her ideas about the value of connection in teaching:

Suhanthie: Do you think that that's typical? Building a rapport being part of teaching?

Margaret: I wonder if it's hard always being a classroom teacher. Like wanting to, but never really having the chance to work one-on-one, in such precious time you really just want to do the curriculum and fix things. And stay on top of things. I wonder whether a classroom teacher just has a very different sense of time. (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Embedded in Margaret's response is the assumption that all teachers value building a rapport ("... like wanting to...") but that classroom teachers simply lack time: ("...never really having the chance..."). Later on that afternoon, Margaret described the messages and expectations being telegraphed to her by her colleagues:

The teachers do want me to tell them what I'm doing. I get the sense that the ESOL teachers should be an expert in something and they want the teacher to be well-grounded in what she does and they want to be able to

come to her for advice and with questions. That must be partially their experience with other ESOL teachers.

Although Margaret has specific ideas about how she wants to teach, she's entering a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1998) in which assumptions about what ESOL teachers should be doing are already in place. When the classroom teachers were themselves newcomers, their experiences with other ESOL teachers served as their situated learning about their community of practice. The practices that they learned then translate now into expectations for Margaret, who derives an image of a professional and expert teacher through her interactions with the classroom teachers surrounding her. Margaret infers that casting the appropriate identity includes reporting to the classroom teachers, "tell[ing] them what I'm doing," being available for advice and questions, and displaying visible expertise.

Margaret was also concerned about her colleagues' perception of her as not dedicated to her job. During the first few weeks of the school year, Margaret had a split assignment between a middle school and an elementary school. While her hours were divided, she sensed that the faculty at her elementary school were perceiving her to be uncommitted:

Margaret: I think I felt a little bit judged in the beginning, that I think that it was because I wasn't there enough. I think that they felt that I just wasn't pulling my weight. I felt a little bit of coldness from some people.

Suhanthie: And that was because you were in the middle school?

Margaret: Yes. They didn't see me and maybe they felt that I was just blowing off. They didn't understand. And I probably misinterpreted it

anyway. But I feel like a lot of teachers, they just really value hard work for the kids, so even if they're coming from a different perspective they just want to know I'm working the same hours that they are and I care about the kids. A lot of people working late hours. Coming in really early.

(Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

Margaret sensed that she was being assessed not on her teaching ability but on her dedication, which was judged according to how often her colleagues saw her. In this discussion, Margaret appeared to be more concerned with how she appeared to her colleagues than with learning how to teach. She was deeply affected by her perception of a disapproving “they.” Rising ESOL enrollment early in the school year allowed her to be placed full-time at her elementary school, and she noted an improvement in her relations with her colleagues at that point:

Margaret: But now ... my colleagues are so helpful.

Suhanthie: More so than at the beginning?

Margaret: Yes.

Suhanthie: Because now they think you're working?

Margaret: Yes. (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 11.01)

As Margaret wove together the multiple messages within her school context that would provide her with an institutional representation of good teaching practice, one criterion was physical presence. Because teachers can close their doors and teach in isolation, inaudible to those who pass by their doors, the one of few indicators of teaching quality available to passers-by is presence. Margaret deduced that visibility was a significant part of being a good teacher in that particular school.

“I’m Working on Changing the Reputation of ESOL”

Katie, Margaret, and Alexandra experienced a distinction between the representations of ESOL teachers they sensed were constructed in their school contexts and the identities that they considered fitting for themselves. Katie, Margaret, and Alexandra believed that ESOL professionals were devalued within their school contexts, and that these understandings reflected and contributed to broader societal values that deprecated ESOL students and English language learners, their needs, and their contributions. The construction of ESOL teachers and students as marginal was not, however, invariable, and the gaps within the contradictions were illuminating. The constructions of ESOL teaching they interpreted in their schools were connected to deprofessionalization, the perception of ESOL teaching as an “easier” job, and characterization of ESOL teachers as “flaky.” In contrast, the teachers themselves saw ESOL teaching to potentially provide a venue for professional fulfillment, social activism, and ethical action.

A factor that contributed to the deficit construction of ESOL teachers’ identities was the perception of their teaching responsibilities. Katie was annoyed and puzzled by the perception of other faculty and staff that ESOL teachers didn’t have genuine teaching responsibilities:

I don’t know why mainstream classroom teachers think I have all this time. Or even the secretaries. They’re like: “Are you with kids right now?” and I’m like: “What do you think I do all day?” ... When they want me to translate or they want me to help with another ESOL student. You don’t ask the classroom teacher if they’re with kids! I don’t have any scheduled

planning time, my planning is all before and after school. (Katie,
Afternoon tea, 11.01)

ESOL teaching was also characterized as “easy” by classroom teachers. Margaret noticed classroom teachers around her envying her autonomy and small class sizes:

Margaret: I think classroom teachers think it’s easier to be a specialist, like if being a classroom teacher is too much, being a reading specialist or ESOL teacher is a good alternative ... When I was at Jump Street [Elementary School, as a student teacher], Agnes’ ESOL colleague told me that classroom teachers come up to her and say they want to be ESOL teachers. For all the wrong reasons. She recommends for those teachers to find another experience ... travel, live a year, get involved in the communities and lives of kids they’d be working with.

Suhanthie: What are “the wrong reasons”?

Margaret: From the outside at least, it appears that you have less work and fewer responsibilities as an ESOL teacher.

The smaller class size and lower visibility of ESOL teaching contributed to its interpretation as an easier assignment than mainstream classroom teaching.

Margaret noted that this perception was not absolutely false: “On the other hand, I wouldn’t want to be a classroom teacher.”

Alexandra believed that the faculty at her school saw the ESOL staff as “flaky” and the specialists in general as a little isolationist.

Alexandra: I’m working on changing the reputation of ESOL.

Unfortunately, we have a reputation of being pretty flaky people.

Suhanthie: The teachers?

Alexandra: Yes, the ESOL teachers. I guess the person before me was fine, they liked her, they like Richard, they just think they're pretty flaky.

Suhanthie: What do you mean by flaky?

Alexandra: I guess my impression has been that they never really reach out to the faculty, they never get in there and see themselves as a full faculty member. And I think specialists can do that, they can tend to keep themselves away from everybody else, but then they're not really doing what they need to do.

Alexandra, too, acknowledged that the general perception of ESOL teachers is not completely divorced from reality. However, Alexandra has touched upon an important element in identity construction, that is the contribution that the ESOL teacher can play in its dialogic nature. ESOL teacher identity is not constructed solely from the outside, by the rest of the school community. Rather, teachers play a role in shaping the image perceived by the rest of the school community. While Alexandra pointed out that ESOL teachers have an undesirable reputation and are perceived to be marginal and separate, she also draws attention to the ESOL teachers' agency in the construction of their identities. She noted what she believed to be lasting effects of her predecessors' disinclination to see themselves as full faculty members. This realization is important because it highlights the potential for Alexandra to change her image through her own agency.

A Room of One's Own

The concept of a “real teacher” surfaced periodically over the course of the school year. Teachers sometimes sensed that at a result of their ESOL status, they were considered to be less legitimate or less “real” than other faculty in the school. In both her current position at Robert Fulton Middle School and at her previous post at an elementary school, Alexandra felt that ESOL was not adequately valued, but the pull-out format of the elementary school setting placed her in a particularly deprofessionalized position:

It's been a lot easier at Robert Fulton Middle School than at Stone Spring [Elementary School] because at Stone Spring you're taking kids out of their class, so the teacher sees you differently than if you're a teacher with your own class, not that you're a real teacher. I find it harder to be in a pull-out program.

At the middle school level, ESOL classes, like all other subjects, were scheduled by the administrative school staff. At the elementary school level, however, ESOL teachers were required to coordinate each individual ESOL student's classes with the students' classroom teacher. Practically speaking, this meant that at the middle and high school levels, students file into their ESOL classes as part of a scheduled period change during which all students were moving from one classroom to another so that going to ESOL fit naturally into the flow of the day's schedule. Conversely, elementary level ESOL teachers would appear at the door of a classroom and retrieve their students, who were usually involved in another lesson. Elementary-level students' departure for their ESOL class was therefore more disruptive, more visible, and more separate from the activities

of their classmates. Alexandra sensed that this “separatedness” model robbed elementary level teachers of some legitimacy.

All of the teachers were keenly aware of the tenuous hold that many local ESOL teachers had on their classrooms. They all knew of ESOL teachers who had been the first to lose their classrooms in overcrowded schools, to be relegated to a portable, a stuffy basement, a nook in the cafeteria, or a mobile cart. When they had gone through their student teaching semester the year before, Margaret’s cooperating teacher had been without a classroom, and she had spent the beginning of every 30-minute class period roaming the hallways looking for the quiet corner of a corridor in which to teach her classes. A self-contained classroom—a “room of one’s own” (Woolf, 1929) and its associations with creative space and the intellectual autonomy to develop a craft, be it writing or teaching—served as a symbol of legitimacy within Alexandra’s school culture, as it did in Margaret’s. Margaret had the choice of pulling students out of their classes and walking them back to her own classroom for instruction or “plugging in” to a self-contained classroom that mixed English language learners and native English Speaking students. She was savvy about challenging the representation of an ESOL teacher as teaching infrequently or not deserving of a classroom. She favored “pull-out” over “plug-in” or inclusion models of teaching ESOL, so that her own classroom would not be left vacant:

Something else about inclusion. Some of my classes are really far apart.

Sometimes classroom teachers are like, you can use my room during that time. But I have to be careful because I don’t want it to be seen that my room is often empty because I might lose that room. We’re supposed to be

quiet in the halls, but I try to get a little instruction in the hall. My room is not assured for next year. (Afternoon tea, 01.24)

She had expressed a similar sense of vulnerability at the beginning of the school year, asking us to:

Say a little prayer for me. My room is being coveted.” (Afternoon tea, 11.15)

Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie expressed a preference for pull-out over inclusion models of teaching, not because they were pedagogically favorable but because in the teachers’ experience, pull-out formats added legitimacy to their teaching and preserved their classrooms. The consequences are problematic. A pull-out format can support the development of an ESOL community, create a safe haven for ESOL students, support the development of bilingual identity, and allow teachers to tailor their pedagogy to English language learners. However, pull-out models of ESOL keeps ESOL students excluded from mainstream environments. Inclusion formats can support ESOL students’ emotional and social selves by immersing them in contexts in which they are able to socialize and belong, and they can support their bilingualism by affording them access to linguistically diverse peers, including those who speak English proficiently. In terms of identity, inclusion models of ESOL smudge the artificially distinct line between ESOL and nonESOL students. The separation of these two groups, inherent to a pull-out format, underscores the binary distinction between them and reinforces the stigma of difference of the group that doesn’t represent the socially dominant norm, that is ESOL students.

Because the teachers’ always-dubious legitimacy as professionals is judged in part by their visibility in their classrooms and affirmed in part by their assignment to a

classroom, they are necessarily engaged in a constant struggle between needs of their students and construction of their own professionalism. When they chose to “plug-in” to mainstream classes, they paid potential price in status and jeopardized their claim to their classrooms.

Discursive Constructions of Identities: “You Have to Know How to Say Things”

In exploring the terrain between who they believed themselves to be becoming and the sometimes artificial images they felt called upon to present, the teachers discussed at length the ways in which identities can be produced discursively. Katie was explicit in expounding upon the relationship:

I do think you have to know how to say things. It’s all how you present it to the teachers or to the faculty. You can do what you want, then cite a name or cite a study. Or you can pick out a philosophy and say, this is why I’m doing it, even though your purpose may be something completely different. You can front it that way. It’s kind of deceitful, but you tell people what they want to hear so that you can do your work. (Afternoon Tea, 11.15)

What Katie described is survival. She was advising her peers about what they needed to do to stay afloat during their first year. Margaret arrived at one afternoon tea dejected and discouraged and contemplating an alternate career. She told us that she had had a bad day and dissolved into tears, saying: “I don’t want to be a teacher.” (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 12.06). Hugs and tissues were produced, and we pressed her for more details of her day.

Margaret: I think a lot of things built up. I had an observation with my instructional specialist. I picked the group who were the hardest to teach. They were under the tables!

Jane: Did you get to talk to her after?

Margaret: After, she said it's not the worst lesson I've ever seen! It's also not the best one.

She told us about the lesson, offering an analysis of what could have been improved on, and concluded with: "I don't want to be a teacher anymore."

Jane: Do you really mean teaching or just that age level?

Margaret: I just want to write.

Jane: Oh, I don't believe you.

Margaret: I guess I don't feel prepared for all the reading, I don't know how to teach reading. I'm with all these early education teachers who've all had so much training in teaching reading.

Jane: But you're not their primary reading teacher.

Margaret: But with the [new reading program]?

At this point, Katie offered her perspective, referring to a tenet of the second language acquisition theory that supports a focus on spoken language before written language:

Katie: What I do with my [new reading program] students, my beginners, I basically work on developing oral language ... We could plan to meet or something, over the weekend, if that would be helpful to you. It's hard, [the new reading program] is hard ... (12.06)

Katie perceived herself as part of a community with Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret, and she was comfortable sharing her expertise with them. However, the teachers experienced that same sense of shared community as absent from their teaching contexts, and none of them believed that it was fostered in their schools or counties. Visualizing teachers as a

community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and conceiving the process of constructing professional identities as a fascinating form of situated learning has been helpful to me in understanding how Margaret and Katie became teachers. Margaret had joined the community of teaching practice and was learning at the periphery. The teaching community she was a “newcomer” (Lave and Wenger, 1991) to, including her instructional specialist and students’ parents, are “old-timers.” As she figured out how she should be with them, she was engaged in “legitimate peripheral participation,” “a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice.” The process of becoming a full participant shapes meanings of learning and of language. “This social process, includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills.” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Whether Katie qualified as an old-timer is questionable, since she had entered the public school system only one semester before Margaret. However, she had acquired a degree of competency in the community of practice and had moved closer to its center than had Margaret at this point of the school year. She was more knowledgeable about the “*shared repertoire* of communal resources” (Wenger, 1999), including the discursive resources such as styles, vocabulary, tools, and symbols, and offered to share the knowledge she had culled with Margaret.

Repertoire of Retorts: Katie

Katie offered Margaret what she referred to as “retorts” from her repertoire of responses designed to contribute to an expert image:

I can send you things also of what to say to administrators when you’re not sure what to say: “Well, I’m working on a lot of oral L development because the [new

reading program] training emphasized that a good reader will have to have to have good oral development before they can read. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

Over the course of this afternoon tea and many others during the year of the study, Katie offered Margaret and the other teachers similar suggestions of words and phrases to explain pedagogical choices:

Oooh, Vygotsky model or oooh BICS and CALP. If you're ever at a loss for something, pull out BICS and CALP. It sounds good, you know. They're like, that doesn't answer my question, but thank you. (Afternoon Tea, 12.06)

And:

That's something you can say, develop oral L. Another thing to say is: 'I do a lot of hands-on activities to promote interaction between the children and myself to practice their language.' (Katie, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

An important element of Katie's suggestion is that it is not intended to educate or inform the listener, but rather to construct the teacher's identity as knowledgeable. Katie's concern was not about the fact that it "doesn't answer [the] question" but about its *appearing* to be an acceptable and appropriate response from an expert teacher. Jane and Margaret regretfully expressed that they were not taking running records⁴ on their students:

Margaret: Are you doing running records on all your children?

Jane: Yes, oh, yes!

Suhanthie: Are you really?! (surprised)

Jane: No (laughing)!!! That sounds great in theory, but who has the time?

⁴ "Running records," a reading assessment system developed by Marie Clay, can be used to determine the development of students' oral reading fluency and word identification skills and strategies.

Katie offered Margaret and Jane the following response to hypothetical questions about why they were not taking running records:

Another basic thing you can say is: “I would prefer to work on comprehension with them and developing their background knowledge, and taking a running record is not indicative of what they can read.

Another suggestion was:

You can say “At this point, I think it’s more important for them to gain meaning. I’m going to integrate sight words into helping them develop meaning and helping them develop background knowledge.” That’s a big thing, background knowledge.

The actual reason that Jane was not conducting running records on all of her students is that the process was time-consuming and would require her to set aside a little time to regularly assess each of her many students individually. However, Katie sensed that the response “Who has the time?” would construct the overworked first-year teachers as inadequate or inept and therefore offered a retort that released the teachers from the slog of running records while maintaining their expert identity.

Katie depicts understanding local (school) culture and gaining entry and legitimacy in the community as something akin to a process of code-breaking. She not only offers words to be appropriated and quoted by her fellow-teachers, but she gives them specific and explicit information about how to crack the code in order to make up their own responses. She referred the other teachers back to their days as a graduate students for theory with which to defend their practice.

Katie: The [M.Ed in TESOL] program gave me a lot of stuff that I could say to other people to back up what I'm doing. The reason I'm doing this is because blah, blah, blah. The research said blah, blah, blah ... Teachers frantically come to you and say this person's been here for 3 months and he can't speak English, I think we should EMT them. Or he's a fluent speaker, why isn't he getting the academics. Then you can say something like. "Well, there's BICS and CALP, BICS only takes 3 years to develop, CALP takes longer, 5-7 years." Then you can go on to say these are some things you can do to help them acquire the language. (Afternoon Tea, 11.15)

Again in reference to not taking running records, Katie suggested that teachers say: "I don't believe in running records because they don't check for comprehension." She went on to advise her peers that: "All you have to do is decode and all you have to say is: 'I don't believe in it.'" She offered a formula: decode the demand and preface your explanation with the claim that you don't believe in what is being suggested. In this way, not taking running records appears as a philosophical orientation rather than an act of omission or negligence and contributes to the construction of a more expert identity. In the sometimes unsympathetic context of first-year teaching, finding the appropriate words could overshadow the actual practice that the words were about.

Katie indicates that entering the culture of schooling requires more than simply applying the theories they had learned in graduate school to their practice within school walls. Rather, learning how to talk is one of the most crucial steps in legitimate peripheral participation. "[T]he purpose is not to learn *from* talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral

participation.” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 108-109). In the context of the afternoon teas, the four teachers were not so much referencing their experiences within schools in order to learn how to teach or even to learn about the culture of schooling. Rather they were learning how to master the discourses of schooling so that they could enter the culture and legitimate their participation in it. The distinction that Katie makes between what teachers know and how they speak raises an important point, one addressed by Lave and Wenger (1991): “Issues about language ... may well have more to do with legitimacy of participation and with access to peripherality than they do with knowledge transmission (p. 105).” The focus of Katie’s step-by-step guidance was to legitimate the presence of the four teachers within the school community, and this focus eclipsed concerns for learning how to teach. Lave and Wenger (1991) wrote about the linguistic practice that accompanies a community of practice. “Legitimate peripheral participation in such linguistic practice is a form of learning, but does not imply that newcomers actually learn the actual practice the language is supposed to be about.” (p. 108). Katie’s coaching about how to talk was certainly a form of learning that served to increase the legitimacy of her peers’ participation in their communities of practice, but learning to talk is only one part of the actual “practice.” Of lesser concern during the afternoon teas was what happened to the teachers in their classrooms when they were alone with students behind closed doors, which underscores their preoccupation with professional identity construction over pedagogical concerns in their teaching lives. It seemed that the notion of “belonging” to the culture of schooling was more important than the notion of “becoming” a teacher. The established hierarchy they practiced within meant that as they

developed their own images of practice, they needed to be mindful of the representations of practice sustained by those who held power in their schools contexts.

The afternoon teas served not only as a source of support and camaraderie for the teachers, they served a secondary purpose, which was as a place in which to master the discourses of the community of practice and to develop their evolving professional identities. While Lave and Wenger (1991) believe that the context of situated learning is usually unintentional rather than deliberate, the dialogue between Katie and Margaret constructs as painfully intentional the process of "legitimate peripheral participation."

The teachers positioned themselves between the two representations of teaching that they were caught between, "being" and "becoming." I use "being" to refer an unbearably light, overly simplistic understanding of teaching identity as complete and fixed from the moment that teachers take up their positions. "Becoming" is a process-oriented understanding of teaching that views teachers as always in the process of "becoming" and that constructs practice in relation to teachers' whole lives and identities. The teachers did not conform to the expectations imposed by the "being" model of teaching. Nor did they believe themselves to be in a position to openly embrace a representation of teaching as "becoming." They knew that to appear "unfinished" could equate to appearing ignorant, untrained, or ineffectual to those positioned to wield power within the schools, such as administrators and other faculty. Rather, they hid behind one to sustain the other, that is, they hid behind fixed and traditional interpretations of teaching practice in order to create space in which to sustain their practice.

“Talking Out of My Butt”

An interesting element of Katie’s afternoon tea discourse is that as she was offering Margaret and her fellow teachers support, she periodically delegitimated her own advice and portrayed herself as less than knowledgeable. For example, the word ‘façade’ carries an association of insincerity. Also in the following two examples, Katie presents herself as pretending to be an expert:

Suhanthie: Is it the jargon that’s giving you credibility?

Katie: I think it’s the way I’m presenting myself.

Margaret: It seems like you can do it with great assurance.

Katie: Yeah, I just present myself like I know what I’m doing even if I don’t.

At another afternoon tea, she told us:

... My first year when people asked me what to do, I would BS and make things up. It sounds horrible, but that’s how I survived, talking out of my butt pretty much. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

It is interesting to note that what Katie refers to as “BS” and “talking out of my butt” would not be defined as either by many teachers. The concepts that she advocates, a focus on meaning making over decoding, the importance of tapping into background knowledge, the challenges particular to English language learners who are not able to rely on a literacy framework, all have currency in second language learning and other educational theories. The ways in which Katie “recruits” different aspects of her self depending on her various “coordinations” (Gee, 1997, p. xiii) provides a clear illustration of how identity changes operate in relation to inconstant meanings, situations, and

investments. While she constructs an expert identity at her school, in the context of the afternoon teas Katie positions herself as having limited knowledge, as being unseasoned in educational practice, and as being proficient only in discursive identity construction. One possible interpretation is that Katie believes that she has wisdom to offer but is reluctant to appear arrogant or to overtly assume the role of expert. Furthermore, to identify herself as an old-timer could serve to weaken the connection between herself and the other teachers, bound together by their novice status in the institution of schooling.

Fragmented Identities

When Katie discussed the construction of the identity she presented to her school colleagues, she spoke in terms of image, as opposed to identity construction. Her concern was primarily with how she ‘sounded’:

I also wanted other ESOL teachers in the school because I was fresh out of the program, so everything I told them I hadn’t tried out myself. In order to establish my credibility I had you sound like I knew what I was talking about. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 01.24)

However, the terrain between Katie’s “retorts” (variously referred to as ‘BS’ and ‘talking out of my butt’) and her pedagogical philosophy is nebulous. In the following excerpt of an afternoon tea transcription, the teacher initially sets out to suggest some ‘retorts’ designed to contribute to establishing a façade. Halfway through the conversation, the voice that was initially part of the façade appears to become authentically Katie’s:

Katie: E-mail me all the questions people ask you and I’ll come up with retorts for all of them. Running records? I have a great one. “Well, it’s not really advantageous to take a running record on the ESOL student at this

point. An ESOL child, especially a beginning ESOL child, has to restructure, who hasn't been exposed to literacy before has no framework within to work. So it's going to be doubly hard because they're not only learning the language, they're learning the literacy framework. So taking a running record is not going to be very effective for them."

Jane: Joelene [an instructor in their master's-level methods class] gave us that multiple choice test, it was all in a made-up language, but we were able to get it all right because we knew -ing, you know it's a verb, that must be C.

Katie: You're using those strategies because you know you have that literacy framework, but little kids have no framework to work within. And native English speakers have their language to work within. It's difficult to teach reading for that very reason because native-English kids have that framework of oral language, natural language. So they know it's I see a bus, because that sounds natural, but nonnative speakers might say, I see bus because that sounds natural to them. (Katie, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

She begins the discussion in 'façade' mode but by the end is actually explaining and standing behind her 'BS'. A similar pattern is evident in the following example:

I can send you things also of what to say to administrators when you're not sure what to say: "Well, I'm working on a lot of oral L development because the [new reading program] training emphasized that a good reader will have to have to have good oral development before they can read. I'm trying to give them the background knowledge they will need to know in

order to understand what they're reading." Like this little boy Brad, he can read beautifully, he can decode, but he doesn't understand a damn word he says. I ask him, I say: 'What does that mean?' 'I don't know.' 'Well, let's do it again. Let's do the rereading strategies.' (Katie, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

Katie started the discussion offering a retort from her repertoire of responses, but in the middle of her explanation became passionate about and frustrated by a system of teaching reading that ignored the importance of meaning-making in the reading life of her young student. By the time she'd reached the end of her story, she was no longer BS-ing.

These two snippets capture nicely the fluidity of the whole notion of identity. de Beauvoir (1949) speaks of the difference between subjective selves, the identities that people live for themselves, and objective selves, the images constructed for the gaze (or consumption) of others, in other words, façades. I suggest that this distinction is overly simplistic because "who one is" evolves in relation to others, so humans are created and discovered—and even become—through the gaze of others because humans live out multiple identities in their various communities. As Katie conceptualizes these sometimes cohesive individual fragments of identity, I suspect that the permeable nature of the interchangeable voices speaks to the ambiguity of identity.

Similarly, despite Katie's enthusiastic attempts to spin images of competency for herself and her fellow tea-drinkers, the apparent firmness of her perspectives was ruptured by one comment at the afternoon tea on December 6th. It represented such a departure from the overall direction of her guidance that it warrants mention:

Or be honest, you know, "I'm not sure. I'll contact so and so and find out for you." For me it was my instructional specialist. "Okay,

what do I do now?” “Oh, that was due, I’m sorry can I have an extension?” I’ve had to do that a few times. Your best reason, I apologize, “I didn’t know, I’m still learning the system.” Then mark it down so you won’t forget next time. (Katie, Afternoon Tea, 12.06)

Later on over the course of that same afternoon tea, Katie told us that she was sometimes open with colleagues when she didn’t have answers:

Sometimes I just tell them, I don’t know. (Katie, Afternoon Tea, 12.06)

Identity is dynamic and teachers’ responses to situations are as mutable as the contexts themselves, so my goal is not to try to weave a cohesive identity from the snapshots that I glimpsed over the course of the year but rather to understand both the consistencies and the contradictions. One possible explanation is that Katie recognized the occasional necessity of confessing to not knowing as a last resort. Another possibility is that Katie, who made this comment on the heels of her 1-year teaching anniversary, had begun to carve out a space for not-knowing in her practice.

“What Would You Say to Parents?”

There were times when the teachers made a specific distinction between their teaching philosophy and practice on one hand and the image they sought to present on the other. A third element to be considered is the image being perceived, which may not always match the image they seek to project. This is significant because it highlights the disjuncture between what teachers believe to be dominant representations of good practice and what parents, administrators, and classroom teachers believe is good practice. In an ideal world, good teachers would look like good teachers to the outside

world, but in practice this is not necessarily the case. Margaret, for instance, solicited advice from her fellow tea-drinkers about how to support her students' ability to spell inventively: "That's something I've been wanting to ask people about, inventive spelling and ... if they ever ask is it right ... I try to be truthful and keep them going. I'm not sure what other people do." (Margaret, Afternoon tea, 01.24). Katie provided guidance, and once she understood how inventive spelling should fit into her teaching practice, she turned her concern from how to teach well to how to *appear* to teach well.

Margaret: What would you say to parents if they saw it posted on the wall?

Suhanthie: Would you post it on the wall?

Katie: Yes. I would explain it to parents that the main idea of writing is to get your ideas out and that from that flow of ideas you develop lessons and bring out specific points. And explain to them that it's a developmental process – not with so much educational jargon ... That's how I would explain it. And most parents go "okay."

Suhanthie: Do they go "okay"?

Katie: Most of them do.

Margaret separated her questions about how to teach from her concern with constructing the image of a competent teacher to present to her students' parents. The distinction she made highlights the gap between the identities the teachers aspire to and the images that they believe are sanctioned in the eyes of the parents of their young students. On another day, as Margaret was feeling self-doubting, I asked her about the distinction between her pedagogy and professional identity construction:

Suhanthie: Do you feel a lack of confidence about your teaching or about your ability to talk to administration?

Margaret: Both, I think.

Suhanthie: It's not just because you don't know the jargon?

Margaret: No, I also don't know what goes under the jargon.

In this instance, the distinction between practice and image was not as clear-cut.

To conceive of inventive spelling as developmental, relinquishing concern with the end product of "correct" spelling, allows room for students to be in the process of learning to spell. Similarly, to allow beginning teachers (and indeed all teachers) to develop their practice within the process of learning to teach contradicts the static nature of the distinction between becoming a teacher and being a teacher.

"You Mouthy Upstart": Alexandra

Unlike Katie and Margaret, Alexandra felt the need to appear less competent than she actually was. Her ability to advocate for her students and herself was muffled by her first-year teacher status. She was reluctant to make suggestions for fear of appearing pushy:

It's been a big part of this year, as a first-year teacher dealing with advocacy and being a first-year teacher all at the same time, it's really hard sticking ... whatever part of your body out there for people to say, well who are you, you young upstart? I mean, they don't call me young. You mouthy upstart. Why do you think that you know better than these experienced teachers and administrators. (Afternoon tea, 04.10)

I asked, "How do you know that people are thinking that?" and Alexandra replied:

I don't necessarily know it, but I know when they are understanding me and believing me because they'll move quicker on what I'm saying.

(Afternoon tea, 04.10)

She went on to give an example, one of many over the course of the year, when administrators indicated a trust in her judgment. In this discussion, she gave the example of a time when she questioned a more senior teacher's assessment of students' readiness to advance to the next level. Her supervisor did not take action, but the guidance counselor did, which indicated to Alexandra that the guidance counselor respected her professional opinion despite her lack of experience. Her supervisor, however, did not respond to her concern in this instance and several others, which Alexandra interpreted as a lack of confidence in her assessment of the students' levels of proficiency.

The pressure to take on a humble novice-teacher image had been with her since she began teaching. During her first semester of teaching (the semester before the study began), she e-mailed me:

“I see a lot of things I would want to see done differently in all the classes, but I'm just a wing-floater, a newcomer, a novice, an upstart. What do I really know about the realities of teaching?”

The image of an arrogant upstart served a silencing function. The fear of appearing mouthy had the potential to socialize Alexandra into silence. Belenky et al (1986) suggest that women's socialization begins in silence and that women are taught to suppress their own voices and dismiss their own needs. It took a conscious effort for Alexandra to resist her acculturation and the oppressive function of the “upstart” image.

“I Never have to Defend”: Jane

Jane, the high school teacher, had an experience that differed significantly from those the other three teachers. She was never called upon to explain herself and rarely felt the need to defend herself. She told us: “I don’t have to tell anyone at any time what I’m doing.” In fact, she felt that her status as beginning teacher gave her permission to be uninformed and to seek assistance: “I usually take the other way, I’m the new teacher and I need help here.” (Jane, Afternoon tea, 12.06). When Katie implied that she had to work consciously to attain a degree of professional credibility, Jane expressed surprise:

Katie: The [M.Ed in TESOL] program gave me a lot of stuff that I could say to other people to back up what I’m doing. The reason I’m doing this is because blah, blah, blah. The research said blah, blah, blah.

Jane: Do you really find yourself defending? I never have to defend. No one ever asks what I did today. (Afternoon tea, 12.06)

Jane did, however, feel the need to justify her teaching in other, non-dialogic and indirect ways. She sensed a pressure to teach in a way that supported grammatical development because this would appear as evidence of her teaching to the department head, Laura, who also taught the next level of ESOL:

Jane: And then they’re off to Laura next year, and she’s gonna be like: “What the hell were you doing with them last year?” There’s that pressure where I want them to be here. Am I getting them there or we doing time? I know they’re benefiting just being in a supportive place for 1.5 hours a day, but ...” (Jane, Afternoon tea, 12.06)

Jane believed that the emotional support of her classroom benefited her students, but she was nonetheless concerned about their acquisition of grammatical knowledge and about whether this acquisition evidenced itself in the standardized test scores of her students:

Jane: I never felt pressured to have to defend or get through a book or turn in lesson plans.

Suhanthie: But you had the pressure of the standardized tests, right? ... If you had had a high failure rate, would it have reflected badly on you?

Jane: You know, that's funny. I still haven't gotten a clear answer on whether the scores are broken down by teacher or not. I think that's something Laura probably put in my head at the beginning and I don't even know if it's true. I don't know if they would even know. I think if someone wanted to look it up that way they could. Well, Laura would totally boast. That's how she would claim that she had to teach ESOL 3. Because I kinda wanted to teach ESOL 3, and she said: 'Well, my test scores are so high, and the principal wants me to keep teaching it because I have such a high pass rate.' Like they have an 85 percent pass rate which is incredible for ESOL 2 because at [a neighboring high school] they don't even let their ESOL 2s take the test." Paula [another teacher] would say "I make sure he puts on my evaluation my pass rate" so maybe I misread it but it always felt like something I had to do. After the writing test Laura broke it down by teacher. (Jane, Dinner at her house, 06.25)

At other times of the school year, Jane made similar references to the reflection of students' standardized test scores on her teaching ability. The pressure of a high pass rate

may have been artificially constructed by the department head, but it did serve the purpose of channeling Jane's energies towards teaching to the grammar-based test. While Jane was at relative peace with her lack of teaching experience, she practiced in an environment that placed a high value on knowledge of grammar, and she was troubled by what she believed was her insufficient knowledge about formal grammar and its reflection on her image as a teacher.

Jane: I feel that way when I sit with other ESOL teachers and it's just grammar, grammar, grammar. I mean, I don't even know the terms. I feel so overwhelmed by that. I have that sense of, God I'm not prepared to do that!

Jane sensed that to appear to be a competent language teacher in her context, she needed to appear to be more knowledgeable about formal grammatical knowledge.

Summary

“My presence in the world is not so much of someone who is adapting to something ‘external,’ but of someone who is inserted as if belonging essentially to it. It's the position of one who struggles to become the subject and the maker of history and not simply a passive, disconnected object.” (Freire, 1998, p.55)

Lave and Wenger's (1998) theories about communities of practice, like many other language socialization theories, assume the goal of language socialization to be acquisition and even mastery of the norms of the new culture. However, what language socialization theories have neglected is an eye to the possibility of a bidirectional blending of newcomers and oldtimers, as opposed to an absorption of newcomers into

oldtimer culture, of teachers “belonging essentially” to the worlds they are entering and acting upon.

Studies of teaching have historically presented the process of becoming a teacher as emanating solely from the interactions that teachers have with their contexts (Waller, 1932, Lortie, 1975). These studies looked at relations of power within the context of school relationships as knowledge about teaching is produced. Katie, Margaret, Jane, and Alexandra illuminated for me that the shaping of practice is actually larger and more complicated than past studies have represented it to be. The teachers’ descriptions of the incidents that contributed to their practice impelled me to broaden my understandings of practice to extend beyond what teachers do. Katie, Margaret, Alexandra, and Jane arrived at their consciousness through the social process they shared not only with individuals in their teaching environments, but with each other at the afternoon teas, with their families, their friends. Shades of identity are not limited to the specific contexts in which they are practiced, and human identity is not composed of individual and compact brick-like elements—teacher, friend, patient, spouse, mentor, parent, son, customer—stacked neatly together upon each other and mortared together to build a solid, bounded whole. In a similar illustration of this concept, when Price (2000) studied young black male students’ understandings of success, he found his participants to be making student identity both in and out of their classrooms, in the hallways, with their friends and families, at MacDonalds. The professional identities that humans develop are often not limited to their professional environment but are complexly interwoven into whole, constantly changing person. I began to perceive teaching acts as only a part, albeit a significant part, of the larger project in which Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra were engaged, that is

the process of becoming language teachers. I came to understand practice as not just about tools and actions but also about ideology.

Exploring the development of the teachers' professional identities highlights the crucial role that language plays in shaping the relationship among power, identity, and pedagogy. The teachers used language critically and analytically to change their perspectives and to challenge and transform the representations of practice offered by their teaching contexts. They focused on supporting each others' abilities to use language proficiently in their identity construction and sometimes even privileged their discursive practice over their pedagogical practice. They used language to change themselves, adjust their perspectives, and alter their contexts.

It is important to note that this critical attention to language had been supported in the teachers' graduate coursework, and that the teachers themselves specifically linked their language awareness to their teacher preparation, in particular one psycholinguistics class and two assignments from that class. The connection is important in illustrating how a specific focus on the relationship between identity and language in teacher education has the potential to support in-service teachers' developing practice. In the psycholinguistics course, they had all read theorists who connected linguistic practice and power, including Sadker and Sadker (1994), Fairclough (1992), Luke (1986), and Matsuda (1991). For one critical discourse assignment, they worked in groups to analyze a tape of one student's class with an eye towards unearthing power relations embedded within classroom interaction. Margaret, Katie, and Alexandra had worked together on this assignment, analyzing a class taught by Margaret. For the other assignment, they looked

at the linguistic and graphic representations in textbooks, analyzing messages telegraphed within the frame of social power relations.

During the year of the study, all four teachers made reference to the effect of the psycholinguistics class on their heightened awareness of inequitably distributed social power, usually in relation to language. Alexandra, in particular, was deeply affected by the class. At a social gathering halfway through the year of the study, Alexandra said to the professor who had taught the class:

“It’s kind of like a near-death experience, you saw the light, forever believe. Once you realize what you’re dealing with, you can’t turn back. Once you realize what you’ve come through, through the textbooks you had us analyze...

You’ve given us this burden. I accept the burden. But I can see how there would be many teachers who are well-meaning, who ... this is a lot to think about, to process. If you don’t want to or don’t have a predisposition, if you honestly don’t recognize the need to constantly process all of these things that you see in terms of critical discourse analysis ... seeing everything through that lens makes you want to react, makes you want to respond and help or try to make a difference. We’re just up against this enormous challenge. (Dinner, Alexandra, 01.26)

Alexandra acknowledged the lasting effect of her eye-opening experience with critical discourse analysis on her later philosophy and practice.

The afternoon teas provided Katie, Alexandra, Margaret, and Jane a context in which to rehearse their performances, a space in which to experiment with their identities

and practices. In some instances, the curtain never rose. However, what was important was not the images they'd crafted but the character development, the actual process of fleshing out identities, sliding arms and legs snugly and deeply into the skins they were preparing to don. Several forms of support for their identity development were absent in their school contexts but present in the afternoon tea setting: acknowledgement of the "unfinishedness" (Freire, 1998) of identity, collaborative sustenance of practice rather than isolation and autonomy, permission to present tentative identities rather than fixed "facades," and a space for not-knowing and for "becoming" over "being".

Chapter 9. Conclusion

Introduction

In embarking on this study, I sought to problematize the fundamental tensions and shifts surrounding the meanings of optimal conditions in which Jane, Margaret, Alexandra, and Katie learned to teach. Several constructs were clearly absent in their institutional contexts but present in the afternoon tea setting, including acknowledgement of the “unfinishedness” (Freire, 1998) of identity, collaborative sustenance of practice rather than isolation and autonomy, permission to present tentative identities rather than fixed “facades,” and a space for not-knowing and for “becoming” over “being.” These constructs were helpful in supporting their practice. In order to examine meanings of pedagogy in the context of the lives and experiences of the four teachers, I set my study in the terrain between how Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra taught and how they thought about their teaching. This setting became fertile as the study unfolded and as I began to see how it nurtured the relationship between practice (what they did) and theory (how they thought about what they did), a relationship that came to life in the context of the afternoon tea conversations. Throughout my analysis, I considered the sense that the teachers were making of schooling during their first year of practice and the intrinsic politics these meanings gave rise to.

Some important themes in teaching ESOL and beginning teaching were fleshed out in this account of Alexandra, Katie, Jane, and Margaret's lives. In this final chapter, I build upon my analysis in the previous chapters to focus in on two central constructs that coursed through the veins of this study. These were becoming and belonging. Conceptually, *becoming* connects identity's past to its present, while *belonging* connects individuals' identities to their communities. I perceive these two constructs to cut horizontally across all chapters and to pose a challenge to widely accepted understandings of three intertwined themes: pedagogy, identity, and transformation. This study argues for embracing a broader definition of pedagogy, for revising the ways in which we understand identity, and for pushing against the boundaries of what counts as transformative practice. In this concluding chapter, I will elucidate on each of these themes.

A Need for a Broader Definition of Pedagogy

Through my analysis of the teachers' meanings of their work, my understandings of *pedagogy* widened to extend beyond what teachers do as they are teaching. As I sat beside the teachers, chatting with them and hearing them reflecting on their lives, I began to see the necessity of conceptualizing pedagogy in much broader and more complex terms than I had at the study's beginning. While pedagogy is certainly about teachers interacting with their students in their classrooms, it cannot be viewed apart from the social and historical context that it is practiced in, the biographies of those who practice it, and the larger context of the relationship among power, identity, and culture. In examining pedagogy in these wider terms, I came to understand pedagogical practice as integrally linked to ethics, to relationship, and to identity.

This broader construct of pedagogy stands in contrast to traditional definitions, which have been understood in terms of technical and behavioral expectations. I found myself wavering between two representations of pedagogy. One was a limited view of pedagogical practice as static, theoretical, pre-packaged, and ready to be served up when new teachers finish their pre-service experiences and enter their classrooms; the other, which Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Alexandra were in pursuit of, was conceptual, fluid, and influenced by relationship and identity. It is important for educators to be thoughtful and critical about how pedagogy is defined because while meanings of pedagogy are constructed in different sites, these sites are situated within a set of power relations that privileges certain representations of pedagogy over others. Ideas about what makes pedagogy need to be examined within the context of their power relations in order to understand why some images of pedagogy persevere in school culture and some are submerged. Adopting a broader understanding of pedagogy that reaches beyond simply practice within classroom walls extends our vision beyond only action to include thought, context, and identity, thus challenging the historically engrained dichotomy between thought and action. Conceptualizing pedagogy as only a theoretical or practical construct is inadequate because embedded in theory is practice, and embedded in practice is theory. In the past, limited conceptualizations have framed pedagogy in terms of either teachers' actions (practice) or researchers' analysis (theory). These definitions of pedagogy seem to be inadequate and reinforce the historical power differential between teachers (usually women) and educational researchers (mostly men) and between theory and practice. This study highlighted for me the need for a definition of pedagogy that is mindful of the dialectical relationship between thought and action.

Becoming and Belonging in Identity Construction

“To be human is to belong. Belonging is a circle that embraces everything: if we reject it, we damage our nature. The word ‘belonging’ holds together the two fundamental aspects of life: Being and Longing, the being of our Longing and the longing of our Being.” (O’Donohue, 1999, p. 2)

O’Donohue tells us that belonging, being, and longing are inextricable from each other and from our humanness. The construct of belonging links our longing to our identities. The construct of *becoming* is similarly implicated in the construction of identity(ies) as fluid, multiple, and ever-changing because it is through longing to belong that we become. The process of becoming, or identity construction, is an integral site in which what we do (action) becomes connected to what we think (theory). When pedagogy is conceived of in terms of who we become, it therefore brings together thought and action. In the schools in this study, ESOL teachers’ and ESOL students’ identities were subject to a regime of truth that defined what counted as being a teacher and, in a parallel vein, what counted as being in ESOL. Historically in this country and more specifically in this study, beginning teachers have been viewed from a deficit perspective. Being in the process of becoming a teacher has translated to having an incomplete teacher identity. This understanding of becoming fails to allow room for the process of becoming an ESOL teacher as an experience in and of itself. Some of the teachers complained that they were expected to graduate from their M.Ed program and *be* teachers, with no space for actually learning to teach, for becoming.

The relationship between being and becoming was central to the study. The afternoon teas provided Katie, Alexandra, Margaret, and Jane a context in which to

rehearse their performances, a space in which to experiment with their identities and practices. The acts they rehearsed during the afternoon teas were rarely “performed” on school grounds, but developing their ideas and identities was important in their processes of becoming ESOL teachers. In the context of the afternoon teas, they could *become* rather than merely *be*, a distinction that liberated them to conceptualize identity as fluid and flexible. At the afternoon teas, they allowed each other to be “unfinished” (Freire, 1998), to view teaching in collaborative rather than isolated and autonomous terms, to present tentative identities rather than fixed “facades,” to explore in community, to scaffold each other, to safely experiment, and to not-know. Exploring the development of the teachers’ professional identities highlights the crucial role that language can play in shaping the relationship among power, identity, and pedagogy. The teachers used language critically and analytically to change their perspectives and to challenge and transform the representations of practice offered by their teaching contexts. They focused on supporting each others’ abilities to use language proficiently in their identity construction and sometimes even privileged their discursive practice over their pedagogical practice. They used language to change themselves, adjust their perspectives, and alter their contexts.

Just as becoming an ESOL teacher is viewed from a deficit perspective, so is becoming a mainstream student. ESOL status is viewed in remedial terms, with ESOL classes positioned to remedy non-native English speaker (NNES) status and help ESOL students to achieve the sought-after status of exiting ESOL. ESOL is always viewed in developmental terms because dominant representations of the school category of ESOL, integrally linked to the social category of NNES, is constructed only from a deficit

perspective. In the context of power relations between native speakers and language minorities, no space exists for *being* an ESOL student, an immigrant, and an NNES except in the context of *becoming* non-ESOL, American, and English-speaking in a way that approximates idealized “native” English as closely as possible. Ironically, becoming non-ESOL often implies becoming monolingual. In order for a legitimate space to be carved out for the process of *becoming* to occupy, educators need to revision and consider understandings of becoming in the context of the power relations surrounding linguistic minority status.

Revisioning Transformation

There is a need for educators for social justice to push against the commonly accepted boundaries of what counts as transformation in order to problematize the hegemony (Price, 2004) of solitary and universally embraced representations. In this study, the connections among *transformation*, an ethic of caring, and identity are highlighted in Jane, Katie, Margaret, and Alexandra’s experiences. For many decades, transformation was understood in terms of action, framed as resistance to unjust or inequitable structures and practices. The ways in which power and privilege manifested themselves and the ways in which ESOL students, language learning, and pedagogy were constructed in the schools in this study complicated the teachers’ naming and shaping of their own transformative practices. The representations of transformation carved out in the four teachers’ practices were more complex and contextual than traditional definitions of transformation would imply and were inseparable from ethics and identity.

One form of transformation that needs to be explored further is actually nested in the third space between access and transformation. The strategy of supporting students’

access to power so that they can later become transformative agents in their own lives and the lives of others is itself an insufficiently recognized form of transformation. For instance, teaching standard English with an explicit problematization of its arbitrary nature equips students to simultaneously succeed and transform.

ESOL classes were originally established to enhance the lives of language minority students, but it is difficult for them to accomplish their purpose given the deficit meaning of the category ESOL and the way the category manifests itself in the culture and structure of schools. In the context of the schools in this study, to enhance the lives of language minority students through ESOL classes was synonymous with helping them to exit ESOL and become mainstream. The question that then arises is: Who is the self at the center of ESOL identity? The definition of ESOL student is rife with embedded contradictions, so discovering what transformation means necessarily implies learning how to manage all these contradictions inherent in teaching ESOL students, which, for the four teachers, was a dilemma entrenched in a framework of ethics and identity.

The teachers were all motivated by a desire to see institutions, particularly the institution of schooling, become fairer, more just, and more equitable. This was, for all four, an ethical positioning in which they understood the pursuit of transformation to be largely about ethical practice. An overriding theme in the project of transformative first-year teaching was crafting a pedagogy steeped in ethical responsibility to their students and, simultaneously, to their own ideals. While the strategies that Katie, Jane, Alexandra, and Margaret have arrived upon are not perfectly comfortable for them, they represent the most caring, most ethical balance that the four teachers are able to negotiate within their contexts and therefore are their representations of transformation. For instance, drawing

on students' home cultures connects students' lives to their learning and challenges monocultural definitions of knowledge, thus representing, in theory, epistemological transformation. However, all four teachers were practicing in contexts in which, to varying degrees, cultural difference could be shameful. This highlighted for me that transformation cannot be conceptualized apart from the intricacies of the context it is practiced within.

Just as ethics were implicated in transformation, so was identity. Teachers' positionality towards their students contributes to the shaping of identities. While I have highlighted commonalities among the teachers' representations of transformation, this study simultaneously made it patently obvious that transformation looks different depending on who is practicing it. For instance, Alexandra's version of transformation included drawing attention to dominant images of what girls' bodies should look like. Katie, conversely, steered clear of conversations about female physicality in order to avoid underscoring connections between girls' bodies and their value. Both teachers were practicing pedagogy designed to transform media-generated images of female beauty, but their transformative approaches looked radically different. Despite their dissimilar appearances, both pedagogical leanings were designed to challenge an inequitable status quo.

Foucault (1978) writes about the "specific intellectual" as one who has two tasks: the first is to identify and describe cracks in the dominant systems of thinking and doing, and the second is to extend and develop alternative systems that exist and even function within the established context of political struggles. Foucault does not suggest throwing out the old systems and replacing them with new. Beyond being unrealistic in this study,

this all-or-nothing strategy creates a dualism in which the old system in its entirety is understood to be evil and the new alternative system is exclusively good. In this third space between the old and the new is the quixotism of teachers building a utopian world in which they have all necessary resources and support and in which their students emerge from uncomplicated, shiny, happy histories. In view of the actual worlds they lived in, Margaret, Jane, Katie, and Alexandra carved out meanings of transformation that included responsibility to their students, caring, and justice. These helped them to forge conceptualizations of identity that extended beyond “oppressed linguistic minority” or “successfully assimilated,” supporting the excavation of a hybrid space between these two poles. This practice of challenging dichotomies extends beyond supporting identity development to provoke epistemological change because it offers the possibility of knowledge that arises from within the cracks of what we already know. A similar example is the teachers’ embracing of the value of partial answers, which breaks down polar definitions of knowledge and allows students to discover for themselves so that they become active in the generation of their own knowledge. Canagarajah makes the distinction between a reproduction orientation, in which “subjects are passive [and] lack agency to manage linguistic and ideological conflicts to their best advantage” (p. 2) and resistance perspectives, in which “students have agency to think critically and work out ideological alternatives that favor their own empowerment.” (p. 2). Rather than handing students answers, the teachers created space for the meeting of students’ knowledge and school culture, a site that gave shelter to the construct of becoming. For the teachers, respecting unfinishedness and creating space for their students’ processes of becoming (a

space that was, ironically, elusive in their own practices) was rooted in ethical commitment.

While this study has helped me to problematize the systems currently in place, it has not offered clear-cut transformative alternatives to traditional pedagogies. It has simply allowed me to work within the deterritorialized terrain (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000) between what is and what could be. For instance, for the teachers, negotiating the line between supporting students' home cultures and gatekeeping around what counts as American culture was murky; for students, a fine line existed between surrendering to dominant culture and appropriating it as a tool in their own destinies. Rather than offering prescriptive solution, the teachers' practices represent what Price and Osborne (2000) name humanizing pedagogies. Humanizing pedagogies offer constructions of pedagogy in which students' identities are fleshed out and their environments contextualized. Rather than submitting to the Self and Other constructions available to their students, Katie, Jane, Margaret, and Jane helped their students to identify a hybrid space in which students could explore and interact with the dominant discourses, disabling the discourses and leaving the students free to explore alternative subject positions. In this way, transformation was motivated by concerns for ethics and identity.

Transformative practice was similarly connected to belonging. As the teachers entered into and acted upon the culture of schooling, they changed its nature. For instance, as Margaret entered into her school culture, embracing her ideas about pedagogies of compassion, she changed her colleague Phyllis' ideas about what it means to teach. The process of belonging helped her to be transformative. The need to belong is a fundamental part of being human. The primary project being undertaken by both

beginning ESOL teachers and their students is the quest for mastery of a new culture in order to belong to it. However, aching to belong can quickly translate to assimilation or indoctrination, and finding a balance between the two requires access to several key ingredients: discursive expertise, critical positioning towards power inequalities, and a strong affinity with and legitimation of one's Self. This study addressed two large questions that relate to belonging: how can beginning teachers come to belong to their school communities without losing touch with their ideals and ideologies? And how can ESOL students come to belong to their new communities without relinquishing parts of themselves? Language played a significant role in the answers to these two questions, which will be explored next.

Longing to Belong in ESOL Teachers' Lives

The teachers used a critical consciousness of language to assist them in their quest to belong. Within the context of the afternoon teas, they developed strategies and discourses that might secure their admission into the communities of practice that they were entering, all the while seeking support from each other to maintain the ideologies they could "go home at rest with" (Alexandra, Afternoon tea, 06.19). They sought for themselves, as for their students, ways to truly belong to communities instead of being neutrally absorbed into them, ways to construct identities that were not simply pleasing and appropriate in the community they were seeking to enter, but rather that allowed them full participation and agency without relinquishing slices of their ideals and their selves.

The concept of community is current and popular within the discourses surrounding teaching, but what does it mean? Within all four school "communities" of

this study, ESOL teachers' and ESOL students' voices were marginalized. ESOL students were taunted for their ESOL status, excluded from participation in school events, not represented in their school newspapers or on social studies maps, and left out of International Night celebrations. They were invisible within some of the representations of community operating within the walls of their school buildings by virtue of their ESOL identity. The teachers, too, were often isolated. Britzman criticized the traditional view of teaching as a secluded activity, noting that: "[i]ndividualizing the social basis of teaching dissolves the social context and dismisses the social meanings that constitute experience as lived. These forces are displaced by the autonomy and very real isolation of the teacher in the current school structure" (Britzman, 1991, pp. 237-8). The tension between isolation and autonomy in teaching complicated the teachers' access to professional support, begging questions about the ways in which schools can build community among teachers through, for instance, supportive peer observations, collaborative teaching, and coteaching. The mentorship programs in place for the four teachers were unequivocally paltry, with some of the teachers in this study speaking with their assigned mentors only once. Because good models of mentorship are scarce, there was a need for meanings of effective mentorship practices to be addressed. Jane suggested that each beginning teacher might need a community of mentors, so that a variety of people are available for teachers to turn to, depending on the challenge being faced—a mentor with an ESOL specialization, a mentor who can competently negotiate administrative tasks, a mentor with expertise in a specific grade level, a mentor from a different school. (Jane, Dinner at her house, 05.07).

Longing to Belong in ESOL Students' Lives

For the students learning to belong, one strategy that addressed this dilemma was for their teachers to support the development of voice as they taught language. A meaning of language teaching that emerged from this study moved beyond simply teaching students to communicate in a way that is pleasing and appropriate to the community they are seeking to belong to. Rather, the teachers sought to teach in a way that supported students' capacity to connect classroom learning to personal experience, underscoring that ESOL students' experiences are worth sharing. Belonging extends beyond merely being subsumed into a culture, it includes full participation complete with all resources students bring. Belonging to certain communities can sometimes require students to relinquish slices of their identity, for instance their languages or language variations that are associated with less social power. One way to challenge this inequity was for teachers to question the legitimacy of the forms of speech sanctioned in educational institutions and to scaffold students' recognition of the arbitrary nature of spellings and grammatical form. This is not to say that it was advisable to withhold information about grammar, since students might have needed it in order to succeed in a society that legitimates this knowledge, but that it is possible for teachers to teach grammar and form without naturalizing their validity.

The stigma of ESOL across all four schools of the study both resulted from and contributed to its construction as deficit. ESOL students clamored to exit ESOL because they were embarrassed to be associated with the category. Their reactions illustrate how belonging is not only about relationship, it extends to identity. The students in this study did not simply want to belong—if this were the case, they would have been content to

belong to the ESOL communities in their schools. The processes of becoming and belonging cannot be viewed apart from the meanings of school categories in the context of power. The school categories were situated within a hierarchy that privileged exiting from ESOL, so it followed naturally that ESOL students wanted to belong to the more prestigious category of “non-ESOL” students. Norton’s (2002) notion of “imagined communities” highlights the power of an imagined sense of belonging, the vision of a future self situated within a desired community, to support ESOL students’ and teachers’ investments in their identity construction. However, examining imagined communities in the context of complicated power relations within the institution of schooling raises questions about the indistinct line between an imagined community and a regime of truth (Carroll, Motha, and Price, 2004).

The deficit construction of ESOL was connected to the likelihood of school failure among ESOL students. Students who were in ESOL were excluded from participating in class, were denied resources, were assumed to be less able than they actually were, and were absent from the grand metanarrative offered within school walls. Ironically, while multilingualism, the reason for students’ placement in ESOL, itself is an asset, the ways in which ESOL is constructed as a deficit school category establishes conditions for school failure among ESOL students.

The issues of belonging and community hearken to the category “World English” and the identity of “World English speaker.” The study raised questions in my mind about policies regarding the placement of “World English” speakers across the United States. Assigning students of color who speak English language variations to ESOL classes while mainstreaming white nonstandard English speakers contributes to both

linguicism and racism. Policies that authoritatively exclude or anglicize nonstandard varieties of English amount to racism and language discrimination. The connections between belonging and linguistic practice were an important part of teachers' and students' identity constructions.

Implications

This study did not set out to tell complete stories. I simply used various lenses to view different parts of the process. What I offer here is consequently neither an account of passive socialization into compliance nor a “perfect counter-hegemonic story” (Villenas, 1998). However, some general areas of theoretical interest that became apparent merit discussion. I do not separate the implications for this study into disparate categories, such as teaching, teacher education, curriculum, policy, and research, because I'd like to avoid fortifying the artificial partitions among these categories. Examining them separately can contribute to reinforcing their hierarchical ordering and can ignore the rich resources offered by, for instance, teachers as curriculum developers and teachers as policy makers.

Many constructs were absent within school walls but apparent in the afternoon tea setting: acceptance for the fluidity of identity, collaborative sustenance of practice rather than isolation and autonomy, permission to present tentative identities rather than fixed “facades,” and a space for not-knowing and for “becoming” over “being.” Rather than suggesting that first-year teachers have regular tea parties in order to access these constructs, or even that they be involved in programs that remove them from their school context to one in which experimentation and uncertainty are acceptable, I propose that attention be paid to how schools can change to make space for those missing constructs,

how social and professional networks that sustain beginning teachers can be created in order to allow the institution of schooling to function as a cohesive learning community. I suggest a need for change in teacher education, public school systems, first-year support, and professional development in order to provide the type of support that Alexandra, Katie, Jane, and Margaret identified as important but lacking in their institutional settings.

The connection between discourse and practice in the process of becoming ESOL teachers is important in illustrating how a specific focus on the relationship between identity and language in teacher education has the potential to support in-service teachers' developing practice, their "becoming." The study suggests the potential usefulness of a focus in first-year and ongoing professional development on discursive practice, on knowing "how to say things" (Katie, Afternoon Tea, 11.15) to ensure that teachers are able to access the "shared repertoire of communal resources," including discursive resources (Lave and Wenger, 1999).

The connections between the teaching of English and the development of ESOL students' voices, positionalities, and identities became conspicuous in this study. In watching and listening to Jane, Alexandra, Margaret, and Katie, I came to understand the limitations of communicative competence as a motivating ideal in the pedagogy of ESOL teachers. The concept of communicative competence, while important and valuable in its original context, has evolved into a regime of truth that needs to be critiqued, reconceptualized, and expanded upon.

The teachers explored ways to make space for student knowledge without reinforcing the stigma associated with difference. They discussed the need for multiple

labels, identifications, and identities. An element that became visible was the ways in which norms are constructed, for instance norms of whiteness, native English-speaker status, and maleness. The importance of questioning associations between dominant categories and neutrality surfaced, as did the necessity of examining how stereotypes are constructed and sustained. In listening to transcriptions, I came to develop an understanding of how difference is discussed and the importance of overcoming silences that allow discrimination to exist. The study highlighted awareness of the failure of ESOL curricula to challenge the “fixity” (Bhabha, 1994) of ways in which knowledge is coded. Some curricula in this study were insufficiently flexible to accommodate both school and student definitions of knowledge in the context of a fluid and ongoing reconstruction of identity. The importance of moving beyond fixed and limited definitions of culture, the “holy trinity” (Delrosso, 2000) of race, class and gender, became apparent, with teachers considering cultures as disparate as mental illness, foster families, and life in Appalachia and paying attention to the ways in which multiple categories of difference intersect.

This need for understandings of knowledge that allow fluidity between school knowledge and home or student knowledge is particularly important in the light of a current trend towards curriculum that is “teacher-proof” and unidirectional. The transmission-based orientation of curriculum being adopted around the country creates no space in which teachers can weave students’ identities and knowledge together with their current contexts. For instance, the Open Court curriculum being adopted by almost every school in the LA County Unified District includes heavily phoneme-based scripted lessons and school officials hired to circulate and ensure that teachers do not deviate from

the script (Ulanoff, 2004). Under these circumstances, teachers cannot be guided by students' needs, interests, and experiences and are forced to teach in ways that are disconnected from their students' and indeed their own lives.

The teachers' deliberate intentions to make connections between students and learning prompted questions about the paradigms of language teaching that dominate language teaching. The study suggested a need for TESOL methods classes to sustain a critical eye towards the construct of methods (Pennycook, 2001) and for grammar classes to include a focus on the pedagogy of teaching language instead of merely on grammar. As TESOL teacher candidates, learning to connect students and learning was a more relevant focus than learning to merely transmit language as an autonomous system disconnected from students.

The dominant discourses in the multicultural literature surrounding teaching minority students do indeed embrace connections. However, Alexandra, Margaret, Katie, and Jane's experiences during the year of the study complicated the meanings of these connections as they reflected upon and struggled with the role they played in the construction of their students' identities and positionalities. For instance, seeking to strengthen students' connections to their home cultures had the potential to encourage stereotyping and wakened the possibility of unintentionally reinforcing hegemonic constructs of culture. The teachers explored ways to connect home and school cultures without universalizing "culture" or ignoring the complexity and subjective nature of culture. Similarly, encouraging self-naming was supportive of students' agency, but it can create the possibility of students choosing assimilationist or self-oppressive identifications, and furthermore could potentially encourage limited and monocultural

interpretations of identity. The teachers did not seek to reject the value these strategies but explored ways of using them thoughtfully.

Further Research

This study raised a number of questions in my mind:

- What would pedagogy look like if it connected students' thoughts to their learning?

Just as pedagogical practice cannot be viewed apart from teachers' theorizing, lives, and contexts, it should not be viewed apart from learners' biographies, identities, and thoughts. Pedagogy is a dialogic process, not simply delivered by teachers but co-constructed between teachers and students. An important part of ESOL learning is therefore the theoretical processes that students go through. Pedagogy is not just about how ESOL students learn, but how they think about how they learn, and an understanding of this dialectic would support the processes of learning.

- What would this broadened understanding of pedagogy look like if it made connections between students' and teachers' perspectives of pedagogy?

Students' learning does not take place in isolation any more than teachers' learning does. Examining these perspectives in a dialogic framework offer possibilities for a more complete understanding of learning processes.

- How is an ethic of caring implicated in pedagogy?

Insufficient attention has been paid to the ethical aspects of pedagogy. With teaching evolving in a technocratic, mechanical, paternalistic framework, the ways in which social justice connects to caring and responsibility towards students have been neglected.

- What is the relationship among grammar, identity, and social transformation?

Grammar has been viewed as an autonomous, neutral body of knowledge, but the ways in which grammar is situated and taught in ESOL classrooms profoundly affects students' identities and positionalities. I see a need for further research that examined grammar not only in terms of limited definitions of learning and acquisition, but in the context of identity development and power.

- How can “coming to voice” (Hill Collins, 2000; Tarule, 1996) be a project of the ESOL curriculum?

The ESOL curricula in this study failed to create spaces for students' experiences and perspectives. Without attention to the identities that ESOL students' bring to their classes, the voices that they develop cannot be their own.

- How is race connected to linguistic minority status?

Work at the intersection of research on anti-racism and research on language minority identity is sparse. This terrain merits further exploration because much of linguistic discrimination is rooted in racism. How can ESOL classrooms equip students with a critical consciousness of racism, sexism, and other forces of discrimination?

- How can teachers challenge silences in which oppression is nurtured without reinscribing discriminatory speech?

There were many subjects during the year of the study that were difficult to talk about to fear of sounding discriminatory. For instance, it was sometimes difficult to challenge stereotypes about black boys or to critique dominant norms of female beauty without highlighting and potentially legitimating these. In order for us to challenge discrimination, we need to find ways to talk about it.

- How can teachers support the fluidity of identity in a world that conceptualized identity in static terms?

Although the teachers in this study had sophisticated understandings of the hybrid nature identity, many educators in the larger institution of schooling view dimensions of difference, particularly national and cultural difference, in dichotomous terms. In addition to learning to challenge these conceptualizations, attention needs to be paid to ways of supporting those teachers who defy dichotomous thinking in the context of institutions that do not.

- How can schools challenge the deeply engrained negative constructions of ESOL within a world that views NNESs negatively?

The negative connotations associated globally with NNES must be critiqued by society at large. This study calls for further exploration of ways in which ESOL teachers acting at the individual level can contribute to this process.

Looking at the Light Cast by Someone Else's Lamp

We have reached a point in history when looking at the light cast by someone else's lamp can have dire consequences. Increasingly high-stakes testing, standardized learning goals, and banking-model curricula compel ESOL teachers to teach in ways that snuff out students' lights and limit the space available to connect students' lives with their learning. Teachers' own perspectives and experiences are divorced from their pedagogies, and the heavily socializing influences of the institution of schooling limit the range of legitimate definitions of transformation, pedagogy, and identity. ESOL teachers seek to develop teaching identities that do not unwittingly erase their selves. If English language teaching is to improve the lives and realities of ESOL students and teachers, ESOL educators must

continue to explore the pedagogical possibilities between resisting oppressive forces towards assimilation and helping ESOL students to craft pleasing but self-erasing identities.

ESOL students' identities are in similar peril. Rising racialized and gendered anti-immigrant sentiment feed their fear of being different and of deviating from a white, English-speaking American norm. The pressure to assimilate extinguishes some lamps while forcing students to gaze at others. The effects of the Homeland Security Act and the USA Patriot Act redefine what counts as light by limiting the range of acceptable identities. The various anti-bilingual education propositions and English Only initiatives around the country contribute to the shroud of shame spread over multilingualism and over immigrants' connections with their first languages.

ESOL teachers face the daunting challenge of allowing the light cast by others' lamps to illuminate their paths while still tending the flame in their own lamps. Furthermore, they seek the same for their students. Such a charge is complex and elusive, but it is my hope that in demonstrating the ways in which four teachers accepted and grappled with the challenge, this study has taken a step towards extending our understandings of the possibilities available to language professionals.

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