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On breaking ground: Second language literacy and language learning through sociocultural practices

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**ON BREAKING GROUND: SECOND LANGUAGE LITERACY AND LANGUAGE
LEARNING THROUGH SOCIOCULTURAL PRACTICES**

by

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ABSTRACT

On Breaking Ground: Second Language Literacy and Language Learning Through Sociocultural Practices

by

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This study was concerned with (a) how second language children actually learn as a result of their social interactions; (b) the learning trajectory of second language students from apprentice to full participation in communities of practice; and (c) how this learning influences, and is reciprocally influenced by, the social, cultural, and historical context as learners become members of community practice. These questions were investigated under the lens of sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning in relationship with others and with materials over time within the social context.

This was a qualitative study involving genetic methodology (Vygostky, 1981) which aims to understand, rather than describe, mental processes through the disclosure of their emergence and subsequent growth. Participants in this study were second language students included in two mainstream classroom of a year-round school in an urban district in the Southwest. Methods of data collection included the videotaping of

children in authentic (non-contrived) interactions; interviews with participating students, teachers, and parents of participating students; field notes of classroom observations; and anecdotal records of participating students. Genetic analysis of these data afforded the possibility of focusing on the social context in which learning takes place.

The results of this study point to a departure from conceptualizations of second language learning as a skill, and instead views L2 learning as a process of re-conceptualization of the self. It was also learned in this study that cultural, social, historical, and institutional elements of the learning context both contribute and restrict L2 legitimate participation in communities of practice. These elements are contributing when students are free to utilize their sociocultural and historical repertoire as mediational tools to make sense of the educational environment (e.g., through the use of hybrid language practices, home discourse patterns, practices that allow for self-expression, and authentic forms of assessment). They are restrictive when institutional aspects are privileged within the classroom context (e.g., by the emphasis on procedural elements, use of official discourse, hegemony of English, monological practices, and legitimizing forms of assessment). It was also suggested in this study that sociocultural, historical, and institutional aspects of the classroom contexts might have been largely ignored by traditional research, and thus this fact has become reflected in praxis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Improving schools for language minority students has become the topic of prominence in recent years due to the large influx of second language students in American schools. However, little light has been shed on how best to address the needs of these students who are disproportionately represented in remedial programs and in dropout rates.

Traditional investigations of language learning have been predicated on the paradigm of positivism—a tradition that focuses on explanations based on the predictability of events as well as on controlled, quantitative experiments. In this study I challenged these traditional views of second language research, which have yielded conceptualizations of language learners as processors of input and producers of output. Instead, this study offered a more holistic, qualitative investigation of language learning, focusing on individuals involved in developmental processes that take place during their interactions with others and with materials, in a given context, over time. While more traditional views of L2 learning dichotomize both the individual and the social, sociocultural approaches offer a more holistic perspective to the understanding of language learning, involving the study of L2 learning as a socially, culturally, and historically situated activity.

In this scheme, second language (L2) learning is not considered a process that resides in an individual's head (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moll, 1990; Rogoff, 1991, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978), but rather a process that emerges interpsychologically (between people) through social relationships, and then becomes an intra-psychological (within individual) tool for the learner (Lantolf, 2000). In other words, this framework proposes that we learn a second language not by memorizing sounds and then putting them to use; we learn language, for example, as we engage in diverse social activities such as schooling, shopping, conducting conversations, etc. These activities are mediated by all sorts of signs (including verbal and non-verbal) and materials. Through the manipulation of these signs, external social interactions become reconstructed within individuals and, in turn, transform psychological processes. For sociocultural theorists, this process entails learning.

Enlightened by the sociocultural framework, this study examined the circumstances of young speakers of other languages who were integrated into mainstream classrooms. Through the analysis of various forms of qualitative data (see Method section), I hoped to shed light on learning processes, rather than on teaching procedures (although I realize that the two are sometimes inextricable), of second language learners as students interact with people, settings, and materials over time.

Rogoff (1995) argued that research on learning needs to move beyond investigating isolated teacher behaviors or clusters of teacher and student practices toward a more holistic and dynamic examination of the learning process as it occurs in the times and spaces of classroom life. This perspective resonates with many theoretical constructs, such as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), legitimate

peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and mediated action (Wertsch, 1998), which have increased our understanding of how people learn through participation in historically, culturally, and socially constituted practices. In the next section I offer a rationale for this study by describing some of the principal elements extrapolated from the contemporary sociocultural and situated learning theories that constitute my view of learning as participation. I then investigate the ways in which these principles can be applied and extended to shed light on the development of English language learners. (See Appendices A and B for a definition of terms and a review of related literature, respectively).

Rationale

The current study stemmed from a pilot study conducted over the course of three consecutive years regarding the interactions between native and non-native speakers in a mainstream kindergarten class. I then followed a group of five students as they progressed through first and second grades. The broad research question guiding the pilot study was, “What are the types of collaborative classroom practices that yield language and literacy gains for second language students?”

From the observations based on the pilot study I came to realize the importance of analyzing students’ interaction in relation to the complexity of the contexts in which an activity takes place. To discuss collaborative practices, the overall social/cultural/institutional dynamics in the classroom were noted as factors that contributed to the establishment of a sense of community. The pilot study revealed that the creation of a whole class identity and the implementation of participatory approaches that stress interdependence were very instrumental in the development of a sense of

community within the class. In addition, the daily practice of interactive activities, such as choral reading, story retelling using puppets, and the enactment of stories, contributed in changing exclusionary patterns found in more traditional settings to patterns of collaboration. Also, and of particular importance, the organization of classroom space played a role in the establishment of a collaborative environment. When the classroom was organized so that it fostered free mobility, patterns of collaboration were increased as students had ample access to each other and to pedagogical materials. When no seats were assigned, it allowed flexibility of groups and encouraged students to sit near those with whom they have more affinity. When materials (such as crayons and pencils) were shared, it provided a greater sense of community and further opportunities for communication. From my observations in the pilot study I found that this type of classroom context contributed to lower anxiety levels, enhanced student participation, and ultimately increased language gains for second language students.

In the pilot study it became clear that although almost any interaction served to promote opportunities for L2 learning, the context in which those interactions occurred seemed as important as the interactions themselves when promoting language learning. The learning environment that was created in the classrooms observed played an important role in shaping not only the larger discourse but also the understandings achieved. For example, as the discourse began to reflect attitudes of caring and commitment, of encouragement, and of collaboration, I began to see greater linguistic gains for second language students.

However, it also became evident that there were inescapable asymmetries in interpersonal relationships, especially between native and non-native speakers. Moreover,

it became evident that within the complex webs of classroom interactions, L2 students I observed were attributed an identity of intellectual incapability in relation to the group and occupied less powerful positions in the interactions.

With those observations in mind, one of the premises for the current study was that the children's use of language with their peers influences their learning, and that together they rely on the use of mediational tools such as language to gradually become legitimate participants of their learning environment. This premise was in congruence with principles of community practice.

A community of practice, as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991), is a set of relations among persons, activities, and the world, over time, and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice (p. 92). The sets of relations that constitute communities of practice are specific, local, historically-constructed, and changing. Some persons in communities are old timers, and others are newcomers. The activities in which these newcomers and old timers engage are community practices. Learning from this perspective entails the process whereby newcomers to a community participate in attenuated ways with old timers in the performance of community practices (p. 98). Lave and Wenger suggested the notion of peripheral participation to describe the engagement in these practices of participants who have different degrees of familiarity with them. Old timers as well as newcomers have differential access to participation and community resources, are differentially powered and differentially involved in negotiating legitimate activities for the community, and are in conflict and affiliation with one another. In these ways individuals construct and are assigned particular kinds of identities within the community. In Lave and Wenger's words, "The social structure of

[community practice], its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e., for legitimate peripheral participation)” (p. 98).

It is important also to note that as the individual acquires knowledge, he/she also contributes to the shape and to the resources of the collective (Moll, 1990). That is, the contexts themselves are transformed by the individuals operating within them. These interpretations suggest that a focus on the individual is not sufficient for understanding learning as a process of co-construction, in which the learner shapes and is shaped by the context he/she operates. Instead, more holistic analyses emphasizing this reflexive nature of classroom environments are needed. These are the sorts of elements with which the present study was concerned.

In the development of community practice, complex webs of interaction between participants mediate learning within dynamic, overlapping, and multidirectional zones of proximal development (ZPD). This notion reflects recent extensions of Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1978) conceived of the ZPD as the difference between what the novice can do alone and what the novice can do in the presence of a more capable participant. More specifically, the inter-psychological exchange between individuals of unequal abilities serves as a scaffold for the novice to further develop existent competence (Lantolf, 1994). Vygotsky (1978) posited that social interaction within the ZPD constitutes the genesis of individual cognitive development. Moll (1990) argued that the ZPD has been narrowly interpreted as primarily applying to adult-child dyads in which the adult transmits discreet bodies of knowledge to the child. Based on their research in an elementary classroom, Moll and Whitmore (1994) proposed that, in any given community practice, collective zones of proximal development emerge,

resulting from the interdependence of its participants and how they use social and cultural resources. Informed by this more expansive understanding of the ZPD, I viewed participation in community practice as producing multiple and multidirectional ZPDs that form the genesis of socially mediated cognitive development.

An important aspect of this study was to take into consideration the historical, cultural, political, and institutional forces that afford and constrain the types of practices available to a community. McDermott (1993) succinctly articulated the effect of these broad forces on learning by proposing that the question of who is learning what and how much, is essentially a question of what kinds of conversations the learners are a part. McDermott's question implies that learning takes place as a result of social practices; therefore, types of practices available in a given community crucially influence what its members can learn and who they can become (p. 295).

Rogoff (1995) also discussed participation within historical, cultural, political, and institutional contexts. In Rogoff's words, the community plane of activity involves "the institutional structure and cultural technologies of intellectual activity [including] purposes (defined in community or institutional terms), cultural constraints, resources, values relating to what means are appropriate for reaching goals . . . and cultural tools such as . . . linguistic and mathematical systems" (pp. 143-144). By considering these dimensions of activity, through the analysis of the community place, this study explored some of the broad forces (social, institutional, historical, and cultural) that impact local practice.

Another consideration of this study was the examination of the privileging of mediational means that extends or limits participants' access to roles in community

practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that unequal power relations frequently influence participation in communities of practice. In particular, they pointed out that “hegemony over resources for learning” (p. 42) obstructs access to legitimate peripheral participation. Wertsch (1991, 1998) developed the notions of resources for learning through his theorizing on mediational means. His discussion of mediated action foregrounds the ubiquity of many cultural tools that may serve to accomplish a task; one tool is often privileged above others. He elaborated, “Privileging refers to the fact that one mediational means, such as a social language, is viewed as being more appropriate or efficacious than others in a particular sociocultural setting” (Wertsch, 1998, p. 124). I, therefore, investigated how L2 students use mediational means to gain access to participatory roles.

A number of recent qualitative studies focusing on linguistically diverse students have demonstrated the analytic potency resulting from the foregrounding of the social context of learning (Franquiz & Reyes, 1998; Gutierrez & Larson, 1994; Moll & Diaz, 1987; Moll & Whitmore, 1994; Toohey, 1996, 1998.). In contrast, rare are the instances when we encounter research on second language learning that focuses on (a) how second language children actually learn as a result of their social interactions; and (b) how this learning influences, and is reciprocally influenced, by social, cultural, and historical contexts as learners become members of community practice. The theoretical framework presented here opens up a venue for addressing these relationships. It places concepts such as situatedness of learning, dialogism, and power and discourse in the realm of this investigation, and it offers a view of learning as a process of true co-construction of knowledge. In this way, this type of investigation, as eventually reflected in praxis, has

the ground-breaking potential to move classroom interaction from the model of transmission (or delivery of information) and towards transformation (jointly managed interactions that have the potential to change learning situations, role relationships, educational purposes and procedures). The investigation of the following questions provided an arena to address the sociocultural character of school communities, to rethink some pedagogical practices, and to support students in their continuous development.

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. In consideration of historically, culturally, and socially constituted practices, both in and out of the classroom, what factors influence second language students' access to legitimate peripheral participation in a language-integrated, primary classroom?
2. What role does the access to legitimate peripheral participation play in the development of English language proficiency and literacy as an essential medium of classroom interactions?

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CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

As mentioned in the Method section, this study was motivated by a pilot study that began in my own kindergarten classroom and lasted for 3 years. Before I introduce the results from data gathered during the current study, I present some of the key findings of the pilot study that served as the developing grounds for my understandings of classroom interactions between native and non-native speakers of English. Then, to address all of the pertinent elements of my research questions and also in congruence with the theoretical framework delineated in the introductory section of this study, I will first situate the data gathered by describing the community, the school, and the classrooms where I did my observations. In that way I hope to provide a general idea of the coalescent historical, social, and institutional aspects that influenced second language learning students' access to legitimate peripheral participation in a language-integrated classroom. After presenting the contextual elements that situated this study, I discuss the actual classroom interactions between native and non-native speakers of English in two different circumstances (the children in rooms 14 and 23) and explain how these interactions illustrated the journey of these non-native students into more legitimate forms of participation in English dominant environments. Following that I will present data that illustrate the role of this legitimate participation in the development of English language proficiency and literacy.

The results presented here make explicit the relationships between the social, historical, cultural, and institutional context to language learning. The analysis of data evidenced the notions of the discursive construction of the self, of the dissonance between primary (home) and secondary (institutional) discourses, and of the essential role of sociocultural and historical elements in the mediation of the processes of language and literacy learning. All of these concepts were juxtaposed and emergent from the data. It is made evident that the process of language learning is not one of memorization of arbitrary linguistic signs that get put to use in goal-oriented activities (Lantolf, 2000), nor is it a series of input/output language involving different stimuli. Instead, L2 learning is conceptualized in this study as a culturally and socially mediated activity such as schooling, playing, conversing, etc. As a function of participating in these activities and through the reforming of mediational means such as language and culture, the process of becoming operative in a different language also becomes a process of transformation—a reconceptualization of the self (McCafferty, in press).

It is important to notice that the results will be heuristically presented in linear fashion for the purposes of organization of the study. However, I realize that all the complexities of the community, school, and classrooms where I did my observations for this study couldn't possibly be related here. For example, over 30 hours of videotape recordings were analyzed; as such, for the sake of conciseness I will only narrate the events that were most salient and pertinent to my research questions.

The Pilot Study

Enlightened by the results of a pilot study that investigated classroom interactions, I came to realize the importance of analyzing students' interactions in relation to the

complexity of the contexts in which activity takes place. It became salient that, to discuss those interactions, the overall socio/cultural/political dynamics in the classroom needed to be noted as factors that contributed to the establishment of a sense of community.

The emphasis on creating a whole class identity and the implementation of participatory approaches that stress connections between the classroom and the specific communities to which students belong proved to have been instrumental in developing a sense of community within the class. In addition, the daily practice of interactive activities contributed in changing exclusionary patterns found in more traditional settings to patterns of collaboration. Also, and of particular importance, active parental involvement had a pronounced effect on the community that was established in our class. Through a variety of organized events and activities (such as literacy nights, class picnics, and parent information nights), we were able to establish relationships that went well beyond the classroom. The collaboration between the parents and me helped the children to establish a sense of trust in school and to attain a greater awareness of what is expected of them. In general, this led children to an increased interest in school learning.

The organization of the classroom space also had played a role in the establishment of a collaborative environment. The room was organized so that it fostered free mobility, increasing independence from the teacher and responsibility for students as they had ample access to each other and to pedagogical materials. There were purposely no seating assignments in order to allow flexibility of groups and to encourage students to sit near those with whom they had more affinity. All materials (such as crayons and pencils) were shared to provide a greater sense of community and to promote opportunities for communication. I found this context to lower anxiety and to increase

agency in student behavior.

However, it seemed somewhat utopian to believe that I had created an environment in which everyone cooperated with mutual intentions and to an equal degree. In fact, there were inescapable asymmetries in interpersonal relationships, especially in situations in which group members were second language speakers of the dominant language. However, such complex webs of interaction did provide opportunities for students to negotiate their identity in relation to the group and to occupy a variety of positionings in the community. For example, during the classroom interactions videotaped in the pilot study, a number of arguments broke out among the student groups, and sometimes the children seemed quite angry. Often these altercations had little to do with the tasks they had been engaged to do, but rather revolved around the behavior of one or more participants of the group. Utterances such as "Stop! You are not sharing," and "She won't let me have the brown (crayon)" are examples. However, these interactions still proved to be an important part of the children's social development. Second language learners in particular benefited from such conflicts as they were able to manage themselves and others in these situations. This was an important part of developing a personal sense of identity in the second language.

The most logical inference that was drawn from the observations done during the pilot study suggested that students who are learning a second language need to have ample opportunity to use it. However, more subtle realizations came to the surface. For example, although almost any interaction is believed to promote opportunities for L2 learning, the context in which those interactions occur seemed as important as the interactions themselves when promoting language learning. The opportunities and

accesses created for the students to participate in conversations played an important role in shaping not only the larger discourse, but afforded the development of shared understandings. For example, as the classroom discourse began to reflect certain attributes of social communities, such as the development of intersubjectivities, communication became more abbreviated, tacit, and implicit. However, because of that, there was also less need for reliance on oral language, which in certain ways benefited L2 students' participation in the task. On the other hand, it also limited their access to more explicit forms of communication.

Greater linguistic progress was observed when L2 learners were provided with occasions to use a variety of modes of expression, to present their work to others and receive feedback, and to choose the interactions in which to participate. In that way, L2 learners borrowed and built on each other's abilities as they made successive advances in reaching higher levels of proficiency.

Another observation stemming from the pilot study was that the role of the teacher remained important. The teacher's responsibilities primarily lay in structuring activities and the learning environment so as to create a context that could be conducive to the use of various forms of self-expression, to the negotiation of understandings and identities, and to the development of shared understandings. Thus, the focus of teaching L2 students shifted from its conceptualization as a skill associated with the memorization of rules and structures to that of a process of internalization of language resulting from the context of a given interaction.

In view of these previous findings and couched in the theoretical frameworks that guided this current study, I aimed to expand my understandings of the social and

cognitive processes of second language learning. The following section will present the results of this present investigation by situating the two classrooms which served as the focus of this study within the social, cultural, institutional, and historical contextual elements of community and school with which this examination was concerned.

The Community

The community in which I did my observations is one of the fastest growing communities in the country. The last census performed by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000 showed for this area a total population growth of 85% since 1990, bringing the number of residents to almost a million and a half. Within this growing community, the Hispanic population has increased by 264% in the last 10 years. Representations of other minority populations, such as Asians and Pacific Islanders, have also substantially increased although in smaller proportions. These minority populations are found in some concentrated pockets around the county and are marginally integrated in the larger society. Particularly in the case of Hispanics, many of them hold subservient jobs and live in poverty stricken areas of town.

The task of accommodating this skyrocketing growth hasn't been unproblematic, particularly in the area of education. The school district for this community is now one of the largest in the country. It is constantly and frenetically changing to accommodate the rapidly growing population, particularly of Latinos, which, reflective of the larger community, has more than tripled in the past 10 years, making up for about 30% of the student population according to 1999 statistics.

The disproportional representation of second language students in dropout rates, remedial programs, and failing grades in high school proficiency exams has been a cause

of alarm to administrators, educators, parents, and other community members. In an effort to improve this situation, district officials mandated that each school choose one or more of the different program models designed to address the second language students for immediate implementation. The choice of programs was not completely based on instructional models, but was also based on the composition of the classrooms as far as percentages of students from different language backgrounds. Their proposed models were as follows: transitional bilingual, two-way bilingual emersion programs, self-contained ESL, and 50/50 (referring to 50% of the students being English learners and the other 50% English monolingual students). All of those models were of difficult implementation, as bilingual teachers were scarce, TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) training was insufficient, and the transience rate of students in the district was high. Also, as most of the schools in the district operated on a year-round calendar that ran on five tracks, each track had different vacation schedules. The logistics of creating 50/50 classrooms that would accommodate siblings, parent schedules, and trained teachers presupposed the designation of a particular track for L2 students—which might have seemed discriminating to some. In all cases, the regular classroom teacher was the one responsible for all instruction, although the district did allocate a language facilitator for each of the school sites, who divided his or her time at each school according with the numbers of second language students.

The year prior to the beginning of this current research I held the job of a language facilitator in an elementary school. There I had, on average, about 170 students on my roster. The language facilitator's job was ill-defined, and I was thinly spread between helping teachers make accommodations in the curriculum, serving as a home-

school liaison, translating official documents, serving as interpreter at parent conferences, instructing teachers on how to use materials, and testing students using the Language Assessment Scale (LAS) instrument.

Combined, all of the elements described in the previous paragraph, most of which are inherent in large districts and growing communities, posed considerable strain on educators and on the quality of education L2 students received. In the following section, I will describe the school where I did my observations, Woodside Elementary. I urge the reader to keep in mind some of the aspects discussed here as they, either directly or indirectly, influenced and affected some of the decision making, policies, and practices that took place at Woodside.

The School

Woodside Elementary had just done away with its bilingual program in favor of establishing a 50/50 ESL program for L2 students. All second language students had been placed in mainstream classrooms, although most teachers in the school did not hold ESL certification. Many faculty members expressed concerns about this arrangement, as they were unsure of their qualifications to teach L2 students and had reservations about not being able to meet their needs. However, as a site-based managed school that advocated shared decision-making among administrators, faculty, staff, and other community members, Woodside opted to do away with the bilingual program so that they could keep the number of students in the regular classrooms smaller, therefore reducing the student/teacher ratio.

In that way, addressing the needs of second language students had become a major concern for teachers, administrators, and parents. Committees were formed to

discuss how best to implement an effective ESL program that, although it would serve just as a band-aid for this academic year, would begin to take roots and become progressively more effective in time. An important aspect of this plan was to offer training for the faculty so that eventually all teachers in the school would be certified to teach ESL. However, those teacher-training classes were not yet in place at the time of the study. Aided by the language facilitator and supported by reading specialists, teachers made do with the knowledge and skills that were available to them. The following paragraphs present the instructional and curricular resources made available at Woodside with the intent being to benefit second language learners.

Instructional and Curricular Resources

At Woodside there was a full-time language facilitator whose job was to assist the teachers with the implementation of materials and with curriculum accommodations to address the needs of the L2 students. Much like in my own experience as a language facilitator described in the previous paragraphs, her job also included the administration of the Language Assessment Scale (LAS) placement testing for all second language students in the schools. However, once those students were tested and designated as limited-English proficiency (LEP), there was no different placement for these students other than the regular classroom because there was not any special program yet in place for them. Therefore, in many cases the L2 students with limited proficiency, if they were struggling in the classroom, were pulled out of the classroom to receive remedial instruction by reading specialists or by special education teachers. At other times, those specialists would come to visit the L2 students and give them assistance in their home classroom, following the tradition of the cooperative/consultative (CC) model, or more

commonly known as the inclusion model. The CC model generally refers to providing opportunities for students with various disabilities to be included in mainstream classrooms and to partake in learning in the least restrictive environment. In this model the regular education teacher and the special education teacher collaborate to assist the included child. Inclusion practices are part of the general philosophy of Woodside as they vow to provide service to all students in desegregated environments. Ironically, this all-inclusive attitude may have contributed to maintaining the informal mechanisms of ethnic subjugation and inequality as language and cultural diversity became nullified by practices that favored the hegemony of the English language and of the American culture.

Moreover, although originally the idea of inclusion referred to students with disabilities, in this case the concept of a CC model had been extended to include special education services and remedial classes for some L2 students placed in mainstream classrooms. In this way the mental association of second language students with low functioning students became explicit. Therefore, because second language students became generally viewed as cognitively low functioning, instruction became ever more direct, reduced, and focused on procedures rather than transformation. In addition, methods of assessment also contributed to reductive practices and a procedural instructional emphasis for second language students. In the following section I explain these relationships.

Assessment

Adequate ways of assessing L2 students was also a topic of concern at Woodside. While many teachers used holistic methods of assessment, such as keeping a portfolio, the district required that the same report cards, originally designed for the mainstream

student population, be filled out and sent home every trimester to document school achievement. The evaluation of language and literacy development as reflected in the report cards was stated as follows:

I. Reading

- a. Reads well orally
- b. Reads with understanding
- c. Applies acquired skills to new words

II. Oral and Written Expression

- a. Writes legibly with reasonable ease
- b. Expresses ideas well when speaking
- c. Expresses ideas well when writing
- d. Uses correct spelling
- e. Shows originality and creativity

The explanation of marks on the report card clarified to the parents that the evaluated items were marked with letter grades A (excellent achievement), B (above average achievement), C (average achievement), D (below average achievement), and F (failure to meet acceptable standards of achievement) for the broader categories (Reading and Oral and Written Expression) and with E (excellent), S (satisfactory), N (needs improvement), and X (not presently being evaluated) for the subcategories. These letter grades were used to compare individual students to other students in the same grade. Through the use of these comparative methods, the focus of assessment is on legitimization, rather than accounting for development or growth. The items in the report card revealed a general disjuncture between the purposes of instruction and what was

being evaluated. For example, while the purpose of writing instruction may be to provide students with opportunities to develop and organize ideas, to allow students opportunities for communicating thoughts, and to permit students to engage in a dialectical process of reflection, what is being evaluated is “writes legibly and with ease.” However, “writing legibly and with ease” has very little to do with being a capable writer, in the same way that “being able to read well orally” may not be necessary for one to be an effective reader. The focus on the assessment of discreet and observable behaviors implies the teaching of these behaviors. Hence, the purpose of instruction and assessment become geared toward procedural outcomes rather than toward the transforming properties of learning. Although this focus on procedural elements affects monolingual and L2 students alike, this fact proved to be particularly damning for second language learners.

As most of the teachers at Woodside were English monolinguals and the instruction was delivered in English, the evaluation of the report card items was done according to how the children were performing in English. That is, although those skills may have been already present for the student in a native language if they were not demonstrated in English, the teachers had no way of accounting for the students’ progress. Even though most teachers to whom I spoke recognized that this method of accountability seemed unjust, as it didn’t accurately reflect second language students’ language capabilities, they also felt powerless to change it.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement was also an area of concern for the faculty and administrators of Woodside. During an interview with the principal early in the study, she mentioned that it was very difficult to have parents participate in school activities. She said that the

school population was greatly composed of working class families in which both parents worked long hours and therefore did not have the time to volunteer. At the time of the study there were various pre-service teachers interning in this school; therefore, several of the teachers with whom I spoke felt that there was enough adult help in the classrooms. However, they also felt that because parents, particularly those from a different language background, couldn't be more involved in the educational setting, they were not really able to understand the expectations of school as far as academic success, working ethics, policies, etc. That belief was reflected in the affirmations of one of the teachers I interviewed, Mrs. A., as she offered:

“I think that some of the parents [of L2 students] can't help their children succeed in school because they really don't have an insider's eye [with regards to education]. Many of them are not literate themselves, so they don't know what to do to help their children. . . . There are some cultural things that become a factor too, and I want you to put this [statement] in your research. For example, when it rained yesterday, all my Hispanic kids didn't come to school. That has to be a cultural thing—school is just not as important. (Field notes 12-10-00).

These statements regarding cultural differences, although somewhat stereotypical, recognized that there are cultural elements that influence students' school life. They also made evident the disjointedness between primary (home) discourse and secondary (institutional) discourse. Although the teacher knew she was being stereotypical in her assumptions as indicated by her tone and by her asking me that I include her statement in my study, she had at that moment appropriated a secondary discourse voice—the voice of the institution.

Mrs. A. was also the teacher of one of the classrooms I chose to observe. Her expertise was in special education; however, she had some TESL training and also had some knowledge of Spanish, so many of the L2 students were placed in her class. She welcomed having students of diverse backgrounds in her classroom and took pride in having students with disabilities and students from a second language background included in her class. Also, for the three years prior to this study, Mrs. A. had taught multi-age groups with students ranging in age from 6 to 9, for whom she accommodated instruction according to their grade-level abilities. She seemed well versed in the current educational research and claimed to be an adept of whole language. She believed that collaboration within students and a highly dialogical and interactive environment were key elements of classroom life. However, in application, as we will see later in this analysis, these elements weren't completely present in her practice.

The previous discussions describing the school and community where this study was situated served to illustrate some of the social, cultural, and institutional forces that actuated in shaping the classroom discourse. In the following paragraphs I present more specific analyses of data gathered in the community practices of rooms 14 and 23 involving the interactions of native and non-native students. I will then explain how these interactions facilitated second language students' trajectory into legitimate forms of participation.

Room 14

Seven out of the 16 students in Mrs. A. 's second-grade class had also been in her class during the previous year as she had taught a multi-age class. This class composition was interesting to me because it provided an environment organic to the investigation of

how old-timers scaffolded the newcomers in the community. Although I observed interactions among all members of the class, I paid close attention to the interactions between Oswaldo, one of the old timers who had been in Mrs. A. 's class in the previous years and to whom the teacher referred as a "model L2 student" (field notes 11-1-00), and Gerson who was a newcomer to that community and at risk of being tested for special education services. Both of those students were native speakers of Spanish. Oswaldo showed more English proficiency than Gerson. Oswaldo had a natural knack for mentoring other students as exhibited by his general demeanor with students who were perceived to be less competent and also by his nurturing attitude toward his sister. He seemed to have had taken to heart the responsibility to socialize Gerson into the class. Following I provide a description of the two boys and some samples of their classroom interactions with each other and with other members of the class. Then I explain how those interactions played a part in the way Gerson came to be a vested member of that community of practice.

Oswaldo

Oswaldo was an 8 year-old Mexican-American student who had come to this country when he was 2. His father was a woodworker, and his mother worked at a Burger King. Oswaldo had one sister who was in first grade at the time of the study. He took great pride in walking his sister to her classroom every day and helping her with her homework. During one of our interviews he replied, "My favorite thing to do at school is to be with my sister; my favorite thing to do at home is to teach her [to help her with] her homework" (field notes 11-11-00). Although his parents spoke Spanish at home, Oswaldo and his sister spoke in English to each other. He spoke fluent English, resented

being talked to in Spanish, and preferred to be called Oswald rather than Oswaldo. The teacher described him as one of her academically strong students, as she had had him now for two grades in a row; she said, “He is great at math, his English still needs work but it has come a long way” (field notes 11-1-01). He was strategic in his learning of English as evidenced by the many clarification questions he would ask of the teacher. For example, when the teacher was reading a story about a Native American girl, Oswaldo interrupted the teacher to ask many questions about what the words meant (i.e., *algonquin*, *bandage*, *scarred*). He often took the role of tutor for others in the class, particularly when he interacted with other L2 students. The following transcript, taken from an activity in which the students worked with a partner to create the number 34 using base 10 blocks, illustrates this role:

Oswaldo: No, you don't do like this (moving one of the blocks over from the tens to the ones on a place value mat).

Gerson: No?

Oswaldo: No, if you do like this you don't get the powerbucks (a token reward).

Gerson: Oh!

Oswaldo: Here's how you do it, three sticks and four of these [small cubes] (moving all the blocks in the way to represent the number 34).

Gerson: Do you want to be partners for the rest of the day?

Also, the teacher often placed him in the role of a tutor as well by asking him to help others, particularly Gerson, and by reinforcing his actions by saying, “Oh! You are showing him how [to do his project]—That's great!” or “Ask Oswald, if you don't know.” In that way, Oswaldo was perceived as an expert in that class. When I asked one

of the other L2 students what they thought of Oswaldo, she said, “He knows everything. He can even count to 200.” Indeed, Oswaldo could count to 200. He also could recite the months of the year, sing the days of the week, name the four seasons, and sing the multiplication rap and the fraction rock. His handwriting was beautiful, and he was adept at following the stipulated classroom rules.

Oswaldo liked school. On a particular activity sheet, the students were supposed to show how they felt about different school activities by coloring the petals of a flower according to the following coloring scheme:

Red—if you feel really good about it.

Yellow—if you feel pretty good about it.

Blue—If you feel not so good about it.

Oswaldo had colored all the categories red. The categories were reading, writing, listening, math, working with others, talking and sharing ideas, being helpful, and making and having friends. Indeed, Oswaldo had many friends in the class. I now turn to the description and in-depth analysis of one of these friends’ learning experiences in room 14.

Gerson

Gerson was also an 8-year-old Mexican American student. He had been born in this country, but when he entered kindergarten he spoke virtually no English. He had an older sister, Joana, who was now in fourth grade. Gerson’s mother worked as a hotel maid, and his father was a construction worker. The teacher reported that Gerson had poor attitudes toward school. Unlike Oswaldo’s attitude sheet, Gerson’s flower had been colored in the following way: blue (didn’t feel so good about it) for reading, writing,

doing his share of work, listening, being helpful, and talking and sharing ideas; yellow (feel pretty good about it) for making and having new friends and math; and red (feel really good about it) for working with others. In the first stages of this study, the teacher had remarked that Gerson had difficulty in playing with peers. He acted belligerently toward others by hitting, scratching, and picking on them at times. In the classroom Gerson was quiet and reserved. He didn't seem to want to venture to answer questions, and if asked a question directly, he usually mumbled: "Inono [I don't know]." He concealed his works so that others wouldn't see it, and only uncovered it (sheepishly) if the teacher came to check it. Although his English was limited, he seemed to be able to hold a casual conversation. He was self-conscious about speaking Spanish and preferred to speak in English to his L2 peers. However, just like in the pilot study presented earlier in this chapter, although confrontational, his relationships with peers in the class were helping him learn language and learn to position himself in relation to the class. The following section will describe how these interactions facilitated language learning.

Language development. This interaction between Gerson, Alicia, and Damian illustrated how Gerson was learning language through his participation in social activities and through being scaffolded by native speakers, or English language old-timers. Both of the students interacting with Gerson were native speakers of English. This interaction was captured on videotape on 12-13-00.

Gerson (gesturing to Alicia with his two fingers as if he was cutting something, referring to a pair of scissors Alicia had taken from him): Hey, mine.

Alicia (passing the scissors to Damian): No, those are not yours; they are Damian's.

Damian (picking up on the game and hiding the scissors inside his desk):

Scissors?!!!

Gerson (to Damian): Gimme! Mine! Teacher!

Damian (deceivingly): I don't have your scissors.

Gerson (furiously walking to Damian's desk and looking inside it): You taked my scissors! Gimme! Teacher!

Through this interaction, I noticed that although Gerson did not have the appropriate vocabulary word to name what he wanted, he was strategic in gesturing to get his meaning across. Although the conflict was most salient in this interaction, it was also clear that Damian was trying to help him learn the word scissors by emphasizing it in his intonation and by continuing to engage him in the game. As a result, Gerson, motivated to reclaim his property, did learn the word.

Literacy development. The amount and quality of tasks assigned to Gerson many times differed from the majority of the class. For example, during guided reading activities, Gerson was placed in a group with three other students: Sabrina, Karen, and Edson. Sabrina was a second language learner with beginning proficiency in English, and Karen was one of the students with learning disabilities included in Mrs. A. 's class. Edson was a 10-year-old Mexican American who, although he should have been in 5th grade, had been placed in Mrs. A. 's class because he also had been diagnosed with a learning disability, and it had been decided that he could cognitively and socially benefit from interactions with second graders. Most of Gerson's reading group instruction revolved around the development of basic skills such as tracking print, matching words with pictures, circling letters, etc. There was particular emphasis on the procedural

aspects of reading instruction as illustrated by this following passage captured on videotape on 11-13-00.

Gerson (turning to the teacher, looking for permission): My turn [to read]?

Teacher (to Gerson): Yes!

Gerson (resisting): I don't know [how to] read.

Teacher (emphasizing the procedural aspects of reading): Just point to the words and repeat after me.

Gerson (surprised): Oh! That's all?

Teacher (reinforcing the procedure): Yes, to get powerbucks [a token reward] you have to be tracking the print. You have to be engaged in your book.

Gerson then began to track the words and repeat after the teacher. The book the group was reading was at a pre-primer level and had illustrations that matched the text, which was composed of 43 words. It read: "I can be Max the builder. I can be Max the fisherman. I can be Max the king. I can be Max the cook. I can be Max the painter. I can be Max the astronaut. I can be Max in a box!"

After all the children in the group read the book, they went to work on sight word activity sheets. These activity sheets asked the students to trace the letters in the words can, girl, boy, read, and all. Other activities in the sight word package included matching capitalized words to words written in lower case, a cutting and pasting of letters to form the sight words written on the page, a missing letters activity, and a sentence completion activity using the sight words. The tasks on each package provided opportunities for students to practice the same sight words many times over. All the packages formed a unit that always followed the same sequence of activities. The units only differed in the

sight words. That is, each unit had tasks that promoted the memorization of five different sight words. The children seem to be able to work on those packages independently and seemed to enjoy doing so. Gerson did not seem to resist doing those activities; moreover he remarked: "I like to do those 'cause I know how" (field notes 1-24-01). The teacher believed that those activities were beneficial for developing reading skills, especially for second language learners, as evidenced by her comment: "This is an old series [referring to the Dolch sight word activities], but we still use it because it has been very effective with low learners, particularly with second language learners. Many teachers come here to borrow my package because they don't make these anymore" (field notes 1-23-01).

There were two other reading groups in the class. During guided reading instruction those groups read chapter books and held discussion sessions after they were done taking turns reading consecutive passages. The teacher would ask comprehension questions and questions that related the children's experiences to the content of the book. For these groups the content of the book took precedence over the procedural aspects of reading. All of the students who had been with Mrs. A. in first grade were now part of these more advanced groups.

The development of content knowledge. It wasn't just in reading that instruction was modified for Gerson and for the other beginning level second language learners. Many of the tasks in the content areas were simplified as well. For example, during my observations of a lesson on Native Americans, the teacher began by reading the story The Rough Face Girl, about an Algonquin Indian tribe. This was a story about a scarred-face woman who wanted to marry an invisible man. But the legend had it that he would only marry a beautiful woman; however, the scarred-face woman exuded such interior beauty

that she had been chosen to marry the invisible man. Following the story some of the students went on to talk and write about the story. Gerson, Sabrina, Edson, and Karen's task had been modified as a fill-in-the-blank activity about the same topic with a word bank from which the students chose the correct words. It read:

Fill in the blanks using the following words: first, Indians, Native.

The Algonquin people are _____ Americans.

Native Americans were the _____ people to live in America.

Native Americans are sometimes called _____.

In that way, the content of the story became severely reduced to three words, which are not necessarily related to the story itself. During another occasion, Mrs. A. had a student teacher, Mr. P., deliver a lesson on the solar system. The student teacher had been asked to keep in mind the diverse nature of the class and, therefore, to create a lesson that would be easily accessible to the second language students. The lesson began by Mr. P. showing the students a book with rich illustrations of planets, moons, orbits, etc. Then, Mr. P. began a discussion of different aspects of the solar system. They talked about the greenhouse effect, they discussed the moons of Jupiter, and whether life in Mars would be possible. While all students seemed engaged in the lesson, when I asked Gerson what he thought the lesson had been about, he said, "It was about the sun." I then asked whether he understood what Mr. P. was saying, and he answered, "Not everything. I didn't know all the words." When I asked one of the native speakers of English what the lesson had been about, he was very eloquent and detailed in his retelling of the lesson. In considering the second language learners in the class, Mr. P. had the assignment to design and teach a lesson based on the audiolingual method. According to Richards and

Rodgers (1997), the procedures for this method could typically be observed as the following steps:

1. Students first hear a model dialogue (usually read by the teacher) containing key structures that are the focus of the language lesson.
2. Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as the basis for pattern drills of different kinds. These are practiced in chorus and then individually. Some grammatical explanation may be offered at this point, but this is usually kept to a minimum.
3. The students may refer to their textbook; follow-up reading, writing, or vocabulary activities based on the dialogue may be introduced. At the beginning level, writing is purely imitative and consists of little more than copying out sentences that have been practiced. (p. 58)

On the board, Mr. P. had written a few sentences especially for the second language students to practice by reciting aloud and then copying from the board. These sentences were:

The sun is our closest star.

The sun is much bigger than the Earth.

The sun is very far away from the Earth.

It is much farther from us than the moon.

The moon is near compared to the sun.

The underlined words had been written with a different color marker on the board for emphasis. Mr. P. read the sentences aloud and asked the students to repeat after him in several times in chorus. Then the students were asked to copy from the board. The

focus of the lesson was the comparative/superlative grammatical structure in the English language. However, when I asked Gerson why he thought those words had been written in a different color, he answered, “It makes it look nicer!” I also asked him what the sentences were about, and he offered, “They are about how far away things are.”

Gerson’s answers indicated that he had not made a connection between the lesson on the solar system and what was written on the board; furthermore, he hadn’t made sense of the structural aspects of the language being emphasized for him. Therefore, while some students in the class had had a lesson about the solar system, the moons of Jupiter, Venus’ veil, and the canals of Mars, the L2 students’ lesson had been reduced to the recitation of the words closest, bigger, far, farther, and near (words which don’t necessarily bear much relationship with the solar system per se). Gerson’s participation had been even further reduced to copying words from the board since he didn’t understand why those words were even emphasized. This can be largely attributable to the fact that the content of instruction had been too implicit for him to grasp. There were other aspects of the lesson that were equally implicit as exemplified by this excerpt from an interaction between Mr. P. and Edson:

Edson (raising his hand): Mr. P.!

Mr. P. (placing his index finger over his lips to signify “quiet!”): Yes.

Edson: [Are there] black holes?

Mr. P.: Yes.

Edson: What’s inside of them?

Mr. P. (seemingly annoyed): If you want to ask a question, it needs to be a good question. You know what a good question is.

Edson, looking puzzled, was silenced. (field notes 01-23-01)

From this interaction it seemed clear that Edson did not know what Mr. P. meant by his comments of questions. The notion of what a “good question is” was too implicit for Edson to understand. It is reasonable to assume that with time within a community of practice many tacit understandings begin to develop as the level of intersubjectivity heightens. However, it is important to note that because L2 students did not fully participate in the learning community while those understandings were forming, they didn’t have the same access to explicit or implicit information as other members of the community. It is important to point out that I decided to include the examples above of lessons delivered by a student teacher to emphasize that this reduced form of content instruction continues to be taught to pre-service teachers in universities’ ESL methods classes.

That is, while some students were reading chapter books and participating in discussion circles, learning about Native Americans, or about the solar system, they were developing a repertoire of shared knowledge which in turn would translate into high levels of intersubjectivity. At the same time, L2 students such as Gerson, Edson, and Sabrina had been developing a different set of shared knowledge, which was at best tangential to the rest of the class. These differences were reflected in the students’ sense of answers to the question, “What is to learn?” When I asked Marisa, a native speaker of English, that question, she answered, “To learn is when you read, you talk to the people and find out stuff.” When I asked Sabrina the same question, she answered, “Learning is when you spell cat. Then you say: The cat is going to the lake. The duck is going for a walk. The dog is playing. And you practice it over and over until you get them right.”

Socio-historical aspects. When this study first began, Mrs. A. 's class had just come back from a three-week vacation. Gerson arrived at school crying because he didn't want to be back. The teacher pointed out that Gerson was generally immature, maybe because he was babied at home by his mother, and she believed that to be a cultural trait—"Hispanic mothers are doting of their boys especially" (field notes 11-02-00). Mrs. A. was concerned about Gerson's progress and was watching him for possible testing and placement in a special education program. She was aware, however, that Gerson's sister, Joana, had had a "slow start" in school, but by the time she reached 3rd grade she began to perform better in school: "I mean, she is still below grade level, but she's not at the level of special ed" (field notes 11-08-00). Therefore, she saw it as a family trait that perhaps the children were slow starters, so she decided to wait before making the recommendation that Gerson needed to be tested for eligibility to receive special education services. Mrs. A. also saw Joana's progress as beneficial to Gerson because that way she was able to help him with his homework. She declared, "It's a good thing he has a sister. She helps him at home" (field notes 11-08-00).

The parent-teacher conference with Gerson's mother, Maria, had been very emotional. Mrs. A. showed her some of Gerson's papers and told the mother that he was not progressing accordingly to the grade level expectations. She also shared Gerson's report card with the mother, which had many low marks (N's and D's), particularly in the areas of reading and language development. The mother began to cry and say that Gerson didn't like to come to school, he didn't want to do any homework, and she didn't know how to help him. Mrs. A. reassured her that she thought Gerson would blossom, provided that he did his homework, and that she was going to try to get some extra help

for him by having the reading specialist or the special education teacher work with him a few times a week.

Mrs. A. asked that I call the mother, but cautioned me not to give her any unrealistic expectations. She mainly wanted to know whether the mother was feeling better with regards to Gerson's level of interest in school. I waited a few weeks before I called Maria. She said that Gerson was getting better about going to school without resistance, but that he still didn't like going. She asked me to help him with his writing. The following transcripts relate excerpts of our phone conversation on 1-10-01:

Maria: Yo estoy muy contenta que Gerson esta mas acostumbrado en su clase (I am happy that Gerson seems to be getting used to his class.).

El ya esta poniendo espacio entre as palabras. El tenia las palabras hot dog para escribir en su tarea (He is already putting space in between words. He had the words hot dog to write for homework.).

Y yo le digo, "Hijo, ponga las palabritas [hotdog] juntas, pero el me digo, "no llas son separadas, la maestra me hay dicho. (And I told him, "Son, the words are hot dog are spelled together hotdog. But he said, "No, they are spelled separately, my teacher said.").

Oh! OK, le digo, pongalas separadas entonces. Tu sabes que yo no sei nada. Sei muy poquito ingles y yo no puedo ayudarlo en la casa. Yo cuento mucho com mi hija, ella me ayuda mucho con Gerson, pois ella si sabe bastante ingles. (Oh! OK,

I said, then place them separately. You know I don't know anything. I know very little English and I can't help him. I can always count on my daughter. She helps me a lot with Gerson.) .

From that conversation, it became clear that Maria felt powerless to help Gerson. She also felt that any help she could give him might be harmful to his development. Moreover, as noted by the last paragraph of the phone conversation, she had the sense that the primary discourse (or home discourse) was not valued in the context of schools, so her inability to speak English precluded her from being an asset in Gerson's education.

I then interviewed Joana, Gerson's sister, while she was at school one day. I asked her whether she thought that their mom could help Gerson at home. She reiterated her mother's words by saying, "No, she can't help him 'cause she doesn't speak any English. I have to help him" (field notes 1-11-01).

Other incidences of devaluation of home discourse were captured on video tape, as Gerson interacted with two other members of the class, one of whom was a native speaker of English (Aaron) and the other a native speaker of Spanish (Sabrina):

Aaron: Poking Gerson with a pencil. [Provoking him]

Gerson: Stop!!! [Demanding]

Aaron: Continues to poke Gerson. [Antagonizing]

Gerson: If you don't stop, my mom said she will come talk to the teacher.

[Establishing authority]

Aaron: Your mom doesn't speak English! [Taking away authority]

Sabrina: Es cierto, su mama no manda nada aqui. (That's right, your mom doesn't have a voice here.). [Showing solidarity to Aaron]

Although, Mrs. A. had made an effort to include some Spanish in her instruction, to have bulletin boards with words written and to sing songs in Spanish, somehow the children had internalized the understanding that within those institutional walls English was the only language that counted, and if you weren't proficient in English, you could be virtually helpless.

This kind of helplessness was in many ways reflected in Gerson's attitude in school. When given a task, he usually waited until someone came up to help him. Many times the other students just did Gerson's work for him as exemplified in the following passage depicting interaction between Gerson, Oswaldo, and Karen. The students were working on their individual projects following the teacher's reading of Cinderella. In this project, the students had to cut and paste pictures of objects in the story according to the sequence in which they appeared, and then they were to write the correct word to label the object. There was a list of objects on the board from which the students had to pick the correct one to match the picture.

Karen (to Oswaldo): Gerson doesn't know what to do.

Oswaldo (to Gerson): What are you looking for?

Gerson (to Oswaldo—looking for the word shoe on the board to write underneath the picture of a shoe): Teacher say I have to do it all by myself.

Karen (to Gerson): But you're not doing it!

Oswaldo (to Gerson, pointing to the word shoe): Here is shoe.

Gerson (to Oswaldo): Where's pumpkin?

Oswaldo (to Gerson, pointing to the word pumpkin): Here.

Gerson (to Oswaldo): Do you want [to] trade papers? I don't know how [to do the assignment].

Oswaldo (to Gerson): O.K. Here, you take mine.

Gerson often resisted doing the tasks given to him by the teacher. He would say that books given to him were too hard for him to read. The teacher would then ask one of the other children to pair up with him to read. In those cases, Gerson would be generally disengaged from the task while the other child read the book alone. He would also often complain about being too tired to copy from the board. The teacher would then ask him, "just finish one sentence for me" (field notes 1-12-01).

The Journey into Legitimate Participation. As time progressed from October to March, Gerson became more and more willing to participate in activities, such as calendar, which were repeated every day and provided a stable procedural structure that allowed him to know how to conduct himself. By the end of the study, Gerson, like Oswaldo, could count to 200, could recite the months of the year, and could sing the days of the week, the multiplication raps, and the fraction rock. He had internalized the general classroom rules and procedures, even some that were implicit but salient, such as, for example, when the bell rings it's time to line up. His oral language proficiency increased, and he was now much more able to ask for clarification when he didn't understand a word. He also improved greatly on the identification of sight words.

His attitude toward school continued to be somewhat negative as reflected in his exit interview on 02-11-01: "I don't like school. I would rather stay home and play videogames all day." However, he seemed more and more conformed with the fact that he had to be there. He did not act belligerently toward his peers very often anymore, but

he continued to be greatly dependent upon his friends to perform tasks for him. The teacher was very happy with his progress as she exclaimed, “He is turning into a really good student!” She had decided not to recommend him for special education eligibility testing and attributed his success to the basic skill practices, to the level of collaboration he had received from his peers, and to the generally inclusive and highly interactive classroom environment. However, the data presented in this chapter indicate that the teacher’s perception in this regard is inaccurate. As already discussed earlier in this section the levels of collaboration were highly asymmetrical, the skill practices were monological in nature (i.e., fill in the blanks, matching words to pictures, recitation exercises), and although students were allowed to interact, the content of these interactions greatly differed for monolingual students and for L2 students.

Summary. This section on room 14 served to demonstrate that although Gerson made his way to become a participant in his class, the ways in which he came to participate were still peripheral to the rest of the class. That is, through his interaction with old-timers such as Oswaldo, Gerson became aware and learned what was most salient and most valued in that environment, as for example the procedural aspects of school culture as well as the language that went with them. Because those aspects were greatly valued in that classroom setting, in that way he was gaining access to that community of practice. However, he still lacked the shared knowledge that others were developing as a result of their participation in meaningful thinking activities. For Gerson, English, and not necessarily the content, had been the purpose of instruction. In this way he hadn’t had the same access to language that comprised the sorts of information, discussions, and general levels of conversation that the rest of the class had had. Thus, if

one were to envision the process of learning as the process of transformation of biologically determined processes into higher, mediated, and self-regulated psychological functions, this process ultimately became curtailed by the emphasis on procedures that led to indoctrination and skill development. Mirroring the processes of peripheralization found in the larger community described in the beginning parts of this chapter, Gerson, and Oswaldo, as well as the other second language learners in the class (Karen, Sabrina, and Edson), in many ways created a sort of parallel community of practice that developed simultaneously to the one formed by other members of class. This parallel community formed by L2 students exhibited some of the same characteristics as the other group, which included the presence of zones of proximal development, the development of shared knowledge, and the development of intersubjectivities. However, as their resources for learning had been severely diminished by the use of reductive pedagogy, by the devaluation of primary discourses, and by hegemonizing the English language, these students suffered from a form of deskilling of the linguistic capabilities they had already in place. That is, had they been allowed to participate in more dialogical activities, had instructional purposes remained the same for native and non-native speakers, and had they felt free to use their native language and culture as essential mediational tools, in all likelihood they would have had a better chance to become legitimate participants of the community of practice.

In the following section I will narrate my observations of Mrs. B. 's third-grade class that I investigated during the same time as I was investigating Mrs. A. 's class. I made the decision to extend my investigations to another class in order to gain a broader spectrum of communities of practice as well as a different set of parameters.

Room 23

Mrs. B. 's class was a self-contained ESL classroom with a diverse population of students (14 Mexicans, 2 Cubans, 1 Guatemalan, 1 Brazilian) although all but one student were native speakers of Spanish. My interest in this investigation lay on how Ana, a native speaker of Portuguese, and in this case a newcomer, used her linguistic and cultural knowledge to penetrate that community to become a legitimate participant in Mrs. B. 's class.

The Role of Sign Mediation: Language and Culture

As mentioned in the Method section of this study, room 23 was temporarily occupied by a roving class of 18 third-grade students and Mrs. B. During the period of time in which I did my observations, Mrs. B. 's class actually occupied four different rooms; therefore, I will leave out the descriptions of the physical environment of those rooms. Instead, in the following paragraphs I will narrate my observations of the group of people that made up that class and of the way they interacted. Particular attention will be paid to Ana.

Ana

Ana was an 8-year-old Brazilian who had recently arrived in this country. She lived with her mother and her grandparents who had left Brazil because of a traumatic situation. They had been the targets of an armed robbery at the farm where they lived.

The robbers had promised to return and to take Ana as hostage next time. Afraid of this possibility, the family left the country in a hurry. Ana had not finished the second grade yet when they left in August because the school year in Brazil runs from February to December. When they arrived in this country, she was enrolled to begin 3rd grade in

the fall because of her age. As the year began, Ana was placed in a regular education class with mostly native speakers of English. The teacher of that class expressed much frustration at having a student in the class with no proficiency in English. A few weeks passed, and Ana was placed in Mrs. B. 's self-contained ESL class, as school officials thought she would benefit from "a language intensive environment" (field notes 10-28-00).

Ana's language background was varied. Her grandparents were Italians and spoke Italian to her at home, but Ana answered them in Portuguese. Her mom spoke Portuguese and Italian to her. At school Mrs. B. spoke English, and her classmates spoke English and Spanish to her. In the beginning stages of this investigation Ana was very shy and rarely talked to anyone. She was belligerent with the students who approached her and often hit and pinched them if they came too close. The next section will narrate how Ana progressed in her language learning and social skills through the use of her native language and culture as a tools for mediation.

Language mediation. The other students in the class were very curious about Ana. They wanted to hear her talk as they recognized that the language she spoke was in many ways similar to Spanish. So, when Ana attempted to say something, the other children usually laughed as they found the incongruence between Spanish and Portuguese amusing. Maybe for that reason, the students made continuous attempts to initiate conversation. They became so aware of the similarities of languages that they began to notice each other's different accents in Spanish as the following transcript, captured on videotape on 11-18-00, illustrates:

Luiz (initiating conversation with Ana): Como se dice gato en Portugues? [How do you say cat in Portuguese]

Ana (shrugging): ----- [no answer]

Andrea (attempting to maintain communication): Gato, Ana, como se dice? [Cat, Ana, how do you say it?]

Luiz (continuing to attempt to get a response): Yo lo digo asi, "gato," pero Marco lo dice asi, "gaaato." [I say it like that, "cat", but Marco says it like this, "caaat."]

Marco (overhearing Luiz): Teacher, Luiz is making fun of my accent again!

Marco was from Cuba, and his accent in Spanish was different from those who were from Mexican descent. This interaction between students exhibited a high level of meta-linguistic awareness and seemed atypical if compared with monolingual third-graders. The teacher reported that the students had begun to notice these nuances of language since Ana had become a part of their class. She also reported that this group of students really seemed to enjoy language play. Indeed, I often observed the students playing with words. For example, during a small-group center activity in which the students, in pairs, were to read non-fiction books and then discuss their findings, Ana and Ricardo paired up to read a book on spiders. Ricardo did not know how to read in English, and neither did Ana. However, they looked through the pages of the book as though they were reading them and made up an oral text to go with each picture. The transcripts relating that interaction which happened on 1-4-01 follows:

Ana (Looking at a picture of a tarantula): Mira, es uma [Look, it's a]

Ana (Improvising a word for tarantula): Es uma branca de neve. [Look, it's a Snow White]

Ricardo (Agreeing): Si, es una blanca. .branca de nieve y ella esta comiendo.

[Yes, it's a snow white and she is eating]

Ana (turning the page and looking at another picture of a tarantula): Y ahora a

branca de neve esta dormindo. [And now snow white is sleeping]

Although it is difficult to tell whether Ana didn't really know the word for tarantula or whether she purposefully wanted to deceive Ricardo, she nonetheless was able to maintain the conversation, and Ricardo went along with the story. The Portuguese words that Ana used to name the tarantula (Branca de Neve) were easily identifiable in Spanish (Blanca de Nieve) as the words for Snow White, which indicated that Ricardo knew those were not really the words for tarantula.

These language plays indicated high levels of metalinguistic awareness and of linguistic sophistication. Ana used her metalinguistic awareness as a strategic tool to gain language proficiency in Spanish and in English. For example, in the interaction regarding the tarantula, Ana used code-switching between Portuguese and Spanish to get her meaning across. Ricardo appropriated the word branca in Portuguese while mimicking Ana as can be noticed on line 4. When attempting to speak Spanish, Ana often would mistake Portuguese structures or Portuguese words for the Spanish counterparts. However, even when she used Portuguese words to mean things in Spanish, she used the Spanish intonation to make it sound correct; in this way other students were more tolerant of her grammatical or lexical mistakes.

In this manner Ana quickly learned to communicate with her peers in Spanish, and she became aware that she could use the Spanish she had been learning to get the meaning of words in English. That is, if she needed to know what something meant in

English, she would first ask what it meant in Spanish to one of her peers to try to get the meaning. For example, during a small group math activity, Ana and her partners, Andrea and Miriam, were playing a game in which they had to turn up cards that added to 10. As the teacher explained the game to the girls, she used the word shuffle. Ana didn't know what shuffle meant, so she asked Andrea in Spanish. An excerpt of that interaction captured in field notes on 1-13-01 follows:

Ana: Que es shuffle?

Andrea [gesturing as if she had cards in her hand and was shuffling them]: "Tu sabes, barajar." (You know, shuffling)

Ana [recognizing the Portuguese/Spanish similarity]: Oh! Embaralhar, I know.

By this time in the study, around the middle of January, the teacher reported that "Ana had come out of her shell," and that she was not the same quiet girl she had been when she first entered the class (field notes 1-7-01). The teacher also pointed out that even Ana's drawings reflected the progress in her integration with the class. As one of the daily assignments, the students had to do a journal entry and draw a picture to go with the text they had written. The teacher allowed the students to write in their Native language if they so wished, so Ana wrote her entries in Portuguese. Although the teacher didn't read Portuguese, she could tell by the pictures that the texts Ana wrote were autobiographical. Her entries, dated from the beginning of her year at school, showed the pictures drawn on the margins of the page, and those drawings became progressively more centered on the page, perhaps illustrating Ana's own journey into becoming a more meaningful participant in the class. When I asked her about the pictures in her journal, she said that she didn't want to talk about that because she had some secrets that she kept in there.

That answer alerted me to the fact that her entries were truly personal to her and, therefore, maybe the pictures that she drew were reflective of her experiences.

Cultural mediation. In early January the teacher reported that Ana spoke Spanish to friends in the class and that her English was developing remarkably fast, but that she was very self-conscious of speaking Portuguese in front of her peers because she thought they would make fun of her. However, during one of my visits to the class earlier in the study (10-28-00) to establish rapport with the children, I played a few Brazilian folk games (Amarelinha, a type of Hopscotch and Tapete Mágico, a variation of Musical Chairs) and sang to them some Brazilian folk songs in Portuguese. The children in the class were very interested in the games and were very curious about the words in the song. At that point Ana was still very shy in the class, so although she was familiar with the songs and the games, she refused to participate. As the students demonstrated interest, Ana also became more interested, and although she did not participate, she kept asking me for more. Several of the children in the class said that they had played similar games either with their parents or with neighbors and were eager to point out those similarities and differences. When I interviewed Ana later that day she indicated that she had found interesting the fact that those students had an idea of how the games were played. A partial transcript from that interview follows.

Me: Voce gostou de brincar de Amarelinha com agente (Did you like playing Amarelinha with us)?

Ana: Nao, mas eu gostei de ver eles brincando (No, but I liked watching them playing).

Me: Porque voce gostou de assistir (Why did you only like watching)?

Ana: Porque eles ja sabiam brincar sem nem precisar falar nada (Because they already knew how to play the game without even telling them how).

At that moment it seemed that Ana had recognized that she had other commonalties with the students than just language similarities. That recognition gave her a greater sense of solidarity with the rest of the children. This sense of solidarity was marked by the fact that I often observed Ana trying to get allies against the teacher. Although Ana remarked that she loved her teacher, at times in order to get her way she took advantage of the fact that the teacher didn't speak Portuguese and that Ana's Spanish was more fluent than that of the teacher. For example in one instance the teacher asked the students to put their journals inside their desks and to come to sit on the rug for a story. I heard Ana whisper to Marcy who was sitting next to her:

Ana [conspiring]: Haga de conta que nao entendistes (Pretend you didn't understand [what the teacher just asked]).

Marcy [concurring]: Si, quedamonos aqui (Yes, we stay here)!

Ana also learned quickly that she could use this sense of solidarity to gain status in the class. For example, although the teacher reported that she continually refused to speak in Portuguese, several times when I visited the class she spoke to me in Portuguese very deliberately and tried to call attention to herself. It seemed as though Ana did that in an attempt to show her friends that because she knew how to speak Portuguese she and I had something in common that the others didn't have. That is, she had understood that she knew something that the others didn't and was empowered by that knowledge. This fact seemed to have given Ana a sense of authority. During an interview I asked her whether she liked to speak in Portuguese with me rather than in Spanish or English. She

remarked, “Eu gosto de falar em Portugues com voce porque eles nao sabem o que agente esta dizendo. (I like to speak in Portuguese to you because they [the other students and teacher] don’t know what we are talking about)” (field notes 12-03-00). The following section will narrate some of the other ways Ana attempted to gain status in the class.

Gaining status—the journey to legitimate participation. Ana purposefully and continuously tried to be noticed. She tried to direct attention to herself by poking other students with a pencil, constantly calling out to the teacher, and tattling on other students.

She was speaking mostly in English now and didn’t seem to want to speak Spanish to her friends anymore. If she didn’t know a word in English, she would say nothing at all. During one of my visits late in January, Ana was doing a small group center activity with two other girls, Angela and Ivone. This episode, captured on video tape on 2-13-01 developed in the following way:

Ana (whispering in Angela’s ear): - - - - - [unintelligible]

Angela (whispering back): - - - - - [unintelligible]

Ana (whispering in Angela’s ear and suddenly stops and utters out loud): How do you say. . . .?

Angela (whispering in Ivone’s ear): - - - - - [unintelligible]

Ana (frustrated that she had failed to maintain conversation with Angela, shouts out): Teacher!!! They are telling secrets about me!!!

The teacher corrected Angela and Ivone by sending them to another center, which left Ana alone to do her task. What caught my attention in this episode was the fact that in the past Ana would have resorted to Spanish before she would let conversation stop. The teacher reported that she was avidly trying to speak only in English now, although

she wasn't always successful in getting her meaning across. That fact indicated that perhaps Ana had internalized that knowing English was what counted (although the teacher made conscious efforts to include and to allow Spanish and Portuguese to be spoken in the class) and understood that by speaking English she would gain status in the class. However, in the same way that the knowledge of Portuguese served as a scaffold for Ana to learn Spanish, her knowledge of Spanish had served as a scaffold for her to learn English. Moreover, it had allowed her to establish intersubjectivity and cultural solidarity with others in the class. Ana was letting go of the very resources that in many ways had helped others realize their own linguistic capabilities, and that awareness had potentially transformed the classroom context. Those resources were relinquished in favor of her fitting in within the more dominant culture. Ana's willingness to give up those resources was reflective of the struggles her family was having in becoming established in the community, as the next section will explain.

Socio/historical aspects. When I first interviewed Dora, Ana's mother, at the beginning of the study (on 10-30-00), she was concerned about Ana's school progress. Dora mentioned that Ana refused to do her homework, that she didn't want to go to school, and that she complained about the other children making fun of her. She also seemed preoccupied with the fact that school officials had changed Ana to Mrs. B.'s class although Dora recognized that Ana was happier in this new class than she had seemed to be in the previous class. The mother wanted Ana to learn English quickly as indicated by the following interview transcript.

Dora: Ela reclama muito dos amiguinhos que estao sempre zombando dela (She is always complaining about the kids making fun of her).

Eu comprei um monte de jogos para o computador para ela aprender ingles. Nos a obrigamos ficar no computador pelo menos duas horas por dia (I bought a lot of computer games for her to learn English. We [Dora and Ana's grandparents] make her stay on the computer at least two hours every day).

Eu nao quero que ela sofra como eu. Agora [como adulta] ja esta mais dificil para aprender [ingles] (I don't want her to suffer like me. Now [as an adult] is much harder to learn [English]). (Field notes 10-30-00)

Dora was taking English classes and working as a housekeeper since they had arrived from Brazil in August. They had brought some funds from Brazil with the intention to open an Italian restaurant, but those funds were quickly dwindling. The grandfather, Roberto, reported that he was having many difficulties in getting the bureaucratic aspects of the business taken care as documented by the following transcripts:

Roberto: Tudo e muito dificil aqui. Agente veio com a ideia que ia ser tudo melhor, mas parece que agente esta sempre remando contra a corrente (Everything is so difficult here. We came with the idea that everything would be better, but it seems like we are constantly swimming against the current).

Me: O que por exemplo [sao suas dificuldades] (What for example [are your difficulties])?

Roberto: Tudo! E tudo muito difícil sem apoio nenhum. Gracias a Deus pelo menos eu sei falar a língua. (Everything! Everything is hard without any support. Thank God at least I can speak English). Porisso posso me virar por aí (That way I can at least get by).

Porisso também quero que a Ana aprenda inglês o mais rápido possível (That's also why I want Ana to learn English as soon as possible). (Field notes 12-07-00)

The family continued to struggle with trying to find necessary resources to become established in the community. In March, during one of my last observations in Ana's class, Mrs. B. informed me that Ana and her family were leaving the country to go back to Brazil.

Summary. Ana's case served to illustrate the fact that many of the same elements that influenced Gerson's development were also present here. For example, like Gerson, through the course of this study (October to March) Ana progressively gained English proficiency and became a more active participant of that class through her interactions with old-timers. Also in congruency with Gerson's case, Ana's case demonstrates that the process of achieving high intersubjectivity with classmates became fundamental in the trajectory to full participation in communities of practice. In addition, it was notable that, as in Gerson's case, some of the converging social, cultural, and historical forces both contributed and limited Ana's development. These forces were contributing in the sense that, as the students felt free to express themselves in their native language, they provided her with an organic scaffold to develop language and literacy. These forces were limiting because Ana soon learned to devalue her own language and culture and was willing to abandon those resources in order to reinvent her self. Therefore, through the

investigations of rooms 14 and 23 it became evident that these two cases support the idea that the process of language learning for L2 students included in mainstream classrooms is not the process of learning discreet language skills. Rather it is a process of reconceptualization of the self as a result of participation in social activity. This process involves a centripetal movement of L2 students from the margins to the mainstream culture. In the case of this study, this movement was in many ways propelled and complicated by the ambiguity of institutional and social discourses that shaped, and was shaped by, the larger society and community, which ultimately served to reduce opportunities for development.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study was concerned with second language and literacy learning as a result of students' social interaction and with the trajectory of second language learners from newcomers to legitimate participants in communities of practice. This learning influences, and is reciprocally influenced by, the social, cultural, and historical context as students participate in activities. These concerns were viewed through the lens of sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, and discursive psychology. In the following section, I will discuss the results of this study in light of these views by returning to the questions that guided this investigation. I will then consider the theoretical and practical implications of my findings as well as make suggestions for further research. However, I will first discuss the limitations of the study.

Limitations

The main limitations of this study lie in the inherent difficulties of explication of all its complexities. That is, as it primarily focuses on the learning processes of L2 students and on the social, cultural, historical, and institutional elements that were related to this learning, what is presented here indicates only a facet of these intricate webs of relationships.

Also, the linearity of this narrative is artificial in relation to how these events happened in reality. Notions of timing, turn taking, rate of speech during interactions, and gesturing are aspects involved in the complexities of the development of

intersubjectivities and the development of a second language; however, the investigation of these aspects would entail a different research design and, therefore, are largely missing from this study.

In addition, the facts that I have been an elementary school teacher for many years and that I began my teaching career in Brazil both enhanced and limited this study. Being a participant of school institutions in two different cultures provided me with the opportunity to appropriate and internalize elements of these two systems. This process may have afforded me with an idiosyncratic view of teaching and learning and participating in educational contexts. Also, by being a second language learner and a researcher of second language learning, I became aware of my own thinking processes through becoming bilingual and bicultural. In this way, the awareness of my own internalized processes may have influenced the way I understand L2 learning.

While these factors may have colored my interpretations, I have made no attempt to suggest that it was my intention to provide a purely objective analysis of my research topics. In fact, it is my fundamental belief that it would be impossible to detach myself from the study. However, I have been clear about the subjective nature of this study, I have documented my participation throughout the research, and I have couched myself in the relevant theoretical underpinnings to provide support for my assumptions. Also, my intentions were not in any way to generalize the results to other settings and/or participants. Instead, this research aimed to particularize, or to understand the particulars of, the circumstances of the specified L2 students included in the two primary mainstream classrooms studied. While considering these limitations, I now turn to the discussion of the questions that motivated my research.

What were the factors that influenced second language students' access to legitimate peripheral participation in a language integrated primary classroom?

For each of the classrooms I observed, in relation to the results it became apparent that there were definite social, historical, cultural, and institutional elements that influenced second language learners' access to legitimate peripheral participation in both classrooms with which this study was concerned. However, for each of the classrooms I observed, these elements played out quite differently; therefore, I will discuss these elements in relation to each class.

Room 14

Although the students in room 14 had ample opportunities to use language as a tool for social mediation, as evidenced by designated times for center work during which the students were encouraged to collaborate, the data showed that the students used language in largely reductive ways. That is, most of the time the students' interactions were largely regulated by the tasks in which they were engaged. These tasks afforded the students little autonomy of performance as they were highly prescriptive (particularly those reserved for L2 students) in how they were to be enacted and were presented frequently in the form of worksheets. In this way, the students' interactions revolved around how to perform the task correctly, or how to do what they had been told. These types of interactions were essentially monological in nature and involved unidirectional transfers of information as opposed to opportunities for meaningful manipulation of linguistic signs. Therefore, in that context, the English language was hegemonic as was the language of the teacher and the language that permeated those prescribed activities that were predominant in that situation. Also, the fact that tasks the students were

performing were dichotomized into a right and a wrong way of doing them generated high levels of competition among the students. They were often observed in power conflicts involving asymmetries of procedural or conceptual knowledge. Interestingly, the teacher, admittedly informed by language and literacy research, attributed the success of her students to the amount of collaboration and to the frequent opportunities for interactions she provided for them. She also felt that basic-skill activities were essential for the development of these students, although she recognized that this approach was not aligned with the latest research. When I asked her why she had the students work on discrete skills by using worksheets, she indicated that she felt that the students needed that type of skill drills to learn and to pass the end of the year tests, and that it was her job to teach them. That is, the teacher in room 14 felt that worksheets were the physical evidence of children's learning and that this learning could then be transposed to the report cards by the way of grades, and ultimately accounted for in normative tests.

While equipping students with the essential skills they need to succeed in school may seem a noble rationale for instruction, this case may also be seen as an example of misguided philanthropy. That is, this reduced use of language, the exaltation of procedural displays, and the hegemonizing of the voice of authority presuppose a distinction between the knower and known that contributes to exclusionary patterns and perpetuates marginal participation. It is important to also note that these practices mirror the ways of institutional discourse, and therefore the institutional elements of the classroom are heightened in comparison to sociocultural or sociohistorical elements. Although L2 students' access to language and literacy learning was largely influenced by these seemingly stifling conditions, L2 students did come to participate in the community

of practice of room 14 although largely in a peripheral fashion. They mostly learned how to speak and actuate according to the stipulated procedural aspects of classroom life and appropriated to a large extent the language and patterns of secondary (institutional) discourse—in many ways the same language and patterns of discourse used to oppress these L2 students.

Meanwhile, the mainstream students in the class were developing a different sort of shared knowledge that involved more dialectical language activities and higher order thinking. It was also noticed that the L2 students in that class by and large formed their own community of practice with their own sorts of shared knowledge. The L2 community of practice in many ways ran parallel to the mainstream community much in the same way as it has been historically documented in the case of minority populations in the society at large. Although in both classrooms I observed there were social, historical, cultural, and institutional elements that influenced the students' learning, the loudest voice within the discursive context of room 14 was undoubtedly that of the institution. With that in mind, I now present a discussion of my examination of room 23 which will serve as another referential point for the concluding parts of this section.

Room 23

As in room 14, the children in room 23 also had ample opportunities for language interactions. However the type of activities that the students engaged in were qualitatively different than the ones in room 14, affording more meaningful manipulation of linguistic signs. There the students were asked to write narratives, to participate in discussion circles, to explore scientific experiments, and to answer open-ended questions. Although there were some guided activities that emphasized skill building, these were

kept to a minimal part of the day and were usually taught within a larger conceptual context. Also, even though Mrs. B. was primarily English monolingual, and although the English language was still privileged, the students were free to make use of their native language and registers as part of their linguistic repertoires. These repertoires became tools for participating and making meaning in learning activity.

Moreover, the participants regularly strategically utilized hybrid language practices involving multiple codes and registers that enhanced the possibility of dialogue, interpretation, and thus learning. Such practices facilitated the creation of multiple zones of proximal development, the attainment of intersubjectivity in relationships, and therefore the establishment of communities of practice.

Also, the students were encouraged to use different forms of creativity and self-expression through writing, drawing, and playing. These practices allowed the students to draw on local knowledge, on cultural practices, and on personal experiences to make meaning. These practices provided different ways of demonstrating competence, which in turn afforded possibilities for non-normative evaluations. In that way the forms of assessment room in 23 moved away from the notion that failure and success were the only categories for identification of children, and as a result the L2 students were to a certain extent more able to attain legitimate forms of participation.

In presenting the two classrooms, my purpose is not to villainize either teacher nor did the methods in this study call for a discrete point comparison of one class over the other. Rather my aspiration was to make evident the fact that although social, cultural, historical, and institutional elements of course were present in both contexts, they were privileged and understood in different ways. However, as I sought to study two

classrooms to amplify my source of data and to gain another set of parameters, certain comparisons were inescapable.

In room 14, institutional elements such as norms and procedures were elevated while social, historical, and cultural aspects of learning were in some cases misinterpreted and largely invalidated. Therefore, in room 14 students' participation was reduced to only one level of legitimization: the institutional discourse level.

In room 23 social, cultural, and historical elements were valued above the institutional discourse. Therefore the students were able to gain access to and to participate in these various aspects that make up the classroom discourse. Thus, in examining the question posed in the earlier parts of this study of what are the elements that favor legitimacy of participation for L2 students, the answer still remains that all social, cultural, historical, and institutional elements are potentially contributing or constraining to the access of L2 students to legitimate forms of participation. Rather, it was the way those elements played out and were utilized in a given context that dictated the degree of legitimacy and the quality of participation of L2 students in the two classrooms in the study. The degree and quality of legitimacy of participation for the various members of a community of practice in many ways shaped and transformed the communities in rooms 14 and 23. Reciprocally, as those communities became increasingly more dynamic in their participatory structures, they served to shape and to transform individuals' sense of self in relation to the community of practice. To expand on the discussion of the role of legitimate peripheral participation in the development of L2 students, I now turn to the second question that guided this study.

What role does access to legitimate peripheral participation play in the development of English language and literacy as an essential medium of classroom interactions?

Through the examination of the communities of practice in rooms 14 and 23 it became evident that access to legitimate forms of participation greatly contributed to these students' development of language and literacy skills. Recursively, the development of English language and literacy skills also contributed to the students' access to legitimate forms of participation. As language and literacy are essential mediums of classroom interactions, it is important to emphasize the role of language in the interactions that formed those communities of practice. To offer an examination of these roles, I adopted the principles of discursive psychology already delineated in Appendix B, and based the investigation of this question on the notion that the mind of any human being is constituted by the discourses in which they are involved, private and public. Therefore in considering the role of language and literacy learning in communities of practice it becomes necessary to first consider the discursive nature of that context. That is, by becoming a legitimate participant in a community of practice L2 students not only learned the linguistic structures that were salient and permeated their classroom contexts, but they also internalized these elements and organized them into a way of thinking within that community; furthermore, this way of thinking appeared to have become laden with the emotions, values, and attitudes of the discourse as well. The discourse the students inhabited, then, contributed to the development of a sense of self. Although it is thought that all members of a discourse community are influenced by this process, for reasons of brevity I will focus on the narratives of Gerson and Ana to further expand on these aspects.

Gerson

When I first began my investigations in Gerson's class, he was belligerent and angry. In view of his anger the teacher gave him a worksheet to color, entitled: "Getting to know your anger," which had many thermometers drawn on it. Gerson's task was to color the thermometers to indicate how angry he felt about different aspects of daily classroom life (e.g., You are called a name you hate, Your bike was stolen, You think people are telling secrets about you). The only thermometer that Gerson had colored up to the top indicating "extremely angry" was one labeled, "You feel angry when you are trying to tell someone something and they are not listening." The other thermometers were colored only to the bottom levels or left blank. That activity although rather simplistic, seemed telling of the way Gerson perceived himself within that community—as though he didn't really have a voice.

As suggested by the data, Gerson's mother felt the same way as she indicated that she didn't know how to speak English, therefore she knew nothing and couldn't help her son with schooling. It was also noted that Gerson had appropriated this same sense of helplessness as his mother expressed in the face of having failed to provide the correct answers for her son's homework. In that way not just the English language, but also the institutional discourse had again spoken louder in pointing out the mother's inadequacies in terms of schooling. That voice was also validated by Gerson's comment, "No, the teacher says hot dog is spelled separately!" The teacher's voice then had embodied the voice of authority that differentiated those who know from those who don't. As knowledge can be taken as a synonym for power the words of the teacher's voice served to disempower Gerson's mother, and ultimately, Gerson himself. Moreover, Gerson's

development of helpless attitudes was further reinforced by the fact that other students were assigned to help him with various tasks. By the end of my investigations in room 14, Gerson hardly did anything without asking for help. The other students in the class often directed themselves to Gerson's desk and offered to help him. Many times he just let others completely do his tasks for him. These examples serve to provide evidence that Gerson's sense of self was being shaped by discursive practices that were well in place in the larger society and in room 14.

It was also notable in the data that the discursive practices present in the school context also served to oppress the teacher as she also at times felt powerless to change or counteract institutional discourses. That was evident in the data by the fact that her pedagogical content knowledge was often in direct contradiction with her choices to instruct the students in the ways that opposed research-based practices in order to document progress on report cards and normative tests. In this way, the teacher and students alike seemed to be subjected to the appropriation of official discourses in ways that implied obedience.

As has already been discussed in earlier parts of this chapter, the community practice of room 14 was marked by the precedence of official forms of discourse; therefore, it didn't seem surprising that they were manifested in the language with which the students and the teacher came to speak and think. I will now turn to Ana's circumstances to investigate the role of language and discourse in shaping and transforming herself in her trajectory toward legitimate participation in the community practices of room 23.

Ana

Much like Gerson, Ana's sense of self in relation to the community of practice of room 23 emerged through the discursive practices available in that context. As a newcomer to the community, Ana expressed frustration at the fact that she wasn't able to speak the language (although Ana spoke Portuguese and Italian fluently). She became belligerent with other students and resistant to the teacher. Like Gerson, Ana experienced a sense of helplessness in the beginning of the year when she began her journey to become a legitimate participant in her class. She was silent for a period of time, and when asked a question she usually shook her head no. However, she quickly learned to speak Spanish with other members of the class whose native language was Spanish.

At that point Ana was starting to belong. Along with the Spanish language, Ana was also learning English and starting to make sense of her environment through the creative use of language play and through the use of hybrid language practices. In about four months (October-January) Ana had made tremendous progress in her oral development of English. However, it wasn't long before she realized that English was the language of the school and began to speak less and less in Portuguese or Spanish in spite of her teacher's acquiescence that Ana was to use whatever language she felt most comfortable. The hybrid practices and the language plays were no longer observed as of mid-January.

In February the teacher reported that Ana had turned into a tattletale. She constantly called out to the teacher to report the injustices perpetrated onto her by her classmates. The teacher also reported that Ana acted as a victim and that the other students were becoming annoyed with her. Through the predominant institutional discourses and also from home discourses, Ana may have appropriated the notions of her

powerlessness—a victim. For example, during an interview with Ana’s mother, Dora, she expressed that she was having difficulties in filling out work applications because she didn’t know English and that she felt “invalida” (like an invalid) without being able to communicate with others (although, like Ana, Dora spoke fluent Portuguese and Italian). Once again it can be noticed that the discursive forces of the institution and of the society at large send out clear messages of normalization and of obedience.

To conclude the discussion of the discursive properties of language that contribute to the creating, shaping, and transforming the shared knowledge found in the communities of practice of concern to this investigation, I draw on Foucault’s (1977) examinations of the role language plays in shaping and sustaining institutions in modern society. His examinations were in agreement with Nietzsche’s ideas of obedience as he claimed that “the role of official discourse, central to institutions of our society, is to control the individual, to neutralize his whim, and to alter his conduct by indoctrinating him into codes of procedures and discipline” (p. 81). Foucault was also of the opinion that man has not progressed as far as he might have, and one of the reasons is that in the attempt to temper the human soul, notions of obedience, subordination, public spirit, and modesty become highly praised and therefore readily perpetuated. He claims that this perpetuation of conformity can be observed in schools as they function as temples of indoctrination for our society. Therefore, institutional forces, abetted by bureaucratic authority, send out clear messages of normalization, which not only condemn elements of creativity but also see creativity as a threat to its stability.

Thus, it is important to reiterate that while L2 students were being identified or associated with low functioning students, were being resistant and belligerent, and

further, seemed unproductive. What became evident through this study was that this attribution was actually the opposite. In the cases of Gerson and Ana, those students were indeed cognitively capable as evidenced by how furiously they learned English. Particularly in the case of Gerson, not only did he learn English but, although reduced, he also learned the content that was available to him through instructional practices. Moreover, these students also learned the tacit nuances of the discourses that they participated in and how to resist oppression through the use of cultural/linguistic resources available to them (e.g., belligerence, silence). But ultimately, they learned to be powerless within the institutional discourse.

Conclusions

Through the observations and discussions presented in this section it was found that second language learning is dynamically situated in social, cultural, historical, and institutional context. When inhabiting these contexts, students forged social relationships and developed shared understandings with classmates as a result of their participation in the classroom practices. In this way these students essentially learned the ways to participate in English dominant communities through the development and reconceptualization of a sense of self as agents within a classroom activity system.

The most salient conclusion points to the need to depart from a deficit view of second language learners that pathologizes native language and culture and attempts to normalize students. It also points to the need to depart from the view of second language learning as a process of input-output of utterances in the target language that treats language learning as a discrete skill, the mind as an apparatus analogous to a computer, and the self as a fixed entity.

Through the analysis of the data it also became clear that the discourses of students' needs and purposes in learning are incongruent with teachers' assumptions of what needs to be taught. What school administrators may think constitutes quality education is also often discrepant with what the body of research suggests as best practices. The discourses of schools are also in disparity with home discourses. This general disjointedness of discourses point to an inherent unreliability of language (i.e., language inconsistencies between what is said, what is meant, and how it becomes enacted within interactions). This characteristic of verbal communication poses difficulty for the L2 learner as he/she appropriates all these elements in the process of enacting the self. With the discussions and conclusions presented in this chapter in mind, I now turn to the implications of this study for teaching and offer suggestions for further research.

Implications for Teaching

This research provided support for the fact that learning to operate in a second language involves complex processes of reconceptualization of the self. This process originates in the social realm of activities, is mediated by discursive elements involving not only language but cultural/historical/institutional elements, and becomes internalized. Therefore, as a result of participating in these activity systems, the individual becomes transformed, and, in turn, transforms the context as well.

Without a clear understanding of how this process occurs and of the elements that afford this transformation, L2 development becomes reduced to the most marginal functions of language. That is, if one doesn't take into consideration the complexities of this system, language is regarded only as a code that enables the processing of information. In this way speakers and writers are regarded as encoders and senders of

information-bearing messages, while hearers and readers are receivers and decoders (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993). Emphasis is then placed on the efficiency with which this process is accomplished. In this way basic-skill practices are seen as a vital component of language and literacy instruction for L2 learners, and the principal value of language becomes to decipher procedural codes. Thus, language and literacy are viewed as fragile gifts instead of as essential human tools of mediation. Also, as these practices are mechanistic in nature and in many ways void of respect for the L2 students' linguistic, cultural, and historical repertoires already in place when children come to school, these students are stripped of essential resources with which to mediate their environment.

This perspective has served to maintain the status quo as it leads to the disempowerment of L2 students. That is, as training in basic skills primarily involves the transmission of information instead of meaningful acts of cognition, it replaces opportunities for the development of higher order thinking. Also, the devaluation of L2 students' home discourse and culture leads to the internalization of a diminished sense of self and to self-deprecating attitudes as it permeates through the institutional discourses in which they participated in that these students are viewed as generally unfit.

Therefore, to counteract these effects principally in regards to the implications of this study for teaching, I suggest that it is necessary first to focus on the entire scope of learning processes of L2 students. This emphasis foregrounds the need to find out what resources these students have available to accomplish their plans, projects, and intentions. It foregrounds the need to find out what repertoire of usable sign systems these students may have available, and what their capacities are for the use of words and other signs. Without these understandings, such students are being severely underestimated. In the

following section I will expand on the notion that theory, research, and practice are virtually inseparable elements of classroom life; therefore, if we are to make meaningful changes in pedagogical practices, it is also important to refocus the way we do research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Research in the area of second language learning has traditionally disregarded the broader context as the focus of examination in favor of the analysis of individual levels of language gains. Moreover, traditional research, in line with traditional cognitive psychology, has substantiated the human mind as an apparatus analogous to computers, and, in this tradition, second language acquisition has been treated as a series of skills involving input/output in the target language. Based on this view, factors that influence L2 learning are often associated with measurable behaviors or fixed traits, and are often in abstraction from the circumstances of the environment the learner inhabits. In this way L2 research has been largely dominated by scientific objectivism, a research paradigm that aims to define and legitimate standards of normality that individuals are to take as a rule of life.

Ironically, conducting second language research based on these epistemological views may play an important role in the perpetuation of some of the elements described in this research as contributing to the marginalization of the L2 population. That is, this type of research often yields dichotomized assumptions based on notions of equivalence that fundamentally dictate truisms. By having the authority to interpret normality, this type of research also has the potential to define others as deviant or abnormal and to subject them to various forms of treatments and interventions. Therefore, if we continue to do research in this positivistic tradition in favor of objectivity, the underlying

implication is that there is a correct way of interpreting phenomena, or of using language, or of reading text. However, in regards to the notion of objectivity, consideration must be paid to the fact that this type of investigation is also dependent on the observer's frame of reference. This means that there is nothing inherently true about the knowledge that grounds the professional practices and discourses guided by this type of research.

It is essential that second language research move away from a methodology that gives way to simplistic interpretations of language learning and toward the investigation of activity systems that afford and situate this learning. This movement becomes imperative if we are to understand research as an integral part of praxis, and as such, a moral and political act with profound implications for ethical practices and a just society.

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APPENDIX A
A DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Activity Theory. Activity Theory is a unified account of Vygotsky's original proposals on the nature and development of human behavior. Specifically, it addresses the implications of his claim that human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity (Lantolf, 2000).

Apprenticeship. The collaborative processes through which novices, working side-by-side with mentors, gain from the latter's experience and gradually assume increasingly important roles in joint projects (John-Steiner, 2000).

Banking Concept of Education. A relationship that mirrors the oppressor-oppressed status in which the teacher deposits his knowledge into the students as ignorant receptacles (Freire, 1970).

Community of Practice. Participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means for their lives and their communities. . . .A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary to make sense of its heritage (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 92).

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material signs like gestures, facial expressions, linguistic shapes, and sounds. Through these mediational means, or sign operations, “external social interactions become internalized, i.e., reconstructed internally, as psychological processes—ways of thinking, modes for learning.” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 134).

Intersubjectivity: It is a way of experiencing the world in similar basic dimensions, processes, and content. To the degree that intersubjectivity is present, that values are alike, the more cooperation is possible. . . The development of intersubjectivities is a consequence of profound importance for the individual development, for a satisfying community life, and for the perpetuation of culture. (Gallimore, Tharp, & John-Steiner, 1992).

Language. The word, by nature, is already resonant with a multitude of conflicting voices always seeking an answer from other words embodied in other voices. In that way, language is living, dialogical discourse (Bakhtin, 1994).

Legitimate Peripheral Participation. It is one of the essential premises of the community of practice framework. It emphasizes the notion that learning occurs as newcomers fulfill various peripheral roles alongside more experienced or competent members in community practice, as they gradually become able to fully participate in such contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Mediation. According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory, cognitive development can be understood as the transformation of biologically determined processes into higher, mediated, and self-regulated psychological functions. Specifically, Vygotsky believed that the transformation of cognitive processes begins when children start to use language (speech) in order to guide, plan, and monitor their own activities. This use of language for

self-regulation can be identified as private speech, which signals the onset of "purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence" (p. 24).

Situated Learning. Situated learning is the idea that learning is located within the institutional, cultural, social, and historical context (Toohey, 1996).

Zone of Proximal Development. The difference between what the novice can do alone and what the novice can do in the presence of a more capable participant. More specifically, the inter-psychological exchange between individuals of unequal abilities serves as a scaffold for the novice to further develop existent competence (Lantolf, 1994).

APPENDIX B

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review examined the literature most pertinent to this study, within the realm of second language learners' literacy and language development related to (a) community of practice; (b) activity theory; (c) discourse and language; and, (d) critical pedagogy. Each one of these areas, juxtaposed, made up the theoretical framework that drove this study. As will be evident at the conclusion of this review, the examination of classroom life in light of these combined theories suggested the need for the current study.

Community of Practice

What Lave and Wenger (1991) referred to as the ideas of community of practice of legitimate participation have already been discussed in the introductory portions of this study. I would thus like to focus on the literature that reflects the practical implications of such concepts, particularly for second language learning.

Studies reveal how the individualizing social structures and interaction routines of classroom practices exclude English learners from the kind of participation important for language acquisition, learning, and the development of identities of competence (Flowerdew, 2000; Toohey, 1998; Willet, 1995). For instance, in the first-grade classroom studied by Toohey (1998), the desks of the English learners were clustered at the front of the room under tight teacher surveillance, where the children had little opportunity to converse with their English-speaking peers. In addition, practices that had to do with individual management of material resources necessary for task completion

(such as crayons, scissors, glue, books, etc.) contributed to the increasing marginalization of students. Toohey (1998) observed that children had desks in which they stored their individually purchased materials and were reminded frequently of the need to use their own materials, bring their own books and so on, and that the borrowing of materials was discouraged and often reprimanded. This practice served to reinforce the notions that some children had more resources than others, some had better resources than others, and individual children had the power to decide whether or not they would share their resources. Another common practice described by Toohey was the requirement that the children not copy one another's written or verbal productions. As L2 students often use other children's verbal productions as a linguistic resource more frequently than their Anglophone counterparts, they were placed at a clear disadvantage within that classroom context. That is, in Toohey's descriptions, words, like things, were individually owned and were not community resources.

Focusing specifically on Latino students, Gutierrez and Larson (1994) described how teachers' hegemonic discursive practices relegate children to "contexts for learning that limit participation in and access to the forms or practices of literacy that are central to language development and successful membership in academic communities" (p. 23). Many such restrictive practices result from the privileging of English as the obligatory cultural tool for acquiring and enhancing literacy skills. Shannon (1995) suggested that, as a result of the hegemonic nature of English, "minority-language speakers take on the burden of an inferior status and are so perceived" (p. 176). Research with Spanish-speaking children indicates that they may indeed internalize the inferior status ascribed to Spanish in society and school (Commins, 1989). Commins described children in a newly

formed bilingual class who believed that "English was the language for school," and thus "opted for a less well-mastered code even though the possibility existed to work in Spanish" (p. 35).

In contrast to these cases in which language minority students suffered from limited participation in classroom practices and from the privileging of English, researchers have documented classrooms in which Latino children fulfill diverse participatory roles in literacy practices and utilize a broad variety of cultural tools to mediate their learning. Moll and Whitmore (1994) described bilingual classrooms in which learning occurred in social contexts that draw upon children's diverse sociocultural resources, or "funds of knowledge" (p. 320). In these classrooms children focused on the co-construction of meaning as they discussed literature and pursued their own research questions during the study of thematic units. Within these highly collaborative activities students benefited from a variety of socially distributed resources for learning. In particular, bilingual children utilized their linguistic ability to facilitate interaction between monolingual participants and to access sources of information in Spanish and English. These settings prompted Moll and Whitmore to conceptualize the rich potential for learning within a collective zone of proximal development (ZPD), in which children become indispensable, thinking resources for one another.

Franquiz and Reyes (1998) portrayed the classroom environment as one in which the participants' broad linguistic repertoires advance literacy and learning. They discussed inclusive learning communities in which teachers and children "employed a range of language registers and codes (e.g., from standard to more colloquial forms of speech and from monolingual to more mixed language uses), in the course of classroom

activity” (p. 123). The authors particularly emphasized the strategic role code switching played in developing the students' linguistic awareness and bi-literacy. This study confirms the notions that learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), that knowledge is a process and not a product, and that access to legitimate forms of participation in school activities crucially defines children's opportunities for developing the skills and identities necessary for academic success.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) discussions of communities of practice often refer to “participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means for their lives and their communities. . . .A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of [shared] knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage” (p. 98). With that in mind, I sought to look at the development of shared understandings through participation in joint activities within a community of practice.

John-Steiner (2000), drawing from the theatrical metaphor first proposed by anthropologist Erving Goffman (1959), argued that in the studies of community of practice, there are often two planes of observations—the front and the backstage of situated activity. The front stage is visible to the outsider (as exemplified by Toohey's observations described in the previous paragraphs concerning access to community property and seat arrangements). The backstage is the site where the processes of interdependence and mutual appropriation of modes of talk and modes of thinking happen. It was the backstage of operations that is the primary focus of this study.

Based on principles taken from sociocultural and situated learning theories, the

research on community of practice that I have discussed in this section revealed that English learners' access to language and literacy learning is often dependent on: a) the inclusiveness of classroom social practices, b) their participation in the development of shared understandings, and c) the range of cultural tools deemed acceptable as resources for learning. Clearly, if educators are to understand how to transform the social structures of the classrooms so as to ensure an inclusive environment and equitable education, investigation of the social practices in those situations must be ongoing, critical, and broad. Looking carefully at classroom contexts through the community of practice perspectives is a helpful beginning.

To couple the investigation of social practices with the examination of the actual learning that takes place during these interactions, in the tradition of Vygotskian theory I chose to examine how students mediate these interactions through the use of symbolic (e.g., language) and physical tools (e.g., materials). A useful framework for this investigation is Activity Theory. In the next section I explain the main considerations of this theoretical approach and their important implications for this study.

Activity Theory

According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory, cognitive development can be understood as the transformation of biologically determined processes into higher, mediated, and self-regulated psychological functions. Specifically, Vygotsky believed that the transformation of cognitive processes begins when children start to use language (speech) in order to guide, plan, and monitor their own activities. This use of language for self-regulation can be identified as private speech, which signals the onset of "purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence" (p. 24). Through the use of private speech in

the form of pretend or fantasy play, for example, children are able to create systems of representation that help them to become free from the immediacy of their external experience. In that way children can bring in elements that are not at once present, increasing both the flexibility and effectiveness of their problem solving. Another important aspect of the framework used to analyze the data that emanated from this study is Vygotsky's notion that mental processes can be understood by studying the tools and signs that mediate them and also that human behavior and thinking occur within meaningful contexts as people conduct purposeful goal-directed activity (Wertsch, 1983).

When viewed in that way, contexts are "neither containers nor situationally created experiential spaces" (Engestrom, 1987, p. 4). Instead, contexts become an activity system that integrates the subject, the purpose, and the instruments (tools, signs, or symbols) into a unified whole. Therefore, in light of activity theory, the mind and the external world are mutually defining, and psychological development can be traced from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal plane (Wertsch, 1985).

Donato (1994) pointed out practical considerations about the role of mediation in second language learning. He argued that, although it is true that the learner actively constructs his own knowledge, the process is a socially mediated activity. Donato also pointed out that second language learning, as opposed to language acquisition, is a conscious process, and therefore the social context has an even greater influence than it was previously believed in view of the notion that "the function of L2 interaction was to give the learner access to the hidden black box [innate language acquisition device in the brain]" (p. 51).

Donato (1994) stated that consciousness is co-knowledge resulting from the dynamic interchange among individuals, and not just from opportunities to supply information to learners. In the specific case of second language learners, it is this active feature of interaction that promotes linguistic change during joint problem-solving activities. He used the metaphor of scaffolding (Bruner, 1983) to show that the collaborative work among language learners can provide the same opportunity for development as in the expert-novice relationships.

In his observations of collaborative activities, Donato (1994) noted how language learners were able to mutually construct a context in which the participants were able to test their abilities with support of peers through discursive practices and ultimately arrive at a shared understanding of the task. He explored the relationships between individual and collective development and learning. The collaboration among peers provided a context in which individual members of the group internalized and transformed information as they worked together to problem-solve. Donato showed that the learners were able to construct collectively a scaffold for each other's performance by relying on the collective resources of the group (e.g., they together evoked different aspects of previous lessons that they needed to solve the task). In this study, private speech, used collectively, served as a principal means of mediation for the group. These forms of social transactions serve as a central focus for zone of proximal development analysis.

Ramirez (1990) examined the role of private and inner speech in mediation in literacy learning, specifically, how they applied to reading comprehension. In his study, Ramirez found that, since reading involves the manipulation of signs, the understanding of these signs entails an act of reference between the sign apprehended and other already

known signs. To illustrate this concept, Ramirez presented an account of a student who had very low reading ability trying to read a text about the daily chores of a housewife and how difficult her daily life was. After having spent much effort and after making many reading mistakes, the student pronounced, 'I don't need to read this!', indicating that she had attained comprehension of the text as it was closely related to her own life experiences. Such an example suggests that the similarities between addresser and addressee exercise more influence in the understanding of the text than do the skills of the reader. As the author explained: "To comprehend is, in this case more than just the result of processing of the information contained in the text; to comprehend here is to assume as one's own the experiences that another communicates" (p. 237). That is, for Ramirez to comprehend is a process that cannot exist outside inner speech; understanding cannot be accomplished without the signs that private or inner speech coordinates.

Ramirez argued that only through the manipulation of signs in the inner plane of thought, in their inner speech, can people establish a relationship between the written or the heard and idiosyncratic experiences. In that way, Ramirez considered words and their significance to be inseparably related to the social intercourse from which they emerge. From these suppositions the notion of consciousness emerges as being essentially semiotic, dialogic, and mediated by inner speech social in origin.

In addition to sign mediation, tools also serve to mediate human activities. Luria (1928) argued that man differs from animals in that he can make and use tools, and this attribute simultaneously transforms the conditions of human existence and the structure of human psychological processes. Vygotsky (1987) also emphasized the role of tool mediation in the development of human psychological functions, a form of thought he

called the cultural method of cognition. This method is characterized by the functional and structural processes of cultural behavior affecting the task at hand and being transformed into a psychological function. These processes are historically influenced by the transformations of previous generations. This association of culture, history, and mind provides grounds for the investigation of culture as a “unique medium of human existence, a medium that acts as both a constraint on and a resource for human action” (Cole, 1999, p. 90).

Wells (1990) studied the role of literacy as a mediational tool for thought. A central idea of Wells was the emphasis on the empowering potential of literacy as a “cognitive amplifier” (p. 102). Wells claimed that reading and writing activities afford the possibility of using language as an intentionally controlled tool for precise and coherent thinking, and this process can also be operationalized in spoken language. When the appropriate conditions arise, the same careful attention given to print can also be given to speech language. Wells contended that literacy as a mediational tool for thought provides the means for the students to gain increased control over learning. Like Ramirez (1990), Wells emphasized that a fundamental characteristic of written speech is dialogism—that is, the idea that the reader must view the text as a means of establishing communication and dialogue with others. Therefore, for Wells, literacy is a new form of dialogue, which goes beyond the temporary boundaries of oral communication.

In sum, the studies presented in this section of the review show that learning takes place as humans are constantly operating in the midst of reflexive and interpersonal influences that shape and direct their activity. These activities are mediated by physical

tools (e.g., materials), linguistic tools (e.g., words), and by cultural tools that encompass both of the previous elements. In operating these tools, students are considered agents who have their own construes inextricably related to the contexts in which they are embedded. The need to cohere, or to make sense, the need to adapt to situations, and the fact that we inhabit many discourses, each of which with its own idiosyncrasies, highly influence the significations an individual apply to a given situation.

As my primary considerations for this study included the observations of students during dialogical interactions situated in the context, I next review the literature on aspects of dialogism and discourse. I first draw on the theory of social discourse to explain the relationship of language and the social, historical, institutional, and cultural context. Then, I explain more specifically the aspects of discourse that relate to the dialogical properties of language and their implications for the study of second language learning.

Discourse and Language

Foucault (1979) contributed greatly to a social theory of discourse in such areas as the relationship of discourse and power, the discursive construction of social subjects and knowledge, and the functioning of discourse in social change. More specifically, his work is chiefly concerned with discursive practices as constitutive of knowledge and with the conditions of transformation of the knowledge associated with discourse.

In his early archeological studies, Foucault spoke of discourse as constitutive of society and of objects of knowledge. This implies an active relation between discourse and reality, in that language signifies reality in the sense of constructing meanings for it, rather than a passive relation between language and reality, with language merely

referring to objects which are taken to be given in reality. Foucault's ideas can be further explained by the examination of the works of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) who explored the concept of dialogism and its complex relation to language. Dialogue in everyday usage refers to a conversation--speaking and exchanging. For Bakhtin, however, the central aspect of dialogue is the kind of relations that conversations manifest and the conditions that must be met if exchanges between different speakers are to occur. In conversation, the speakers are always different from each other, and the utterance that each makes is always different from the other's (even if one repeats the same words as the other). These differences are said to serve as the building blocks of simultaneity. That is, for Bakhtin, "nothing is in itself, and existence is co-being; it is a vast web of interconnections that are so tightly linked as to be ultimately inseparable" (p. 156). This is the concept of mutuality.

Bakhtin's contributions in the study of dialogism and mutuality have important considerations for the study of the relationships between language and context. He viewed words and meaning as being inseparable from the social context from which they emerged. Even though the contributions of Saussure (1993) in many ways parallel those of Bakhtin, the two thinkers drew very divergent conclusions from their studies on language and thought. In Saussure's ideas, speech and language are in opposition. For the linguist, speech represents language as it is present only in a single speaker, and language is the realm of the social--the general rule for all present speakers of a particular language. In this distinction, Saussure concluded that because speech as a whole involves each individual's idiosyncrasies, it is impossible to analyze. He instead turned himself to the study of the shared, social aspects of language that enable symmetry and unity. Such

aspects are present in the wholeness of the sign, the closure it achieves between sound and meaning, and the union it forges between the signifier and signified. Bakhtin (1981), on the other hand, rejected this view of symmetry and unity in favor of difference and simultaneity—the basis of dialogism:

Dialogism presumes all perception, including the higher forms of it, which we call thinking, is accomplished through sign operations. And since signs can mean only if they are shared, it follows that the traditional individual/society opposition is best conceived not as a duel of mutually exclusive categories, but rather as a continuum in which differences between the two poles may be charted as varying ratios of intelligibility. (p. 168)

That is, for Bakhtin, the individual/society, like the self/other relations, must not be viewed in binary relationship (either/or), but as a continuum of degrees in which otherness is manifested in a self.

George Herbert Mead (1934) was also preoccupied with other/self relations. He recognized that "if the self-form is an essential form of all our consciousness it necessarily carries with it the other form" (p. 243). There must be other selves if one's own is to exist. Like Bakhtin, Mead also pointed to language as a mediator of social psychology: "In the process of communication the individual is an other before he is a self" (p. 244). Mead explained further that out of this process thought arises in the form of inner speech— "in the role of a specific other and then in the role of the generalized other" (p. 244). It is in that way that the individual recognizes that thought is not only inner speech, but it is also inner dialogue. Therefore, it can be said that language is the basis of thought as well as the mediating tool for all self/other relations. However, the

question of what particular features of language enable us to bind with a particular group of individuals while existing as selves still remained unanswered by Mead. For Bakhtin, the answer to this question lies on the concepts of addressivity and dialogue. Since no communication is possible in isolation, the dynamic exchange that allows for the interaction and alternation of different contexts is ultimately relative.

Van Lier (1996) elaborated upon this notion by stating that utterances can only have meaning through the interplay of one's own and others' intention. It is this interrelatedness of words, worlds, and utterances that van Lier called conversation—the most basic form of social communication, which is characterized by a “high degree of communicative symmetry” (p. 98). He further explained that “in conversation, every sentence is prompted by a motive. Desire or need leads to request, question to answer, bewilderment to explanation. The changing moments of the interlocutors determine at every moment the turn oral speech will take. It does not have to be consciously directed. The dynamics of the situation takes care of that” (p. 99).

Bakhtin's (1986) notions of appropriation also serves to help us understand discourse development. The theorist used this notion to describe the process by which “we respond to and transform the utterances of others and in turn use them for our own purposes” (Lensmire & Beals, 1994, p. 411). According to Bakhtin, children appropriate not only the structural elements of language, but also words, themes, purposes, and styles from the discourses they inhabit. The concepts of appropriation, mutuality, addressivity, and dialogism provide a compelling argument for studying the learning of English as second language (in integrated classrooms) in the naturalistic setting. That is, within the framework presented here, language learning is greatly influenced by the concepts

available within our discourses and by the dialogical signification we assign to them in the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which language learning takes place.

Because second language students enjoy a minority status, the investigation of their dialogical relationships in the mainstream classroom, the power relations involved, and the aspects of oppression were important to this study. As Toohey (2000) pointed out, discourse practices in Western cultures operate so that individuals develop institutional identities that are dependent upon the way they are positioned and categorized through specific uses of language. Sometimes these categorizations may prevent children from full participation in communities of practice as second language students often occupy identities that are neither desirable nor powerful.

Congruent with Toohey's ideas is the notion that the mind is a product of the concepts available within our discourse and the significance we assign to them. Discursive psychologists Harre and Gillette (1994) argued that this goes for the concepts that concern what is around us and also for the concepts that concern our own mental lives. That is, according to this view, human activities are given significance by the discourses in which they appear. This may seem to suggest that there is no truth about the mind as it seems radically subject to different constructions. However, it is important to note that certain boundaries apply as an individual negotiates his or her life events. The need to adapt to situations, and the fact that we inhabit many different discourses, each of which with its own cluster of significations, constrain the significations that an individual applies to a given situation. Therefore, discursive psychology identifies a person as having a coherent mind or personality that is fluid as individuals adopt various positions within different discourses while fashioning for themselves, however intentionally or

unintentionally, a unique complex of subjectivities (essentially private discourses) with some consistency within their life stories.

The difference, then, between mind or personality as seen in discursive psychology and in traditional psychology is that the former sees it as dynamic and essentially embedded in historical, political, cultural, social, and interpersonal context. For theorists of discursive psychology, the mind is not a substance and is not definable in isolation. To be a psychological being at all, one must be in possession of some minimal repertoire of the cluster of skills necessary to the management of the discourses into which one may from time to time enter.

This, in brief, is the rationale and agenda of discursive psychology. It aims to take seriously the discursive subject. The subject is discursive in that he or she uses symbols whose meaning is a function of their use in discourse. Discourse involves both symbolic interactions and the conventions and relationships in which those interactions are constrained by informal rules and interconnected with each other in ways that reflect coherence. People are constantly operating in the midst of reflexive and interpersonal influences that shape and direct their activity. People are also agents who have their own construes and expressive acts to produce from the contexts in which they are embedded and within which we all live and move and have our being (Harre & Gillette, 1994). For this reason we cannot fully specify the psychological subject/agent as an object whose nature can be defined in isolation from a context and whose mental processes can be unraveled by objective measurements and description. Instead, subjects are viewed in relation to others; that is, as we relate and construe others, others relate and construe us.

In this way we all share and negotiate conceptualizations and significations according to the discourses which we are adept.

In sum, the ideas of signification of symbolic systems, positioning, and agency are central to the analysis of human interactions. As all of those concepts will play a role in the analysis of the data gathered for this study, it may be necessary for further discuss these three ideas: signification, positioning, and agency, in relation to the discursive origins of the self. The term signification is used by Harre and Gillette (1994) to indicate the active role in structuring the interaction between a person and a context so as to define the subjectivity of that person in the situation and their positioning in relation to certain discourses. The notion of positioning has to do with the way different categories of people (for instance, men and women, adults and children, professors and students) enter into conversations. The positionings that each individual occupies within certain discourses are influenced by the participants' perceptions of their rights and obligations, and of the place they occupy in relation to the sociocultural context in which they interact. It should be emphasized here that within this framework, human beings are not seen as objects that are caused to behave by forces acting on them. Instead, as it has already been noted, this theoretical approach regards human being as agents moved by intentionality, continually seeking to understand and trying out ways of giving meaning to things around them. For Harre and Gillette (1994), the discursive thesis is that the sense of self is an experience, and that to experience oneself as having a location in a manifold of places in relation to others is a necessary condition for being able to use and to understand the self. This is done through the mediation of signs including language.

In Gee's (1996) discussions of literacy, ideology, and Discourses, he makes a distinction between primary and secondary Discourses, which imply socioculturally different uses of language. For Gee, the people's primary Discourse, one that comes from the home, serves as a framework or base for their acquisition and learning and ultimately influences the way they shape their experience and their sense of identity. Beyond primary Discourses, there are the Discourses that involve social institutions other than the family and therefore involve communication with non-intimates. Gee referred to those Discourses as secondary. They include schools, workplaces, stores, government offices, businesses, churches, etc. These Discourses are developed through the process of apprenticeship in these secondary institutions, and they build on, and extend, forms of language, behavior, values, and ways of thinking characteristic of their primary Discourse. These two forms of Discourse can be more or less compatible, depending on an individual's circumstances, and there is clearly great advantage in having a congruous relationship between primary and secondary Discourses. However, Gee argued, secondary Discourses involve more formal uses of language, both oral and written, and also involves ways of thinking, valuing, and behaving that go beyond the uses of language in our primary Discourse. Secondary Discourses, then, are used during interactions with people with whom we cannot assume large amounts of shared knowledge and experience and, therefore, in these more formal interactions, we take on an identity that "transcends the family or primary socializing group" (p. 143).

Other critical theorists have debated this conflicting nature of social practice as well. In the next section of this review, I point out some of the major concerns of critical theory framework and discuss how it plays a part in this study, especially as it relates to

the role of family in the historical and cultural elements of the context. The works of critical theorists have also contributed to broaden definitions of literacy, as viewed in this study, to include that of a transformational tool that makes propitious the empowerment of second language learners.

Critical Pedagogy

For critical theorists the focus of literacy is directed not only at the development of proficient readers, but at the development of awareness of the self in relation to society. Literacy practices should, then, be made personally meaningful and useful as a tool to improve societal conditions.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1970) talked about the achievement of literacy (as it is broadly defined) as a process of humanization. Dealing with dehumanization, then, by denying individuals equal access to literacy learning, becomes a central problem. For Freire, dehumanization involves not only those whose humanity has been robbed from them through various forms of oppression but also those who do the oppressing. Thus, the great humanistic task is for the oppressed to liberate themselves and those who oppress them. This book presents a pedagogy of the oppressed, "a pedagogy which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity" (p. 33). For the oppressed to change their reality, they must first analyze that reality in order to understand its causes and then work together to transform, rather than adapt to, that reality. This transformation can be materialized through praxis, reflection, and action, and then further reflection upon that action, in order to transform the world. Freire discussed, among others, two interesting characteristics of the oppressed: first, their tendency to internalize the

oppressor and their longing to resemble the oppressor and his lifestyle; and, second, stemming from their internalization of the oppressor, their tendency to self-deprecate themselves, to view themselves as ignorant, lazy, unproductive, and unfit. A liberating, humanizing pedagogy must, through critical dialogue with the oppressed, eliminate these tendencies, and the revolutionary leader/teacher must establish a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed so that the pedagogy expresses the consciousness of the students themselves. This liberation is a noble endeavor, indeed a part of the purpose of being, as Freire suggested that "at all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human" (p. 52).

One goal of this type of pedagogy is to break down the hierarchical relationship of teacher and student, reconciling the two poles so that both are simultaneously student and teacher, becoming teacher-student and students-teachers. This dynamic does away with what Freire called the banking concept of education, a relationship that mirrors the oppressor-oppressed status in which the teacher deposits his knowledge into the students who are characterized as ignorant receptacles. The banking concept of education is to be replaced by a problem-posing education, which poses the problems of men in their relations with the world. This type of liberating education consists of acts of cognition, not transfers of information, and thus emerges in the centrality of the dialogical relations.

Auerbach et al. (1996) places Freire's ideas of participatory learning into practice in From the Community to the Community: A Guidebook for Participatory Literacy Training. In this approach, adult learners participate in their education by setting goals,

designing the curriculum, evaluating progress, and choosing activities. The uniqueness of this program lies in its collaborative nature. Universities and community centers work together to facilitate the training of adult literacy instructors. Teachers who are members of the language minority to be taught are trained as mentors. They, in turn, participate in the training of other immigrants and interns who have shown an interest and a commitment to the community, to become instructors, political activists, or tutors. In this way their teaching resources are expanded manifold.

The adult literacy instruction took place in three different community-based agencies in the Boston area. In each of those sites Auerbach et al. noted that the program was specifically designed to meet the needs of the communities that surround it. Because of a concentration of members from the same language minorities, and in view of low literacy levels in two of the sites, the project provided initial literacy instruction in the students' native languages. Because of the diversity of language and literacy backgrounds in the third site, instruction focused on beginning ESL.

This project viewed the teaching of literacy as more than teaching a set of mechanical skills or functional competencies; it viewed literacy as a tool to promote social justice and equality for all people, and to provide the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among cultural groups. It promoted literacy as a means to a better understanding of the social nature of the issues that affect the students lives. The focus was on meaning rather than on form. At the core of this project was the belief that the process of educating students was best achieved when instruction was embedded in the contextual realities of their experiences. Therefore, the content of instruction was made meaningful by being abstracted from the students'

everyday experiences and by using authentic language. In this way, Auerbach et al.'s guidebook brought forth a view of literacy that takes into account the discourses practices of a particular culture, as well as the culturally specific literacy functions.

As has already been mentioned in the earlier parts of this review, critical literacy has important implications for the literacy and language development of second language learners. These implications have been made evident in the literature that explores the relationships between the sociocultural contexts of classrooms and literacy development (e.g., Cook-Gumperz, Gumperz, & Simons, 1981; Heath, 1983; Hymes, 1981; John-Steiner, 1994), and more particularly, in the literature that explores the role of family in the educational environment. In the next section of this review I will provide a closer look at some of the extant literature relating community/family literacy practices with school literacy practices.

The Role of Family in Sociocultural Contexts

In Sociocultural Change through Literacy: Toward the Empowerment of Families, Delgado-Gaitan (1994) argued for a theory of literacy as social practice which is dependent upon the organizational nature of the family. She took into account the cultural web that explains the family's socioeconomic level, social and political relations, religious beliefs, and location, as well as the family's relationship to other institutions, including neighborhood, media, health institutions, and schools. In her article Delgado-Gaitan presented the results of a study about the family-literacy program in Carpinteria, California. The study illustrates the potential for empowerment of family literacy programs as parents begin to gain access to literate communities and start to understand texts in relation to their own experience. She defined empowerment as "the increased

ability to create desired change as the individual, parents, family, teacher, and school deem appropriate. At an individual level, empowerment takes place by building self-esteem and self-confidence” (p. 146). In her examination of parent-children interactions while reading, Delgado-Gaitan revealed that parents teach more than decoding and strategies; they communicate sociocultural knowledge based on their own experiences, as well as impart values and a world view about their position in society.

Ada (1988) attempted to examine the intersection between children's literature, parent-child interaction with each other and the text, the questioning of strategies for reading comprehension, and the notion of self-concept through Freire's notions of liberation. Her findings show that the question-and-answer interactions about the storybook texts yielded, not just greater understanding of the text, but also the sharing of values and opinions about the importance of the family, about identity with a group, about emotional support, and about freedom. Positive change in their perception of self-efficacy was observed as the parents learned to participate in their children's literacy learning. Through the parent classes, the families established new relationships with other members of their cultural group and shared common concerns, fears, and successes as they learned from one another. Part of the families' overall development was evident as they reached out to other members of the community by teaching what they learned in the literacy project and by becoming involved in organized community activities.

In sum, both studies (Ada, 1988; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994) show that families became empowered on numerous levels beyond the home reading activity as parents became knowledgeable of the importance of encouraging literacy in the home, of

learning collectively with other members of the community, and of becoming more involved in their children's education through an established parent group.

Valdes (1996) discussed parental attitudes toward school and the efforts to increase student immigrant achievement by changing families. She proposed that the parent education programs that are widely put into place by schools serve to promote the why-won't-you-be-more-like-me mentality, and thus to maintain the status quo. She argued that these practices, although well-intended, neglect to recognize bi-culturalism as an asset. In her book, Con Respeto: Bridging the Distances between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools, Valdes (1996) provided data concerning the daily lives of 10 immigrant families participating in a family literacy program. The information sheds light on the fact that what educators have interpreted as the disinterest of newly arrived immigrants in their children's education, in reality are important sociocultural features which conflict with educators' expectations of what a family should be or how it should function. In her examinations, the author claimed that immigrant parents from Mexican working-class backgrounds bring to the United States goals, life plans, and experiences that do not match school culture. The notions held by immigrant families of what success consists of are often incongruent with the school's definitions of success. While it is true that the families in this study were not producing achievement gains in students, it was not because they were bad parents, but, among other factors, because the program aimed at changing the family, paying little appreciation and respect to the values, needs, and aspirations of immigrant families.

Instead, extraordinary changes in language minority students' academic progress have been documented in the recent research on the efforts of many educators (e.g.,

Cummings, 1986; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1994; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Quintero & Huerta-Macias, 1990) who have been promoting significant parental involvement and changing exclusionary patterns to one of collaboration through the implementation of family literacy programs and other related activities. An important feature of exemplary parent-involvement programs has been respect for cultural diversity, strengthening of home language, and participatory approaches that stress connections between the classroom and the specific communities to which students belong (Au, 1998).

In Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms Moll et al. (1992) provided a description of a collaborative project between education and anthropology that studied households and classroom practices within working-class, Mexican communities in Tucson, Arizona. The main purpose of their study was to develop innovations in teaching that capitalize upon the knowledge and skills found in local households to create classroom instruction that is meaningful and directly relevant to students' lives. The project involved analysis of the origins and social history of the households by looking into the vast web of relationships and networks within which these families interconnect in their social environments, and by the examination of the families' labor histories which reveal the accumulated bodies of knowledge of the households. They use the expression funds of knowledge to refer to the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133).

Bloome, Katz, Solsken, Willet, and Wilson-Keenan (2000) also discussed the relationships of family/community literacy practices and school literacy practices. They

emphasized that what defined these two types of literacy practices was not the location in which they occurred, but the social relationships among the persons involved and how literacy practices were enacted by a group. Bloome et al. noted that there were two potential models for studying the relationships between family/community literacy practices: a school-centered model and a community-centered model. School-centered models provided parents with the skills and knowledge to reiterate school literacy practices at home. Although, inherently in the school-centered practices, the parents became teachers, children became students, and stories became educational texts; at a deeper level, the parents and children transformed school literacy practices so that they were resonant and consistent with the family/community approaches to life.

Community-centered models brought the community into the classroom, where the students had the opportunity to integrate multiple social and cultural literate identities with an academic literacy identity. These hybrid literacy practices allowed the students to be respected as a member of the classroom as well as a member of their family and community.

The examination of students in their home-based contexts allowed the teacher to know the child as a whole person who is actively involved in multiple spheres of knowledge and who has multiple relationships with the same person or with various persons. In contrast to the classroom, households are a rich arena of activities in which children are not passive bystanders, but active participants in a broad range of situations mediated by social relationships. Even though the literature on the positive relationships between family involvement and student achievement abounds, there are relatively few instances of studies that focus on meaningful participation of parents of second language

backgrounds in our schools. My goal in exploring this relationship is to broaden the view of literacy education to include the social worlds and resources of second language students and to move away from the encapsulated view of classrooms.

Conclusions

This review examined some of the existent literature on community of practice, activity theory, discourse and language, and critical pedagogy. In the investigation of classroom activities through the lens of the theoretical constructs specified, there are nuances and discrepancies that may need further explication. That is, while the theoretical perspectives driving this study all share elements of the broad social constructivist assumptions, they also diverge in some aspects. For example, all four of the frameworks reject the notions of the self as a “thing-like phenomenon, a self-contained individual endowed with internal machinery of cognitive skills” (Stetsenko & Arievidtch, 1997), and, instead, provide a relational, contextualized account of the evolving self. They conceptualize the self as an agent, an active participator, who conceives and shapes his or her own developmental course in a constant interaction with the world around them. Therefore, all four perspectives described here dramatically depart from the idea that development is an internally driven maturation, an automatic unfolding of naturally inborn capabilities. Within this paradigm, learning is not a result of transmission of knowledge, but rather it is a result of dynamic systems of activities expressed in concrete actions. Therefore, human activity is the focus of analysis. The participants are defined through their involvement in the world, and human development is inextricably intertwined with this ongoing system of activities and is mediated by language and other semiotic devices within a cultural and historical context. In effect, these assumptions

signify a radical departure from positivistic views of understanding human cognition and resonate instead with post-modern philosophy in that it proposes holism and continuity rather than traditional dualisms. In congruity with the socio-constructivist paradigm discussed here, I would like now to disambiguate the theoretical perspectives presented in this study, not by contrasting them, but by offering some of the nuances that characterize them. For example, Stetsenko and Arieivitch (1997) claimed that discourse-based theories and post-Vygotsky constructivism, while having much in common, vary in how they define the methodology and in the ways of studying the self and human development. Discourse-based theories contend that all psychological phenomena are, at base, discursive. That is, social attitudes, emotions, self, personality, and agency are “viewed and created in social discourse and as having their being only in discourse” (p. 162). Therefore, here discourse and conversation are placed in the focus of analysis. In this view of human development emphasis is placed on external processes of the interactions, made evident through discourse practices such as appropriation.

For Vygotskian constructivists, internalization is at the core of human development. According to Stetsenko and Arieivitch (1997), there are two lines of post-Vygotskian constructivism. One emphasizes the notion of intersubjectivity (Cole, 1992; Rogoff, 1994), conceptualizing learning as a result of participation in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991) through the development of shared knowledge and shared understandings of tacit and explicit forms of communication, including verbal and nonverbal dialogue based on mutual activity (Rogoff, 1990). The other line of post-Vygotskian theorists (Arieivitch & Van der Veer, 1995; Davydov, 1988; Gal’perin, 1989) emphasize notions of internalization, and learning is conceptualized as transformation.

That is, by participating in socially mediated activities, human beings not just learn new concepts, “but also create a specific realm of action, which yields additional possibilities for adaptation in humans” (Stetsenko & Arievidtch, 1997, p. 168).

In sum, these two lines of post-Vygotskian constructivist thought converge at the apices of the social origin of the mind, the crucial role of interaction with more competent partners, and the active co-construction of knowledge, although each emphasizes different processes. For post-Vygotskian constructivists, the process of appropriation is encompassing of external and internal mechanisms, while for discourse-based theorist, appropriation ensues external processes.

By exploring both discourse-based and post-Vygotskian constructivism, in this literature review, I aimed to provide ample support for the analysis of classroom interactions that integrate the main contributions of the theoretical perspectives in consideration for this research, as well as to add depth and breadth to the study of second language and literacy learning. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I will provide a brief exegesis of the relevance of these theoretical perspectives for this study.

The literature reviewed suggests that L2 students’ language and literacy learning does not happen within individual heads, or in a vacuum. Instead, both language and literacy learning are socially mediated processes, situated in the social, cultural, historical, and institutional context. Therefore, the analysis of individual learners, teachers, or teaching methods is not sufficient to enlighten us about the complexities of these processes.

As has already been mentioned in the introductory portion of this study, traditionally research on second language learning has situated itself within the natural

science research paradigm (Chomsky, 1965; Gagne, 1962; Krashen, 1981; Skinner, 1957). This tradition focuses on explanations based on the predictability of events as well as on controlled, quantitative experiments; it substantiates the human mind as an apparatus analogous to computers. In this view second language learning has been treated as a series of input/output in the target language (Harre & Gillette, 1994). The sorts of elements that I have identified in this review of literature as being highly influential to language and literacy learning (i.e., participation, mediation, and context) are nonetheless ignored by research endeavors that use the Cartesian model of explanations, based on syllogisms and causal relationships. I, therefore, sought to examine second language learning in the social context, giving full consideration to the fact that learning is a social construction in that our concepts arise from the discourses in which we participate and that shape the way we think. These concepts, the basis of thinking, are expressed by words, and words are located in languages, which are the main tool to mediate human activity (Harre & Gillette, 1994).

The main intention of this study was to explore the potential that sociocultural theory and Vygotskian research methodology have for understanding second language learning in relation to the overall sociolinguistic context. The Vygotskian general approach to pedagogy has at its core psychological development through social interactions, or the process of true co-construction of learning, a process in which the participants of a particular context are viewed in relation to others. As participants relate to and construe others, others relate to and construe them. Therefore, language acquisition is seen as a cognitive transformation that occurs both in the moment and over time, in and through discursive relationships and interactions.

This study added a more holistic investigation to the extant literature by juxtaposing the different theoretical lenses already mentioned to provide a unique look at second language learning. Therefore, in the process of answering the following research questions, I hoped to provide a much needed, broader, and deeper understanding of second language learning. The questions guiding this study were:

1. In consideration of historically, culturally, and socially constituted practices, both in and out of the classroom, what factors influence second language students' access to legitimate peripheral participation in a language-integrated, primary classroom?
2. What role does the access to legitimate peripheral participation play in the development of English language proficiency and literacy as an essential medium of classroom interactions?

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