LEARNING ESL IN A CANADIAN SENIOR-PUBLIC SCHOOL: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY.

By

Warren Peter Olivo

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Anthropology
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Warren Peter Olivo 2000
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.
Abstract.

Thesis title: Learning ESL in a Canadian Senior-Public School: An Ethnographic and Sociolinguistic Study.

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy.

Year of Convocation: 2000

Warren Peter Olivo
Graduate Department of Anthropology
University of Toronto

This dissertation, based on a 15-month ethnographic and sociolinguistic study of English as a Second Language (ESL) learning in a Senior Public school in Toronto, examines how students learning ESL are subject to institutional relations of power and asks whether and to what extent ESL student practices reproduce these unequal power relations.

In this dissertation I draw on two overlapping senses of the concept of 'practice' as it is used in anthropology and in theories of second language acquisition. The first sense of practice comes directly from an interactionally-based model of second language acquisition. Proponents of this model argue that the acquisition of language skills results from learners practicing the target language. In this dissertation I examine the social factors that affect ESL students' ability to practice speaking English, both in the classroom as well as outside the classroom among 'peers' in situations where other languages are potentially spoken. The second sense of practice comes from contemporary social theory, where scholars seek to understand the complex role of practices in the (re)production of social and cultural structures. This dissertation examines the
mechanisms by which the unequal social relations between minority and majority language speakers in Canada are reproduced through everyday practices. I show how ESL students' ability to practice speaking English is subject to the teacher's institutional mandate to control student activities (including talk) in the ESL classroom setting. In other words, ESL students' ability to learn English (and by extension their ability to access the power that this dominant variety represents) is systematically limited by the teacher's power to control talk in the classroom.

I also examine the role that ESL students, as a subordinated group, play in the reproduction of power structures. I found that ESL students act in ways that indicate recognition of the unequal structures of power to which they are subjugated. Furthermore, ESL students often draw on and reproduce these power inequities in interactions with other ESL students. However, at other times ESL students act in ways which appear to evade the power relations which constrain the process of learning ESL in this school setting.
Acknowledgments.

During the course of my doctoral studies, and during the research for and writing of this dissertation, many people have provided invaluable support and assistance. First and foremost, thanks and love goes to my partner Wendy and my son Henry for their support and inspiration. The same goes to my parents and to the rest of my extended family for their encouragement and belief that I would some day finish what I had begun.

My doctoral committee has been extremely helpful in reading and commenting on early drafts of this dissertation and for encouraging me to continue, even when it looked as if I would never get permission to get into a school. Special thanks goes to Bonnie McElhinny for a superb and seemingly tireless level of support and assistance, to my supervisor Ivan Kalmar for his help, and to the rest of my thesis committee—Hy van Luong, Monica Heller, Jim Cummins, and Sandra Schecter—for their support and feedback. I also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program and the University of Toronto, without which this project could not have been completed.

Other graduate students and faculty at the University of Toronto have listened to and commented on selected portions of this dissertation. In particular I wish to thank Gaston Gordillo, Dierdre Rose, Gavin Smith, Michael Lambek, Kristina Sieciechowicz, Suzanne Miskimmin, Susanne Unger, and Aryeh Grossman for their comments. I would also like to say a word of thanks to the staff in the Department of Anthropology, in particular Annette Chan and Natalia Krencil, for helping me through the day to day grind of graduate student life.
Other individuals have assisted in the production of this dissertation or have worked on some of the data reported here. I wish to thank Afshan Ali for her assistance in transcribing and translating those utterances presented in this dissertation that were spoken in Urdu, and Manuel Sevilla for his work transcribing and translating the Spanish utterances. I would also like to thank Jennie Jones for transcribing the recorded interviews. What a wonderful gift!

I must also thank the Research Review committee for the (now defunct) Toronto Board of Education for granting me permission to conduct research at Barton School. The Principal of Barton School deserves the same thanks for welcoming me into the school. Finally, I want to sincerely thank the ESL teacher at Barton school, the Assistants, and the ESL students, all of whom have given me tremendous, if anonymous, assistance, and have helped me to understand what it is like to learn English as a second language in a Canadian public school as we enter a new millennium.
Table of contents.

ABSTRACT .......................................................... ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................... iv

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1
The concept of practice in social theory ................... 5
The role of practice in second language learning .......... 9
Language, power, institutions .............................. 15
Structure of this dissertation ............................... 19
Notes to Chapter 1 ........................................... 23

Chapter 2 'BARTON SCHOOL' AND THE SURROUNDING
NEIGHBORHOOD: A PROFILE ................................... 25
The neighborhood ........................................... 25
The school and the students ................................ 30
ESL students at Barton School ............................. 37
The structure of ESL student friendship
groups at Barton School .................................... 38
The ESL classroom ........................................... 42
The social position of ESL students at
Barton School .................................................. 45
Notes to Chapter 2 ........................................... 47

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY .......................................... 49
Obtaining permission to conduct research among
students in a school setting ................................ 49
The Research Review Committee ......................... 50
The Principal .................................................. 54
The ESL instructor ........................................... 56
The students and their parents ............................. 57
The researcher's presentation of 'self' in the
school ............................................................. 60
Methods of data collection .................................. 77
Participant observation ...................................... 78
Interviews ...................................................... 79
Audio recording ............................................... 79
Doing fieldwork 'close to home' ........................... 81
Notes to Chapter 3 ........................................... 85
Chapter 4  DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT IN TRADITIONAL CLASSROOMS ........................................... 88
In classrooms ‘talk’ ≠ ‘work’ ........................................... 89
Why do teachers control student talk? ........................................... 100
Notes to Chapter 4 ........................................... 107

Chapter 5  ‘WHERE WOULD YOU RATHER BE?’: DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT IN THE ESL CLASSROOM ........................................... 108
The separation of talk and work in the ESL classroom: evidence from interviews and classroom interactions ........................................... 110
The use of elicitations in the ESL classroom ........................................... 130
The student point of view ........................................... 136
Notes to Chapter 5 ........................................... 145

Chapter 6  CLAIMING INSTITUTIONAL POWER IN ESL STUDENT INTERACTIONS: STUDENT-INITIATED REPAIR SEQUENCES AND META-PRAGMATIC DIRECTIVES ........................................... 147
The ESL classroom: Challenging the teacher-student dichotomy ........................................... 149
Student-initiated repair sequences ........................................... 153
ESL students’ use of meta-pragmatic directives ........................................... 158
Notes to Chapter 6 ........................................... 164

Chapter 7  CODE SWITCHING, CODE REGULATION AND INSTITUTIONAL POWER: A MICRO-ANALYSIS OF ESL STUDENT INTERACTIONS ........................................... 165
Code-switching and code regulation in the ‘fire escape group’ ........................................... 166
The ‘school’ versus the ‘yard’ ........................................... 171
Students who tell other students how to talk ........................................... 177
Notes to Chapter 7 ........................................... 181

Chapter 8  CODESWITCHING IN ESL STUDENT FRIENDSHIP GROUPS: WHO IS THE ‘WE’? ........................................... 183
Defining codeswitching ........................................... 183
Toward a re-analysis of ‘we’ vs. ‘they’ ........................................... 189
Notes to Chapter 8 ........................................... 195

Chapter 9  CONCLUSION ........................................... 196
Possibilities for changing ESL curriculum ........................................... 201
Notes to Chapter 9 ........................................... 203

REFERENCES ................................................... 204

vii
List of tables.

2-1  Porportion of ethnic groups in ‘Barton ward’ compared to City of Toronto ........................................... 29
2-2  Languages spoken as a mother tongue in ‘Barton ward’ compared to City of Toronto ........................................... 29
2-3  Place of birth of Barton School students compared to students from all Toronto Board schools ........................................... 34
2-4  Languages spoken in the homes of students attending Barton School compared with students from all Toronto Board schools ........................................... 36
2-5  ESL status of students at Barton School compared to all students in the Toronto Board of Education ........................................... 37
2-6  Country of origin and language(s) spoken by students in the ESL program at Barton School ........................................... 38
2-7  Similarities and differences between primary, senior public, and secondary schools, and the ESL program at Barton School ........................................... 46
4-1  Summary of interactional sequences ........................................... 96
4-2  Summary of teachers’ mechanisms for controlling ‘official’ classroom interactions ........................................... 100
5-1  Types of verbal and non-verbal sanction of student talk in the ESL classroom ........................................... 119
5-2  Summary of ‘official’ activities in the ESL classroom ........................................... 125
7-1  The ‘school’ versus the ‘yard’ ........................................... 173

List of figures.

2-1  Barton School and the surrounding neighborhood ........................................... 26
2-2  Sociometric profile of ESL student friendship groups at Barton School ........................................... 39
3-1  The ESL classroom at Barton School ........................................... 43
3-1  Possible social roles for conducting participant observation with children ........................................... 63
5-1  Percentage of elicitation types used in a non-ESL classroom ........................................... 132
5-2  Percentage of elicitation types used in ESL classroom interactions ........................................... 134
5-3  Percentage of elicitation types used during homework take-up in the ESL classroom ........................................... 136
7-1  Sociometric representation of the ‘fire escape group’ ........................................... 167
7-2  Linda’s friendship relations ........................................... 178
7-3  Marguerita’s friendship relations with the Spanish-speaking students ........................................... 180
List of appendices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>ESL teacher/assistant interview schedule</th>
<th>213</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>ESL student interview schedule</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Sample school research application form</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Sample parental consent form</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: 
Introduction.

This dissertation investigates the social and interactional factors that affect minority-language students' ability to learn English as a second language. It is the product of 15 months of ethnographic and sociolinguistic research conducted at an inner-city Senior Public school located in Toronto, Canada, which I have named ‘Barton School.’ Barton School houses approximately 300 7th and 8th grade students of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Although English is the politically and economically dominant language in Toronto, as it is throughout much of North America, being a native speaker of English is the exception rather than the rule at Barton School. Indeed, only one third of Barton students claim English as the sole language spoken in their home. When I began attending Barton School I observed interactions involving ESL students, teachers, and other students on a regular basis. I became more and more interested in understanding how being a language learner affected the day-to-day lives of ESL students at Barton School. In particular, several incidents that I witnessed led me to focus my research on this student group. One such incident occurred one afternoon when I was seated in the school library observing the comings and goings of students. Three students from the ESL class came in to exchange books they had signed out for new ones. Two of the students, both Spanish-speaking girls, entered the library talking Spanish to one another. Another ESL student Jim, a recent arrival from Korea, came through the door and told the other two girls to “shut up”. One of the girls, Corina, responded by punching Jim and Jim
retaliated by hitting Corina back. Immediately, the librarian came over and demanded to know what was going on. Corina’s friend spoke to the librarian, and her command of English was such that she was able to communicate a version of the event that favored Corina (she claimed that Jim had hit Corina but did not mention that Corina had also hit Jim). Jim’s English skills were relatively weak, and with no one to speak on his behalf, he was unable to verbally counter the girl’s version of the event. Jim’s frustration at not being able to tell his story to the librarian was immediately visible. He began to shake and was driven to the point of tears before being led away by the librarian.

Two other incidents involving ESL students (although students who were not enrolled in the ESL class at Barton) occurred around the same time as the incident in the library. On each of these occasions I observed a dispute arise between a girl and a boy where the girl verbally berated the boy after he had physically bullied or intimidated another in the schoolyard. Each of the girls, Amanda and Jessica, was both white, native to Canada (Amanda of Polish and Jessica of Portuguese descent), and a native speaker of English. Each was relatively popular, well-known in the school, and a member of a high-status friendship group. Steve came from Sri Lanka and John was Filipino. Both boys had recently immigrated to Canada, and both had learned English as a second language. Both boys were physically strong and aggressive, and I had observed both of them engaged in acts of such behavior on several occasions. Finally, each was a peripheral member of a high-status group of eighth-grade students (including Amanda and Jessica) who were all native speakers of English.

In the first incident I observed Steve throwing a much smaller boy to the ground. The boy got up limping noticeably and was escorted away crying by a friend. Amanda
had also witnessed the event while she was practicing on the baseball field and ran over to where Steve was standing and began to verbally berate him. In the second incident I witnessed John intentionally throwing another boy’s ball on top of the gymnasium roof. Jessica had also seen John do this and began to yell at him, criticizing what she called his “lack of respect” for other people. She continued to yell at John until she was escorted away by a friend who told her to “forget about it”. In both cases the girls used their knowledge of English to confront and criticize the aggressive behavior displayed by Dave and John. As such, they transformed what was essentially a physical interaction between two boys into a verbal interaction—one in which they possessed superior skills, being native speakers of English. The high pitch and volume of the girls’ utterances also transformed the relatively confined space of physical interaction into a much wider space of verbal interaction where other people in the yard were directed to see and hear what was going on. In such a way the physical aggression that each boy had acted out was transformed into a public humiliation by the way in which both girls responded to the initial act. In neither case did the boy launch a verbal counter-attack, although each was visibly angered by the girls who were yelling at them. John, for example, sat in a corner of the schoolyard and wouldn’t let anyone get near, yelling, “get the fuck away from me!” if anyone attempted to approach him.

After witnessing such occurrences, I began to wonder how the status of language learner affected the lives of these students. Did Dave or John’s lack of competence in speaking English affect their ability to verbally defend themselves against the harsh words of the two girls? To what extent did their status in friendship groups depend on their ability to speak English and to what extent did they make up their shortcomings in
this area with acts of physical aggression? Why did Jim become so upset when confronted by the librarian? Why, like John and Dave, did he remain silent? Why did Corina hit Jim in the first place, rather than tell him off verbally? In short, to what extent did the students’ competence (or lack thereof) in speaking English play a role in negotiating social relationships with other students as well as relationships between teachers and students, and how did these social relationships influence ESL students’ ability to learn English? Intrigued by these preliminary observations, and with these questions in mind, I approached the ESL teacher and asked him if he would be willing to let me observe his classroom for the following year. He agreed and I attended the ESL classroom on a more-or-less daily basis between September 1997 and June 1998. During this period of research I followed ESL students through their daily routines, and, with their permission, followed groups of ESL students during lunch into the schoolyard and the local neighborhood. I also conducted interviews with ESL students, their teacher, and his assistants, and audio recorded spontaneous interactions among ESL students and their teacher and/or his assistants in the classroom as well as interactions among ESL friendship groups inside and outside the school.

After I had started to attend the ESL classroom in September 1997 my research questions began to crystallize around the notion of ‘practice’. Specifically, I became interested in exploring how ESL students were given, or created for themselves, opportunities to practice speaking English. For the purposes of conducting research I divided this into two different, though related, questions:

1. How are opportunities to speak English created (or denied) in the ESL classroom setting?
2. How are opportunities to speak English created (or denied) by students when the ESL
teacher is not present (e.g. outside the classroom), or is not a participant, in situations
where languages other than English may be spoken?

These questions are significant insofar as ‘practice’ is in some way tied to the process of
language learning. Hence, we need to investigate what role, if any, opportunities to
practice speaking play in the process of second language acquisition. I review the
literature on second language acquisition that deals with this issue later in this
introduction. However, before moving to a discussion of SLA theory it would be
beneficial to outline the significance of the term ‘practice’ as it is understood in
contemporary social theory.

THE CONCEPT OF ‘PRACTICE’ IN SOCIAL THEORY.

emerged in anthropology which she situates under the rubric of ‘practice’. This
orientation differs from the theoretical dominance of Marxism and the study of political
economy in anthropology during the 1970s. Contemporary theories of practice emphasize
the point that human agency is constrained (although not determined) by social structure.
Because practices are constrained in this way there is a tendency for practices to
reproduce social structure. However, since they are not fully determined by structure,
human practices contain the potential to alter or transform these structures. Thus,
contemporary theories of practice seek to understand how such structures are produced
and reproduced not only by examining the impact of structures on human practices but
also by examining the impact of practices on these structures (Ortner 1984: 146, 148.
The work of Bourdieu and Giddens is considered seminal to the development of contemporary practice theory. Both Bourdieu and Giddens foreground the dialectical relation between structure and practice. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977a), Bourdieu coins the term *habitus* to refer to the internalized, socially constituted systems of dispositions possessed by particular social groups. He argues that a group’s *habitus* gives rise to particular practices, which, in turn, have a tendency to reproduce *habitus*. Similarly, in his theory of ‘structuration’, Giddens (1979) argues that social structure is both a source and product of social practices. “Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and ‘exists’ in the generating moments of this constitution” (Giddens 1979: 5).

In linguistic anthropology, practice theory has been particularly relevant to the study of language socialization, understood both as “socialization through language and socialization to use language” (Ochs 1986: 2; cf. Schieffelin and Ochs 1986, Ochs 1988, Schieffelin 1990). Researchers interested in language socialization study the interactional routines wherein caregivers instruct novices in socially and culturally appropriate ways of speaking and acting. Such studies focus on the intergenerational transmission, and hence reproduction, of social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge. Researchers such as Ochs and Schieffelin employ contemporary theories of practice in their analyses of language socialization. In particular, Ochs (1988: 15) argues that ‘activity’ (‘practice’) functions as a mediating factor between linguistic and cultural knowledge, and argues that knowledge and activity impact on one another.
In this dissertation I use contemporary theories of practice as a lens through which I examine the mechanisms by which the unequal social relations between minority and majority languages and their speakers in the Canadian context are reproduced through everyday practices in the educational setting. I examine how students learning ESL at Barton School are subjected to institutional control in ways which constrain their ability to practice, and thus learn, English, the dominant language in the school and in the wider society. I also examine the role that ESL students play in reproducing these unequal social structures. I ask whether ESL student practices reproduce the structures of their own domination or whether they recognize these structures and resist their imposition. These questions, which center on the extent to which unequal social structures are produced, reproduced, contested, or transformed through practice in the educational setting have been addressed by other linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists in recent years (e.g. Heller 1995b, 1996, Martin-Jones and Saxena 1996, Rampton 1996, Lin 1996).

In order to understand the possible roles that dominant and dominated social groups play in reproducing forms of social inequality it is necessary to first understand the concepts of ideology and hegemony and their relation to practice. I use the term ideology in the ‘neutral’ sense (cf. Williams 1976: 129) to refer to particular beliefs held by particular social groups which are ‘political’ as well as ‘social’ facts (cf. Williams 1976: 118). In this dissertation I am particularly interested in the examination of language ideologies, understood most broadly as, “shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world” (Rumsey 1990: 346). In contrast to those scholars who deem it necessary to understand ideology, and in particular language ideology, as
distinct from practice (e.g. Irvine 1998, Silverstein 1979), I understand ideology to be embedded in practices (cf. Spitulnik 1998). 3

I understand hegemony to refer to the process whereby dominated social groups come to accept an ideology held by a dominant social group (and thus of the material and social relations that this ideology helps to sustain) as ‘normal reality’ or ‘commonsense’ (cf. Gramsci 1971, Williams 1973, Williams 1976). In this dissertation I examine how opportunities for ESL students to practice speaking English are controlled and limited by the institutionally mandated power of the teacher and his assistants, a process that is linked to a dominant school-based language ideology in which students’ talk is separated from, and devalued in relation to, their work. In turn I examine the extent to which ESL students conform to, resist, or evade the imposition of this dominant ideology in the classroom as well as the extent to which they challenge or reproduce this language ideology in peer-based interactions inside and outside the classroom. In other words, I examine the extent to which this language ideology is or becomes hegemonic.

The school plays an important role in disseminating another language ideology which holds forth a single language variety as a ‘standard’ or ‘correct’ variety and ranks it (and those who speak it) above other linguistic varieties and their speakers (cf. Grillo 1989, Milroy and Milroy 1991, Bourdieu 1977b, 1990, Heller 1995a, 1995b, 1996). In this dissertation I also ask whether this dominant language ideology is hegemonic by examining the ways in which ESL student practices conform to, reproduce, or contest this ideology.
THE ROLE OF PRACTICE IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING.

Researchers studying processes of second language acquisition typically emphasize one of two models of language learning. A linguistic/mental model emphasizes the natural order of language development and posits the existence of a universal language acquisition device. In this model, the particular route of second language acquisition is largely predetermined (Van Lier 1988: 75). In contrast, an interactional model holds that language learning occurs in and through participation in speech events. Talking to others is thus seen as essential to second language acquisition. In this model it is understood that the acquisition of grammar develops from interaction rather than being a source of interaction (Wagner-Gough and Hatch 1975, Hatch 1978). The interactional model is grounded in a social theory of cognitive development (e.g. Vygotsky 1978) which suggests that cognitive skills develop through social interactions, not the reverse.

Within the interactional model there is varying emphasis placed on two different aspects of the language learning process: input and output. The notion of 'comprehensible input' is attributable to Krashen (1980) who states that learners need to hear well-formed examples of the language in order to trigger the mental processes of language acquisition. In other words, learners need to be exposed to the target language in interactions in order to learn. The greater the exposure, the more rapidly learning can take place. In addition, Krashen argues (1981: 57) that comprehensible input is the only causal variable (i.e. variation in the amount of exposure to the target language) in processes of second language acquisition. However, other researchers (e.g. Swain 1985, Ellis 1980) contend that the acquisition of language skills is a result of learners producing the target language, that is, through practice. As with comprehensible input, learners develop their speaking
skills more rapidly by producing the target language more frequently. Swain (1985: 236) argues that productive practice, or 'comprehensible output,' is as fundamental to second language learning as exposure to the target language (i.e. comprehensible input).

"[P]roducing the target language may be the trigger that forces the learner to pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning" (Swain 1985: 249). Swain's argument is based on her comparison of French-immersion and native French-speaking student groups. The immersion students had high levels of language proficiency but were still appreciably different from the native French speakers in their use of some aspects of the language (Swain 1985: 244-245). The hypothesis that comprehensible input is the only causal variable in second language acquisition is questioned by the data on immersion students in that these students did receive considerable exposure to the target language (most for approximately 7 years) but were still not as proficient as the native speaker group. The chief difference between these two groups was in the relative opportunities they had to actually use French both in and out of the classroom. Swain concluded that the immersion students lacked proficiency because they were given limited opportunities to use the target language when compared to the native speaker group. Research conducted by Strong (1983), Peck (1985), Naiman et al (1978), Bailystock (1978), and Seliger (1977) lends support to Swain's argument (but cf. Day 1985).

Although input and output factors are weighted differently in interactional models of language learning, there is a general consensus that both factors play a role. Thus, exposure to and practice with the target language are considered necessary conditions for language learning to take place (Spolsky 1989). In this dissertation I pay particular
attention to the factors that affect the process of producing comprehensible output, with the assumption that producing comprehensible output is a factor that triggers the mental processes of second language acquisition. My research focuses on the opportunities that ESL students have to practice speaking English in the classroom and outside and the social and interactional factors that affect these opportunities. Research conducted by Peirce (1993, 1995) has examined similar factors among adult ESL learners. Her work is worth discussing at some length here as it provides a useful point of departure for the research reported in this dissertation.

Pierce argues that traditional theories of second language acquisition draw an artificial distinction between the language learner and the social context of language learning. The individual learner is typically described with respect to a host of psychological variables (e.g. motivation to learn, self-confidence, anxiety) that affect the process of language learning (e.g. Brown 1973, Gardner and Lambert 1972). The idea of social variation in processes of second language acquisition in traditional theory typically refers to differences between the language learner's culture and the culture of the target language users and the extent to which these differences affect the process of language learning. Peirce argues that this distinction cannot address variation in an individual language learner's motivation, confidence, or anxiety. She argues that a theory of language learning must address intra-individual variation in processes of language learning. When are learners motivated and when are they unmotivated? When is there great social distance between language learners and native speakers and when are these differences minimized? Under what conditions are learners able to speak and when must they remain silent? Peirce argues that traditional SLA theory argues that learners are free
to choose the conditions under which they can interact with target language speakers, and have not questioned how power relations might affect learners' ability to speak in these interactions.

In a move away from traditional SLA theory, Peirce argues for the theoretical integration of the language learner and the social world where learning takes place. Drawing from post-structuralist and feminist theory (cf. Weedon 1987), she adopts a postmodern understanding of subjectivity. This subjectivity is produced in a variety of social situations where individuals can take up a number of available subject positions (e.g. woman, teacher, wife, mother, worker, etc.) that constrain how one acts and speaks in the world. In this understanding, individuals are both subject to and subject of social relations of power within particular historical and social contexts. Furthermore, language plays an important role in the construction, affirmation, and challenging of power relations.

Against the backdrop of this understanding, Peirce problematizes the concept of learner motivation in SLA theory. Instrumental motivation refers to the motivation to learn a language in order to reap material benefits, such as a good job, while integrative motivation refers to the motivation to learn a language in order to become integrated into the host society. Peirce replaces this distinction with the concept of 'investment,' an idea extrapolated from Bourdieu's (1977b, 1991) theory of language as a form of symbolic capital. Peirce argues that learners choose to invest in learning English with the understanding that they can use it to acquire material and symbolic resources which will allow them to increase the value of their own symbolic capital. Peirce argues that the concept of investment is not equivalent to instrumental motivation: it is not a fixed
personality trait. By investment, Peirce attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to ever shifting historical and social relations.

Peirce's research focuses on the informal language learning environment outside of the classroom. She collected data on immigrant women who were students in the ESL class she taught. She conducted interviews, administered questionnaires, and had the participants keep diaries which recorded their interactions with English-speaking Canadians and recorded their reflections on their language learning experiences. The participants in her study were all highly motivated learners. At the same time, these women felt uncomfortable speaking English to people with whom they had a particular material or symbolic investment (e.g. English-speaking co-workers, bosses, professional colleagues, etc.). Hence, despite being highly motivated language learners there were situations where these women felt uncomfortable speaking or where they felt they could not speak. Not surprisingly, many of the situations were those in which they symbolic stakes were high, but where the 'right to speak' (cf. Bourdieu 1977b, 1991) was not generally made available to immigrant language learners. In other words, opportunities to practice speaking in these situations were constrained by social relations of power. Peirce noted that learners did not passively accept the power relations which constrained their ability to speak. For example, one of the participants wrote that she generally felt uncomfortable speaking English. She referred to herself in her diary as 'stupid' and 'inferior' because she was not a fluent speaker of English. However, she was able to draw on available subject positions in order to challenge what she understood as the rules of interaction between English-speaking Canadians and immigrant language learners and to create opportunities for herself to speak English. In particular, she drew upon her identity
as a mother to redefine the relationship between herself and her younger co-workers as akin to mother and children rather than native English speaker and immigrant language learner. She thus set up a counter-discourse where, as a mother and older person, rights to speak were accrued to her.

Peirce’s research addresses a significant gap in the literature on language acquisition by introducing the idea that opportunities for language learners to practice speaking are often constrained by social relations of power. She also shows how language learners can challenge prevailing power relations in order to create opportunities to speak the target language. Her work represents a growing scholarly interest in understanding the social forces that can affect a person’s (or group’s) desire, willingness, and ability to learn a second language (cf. Goldstein 1992, 1994, 1997, Harklau 1994, Mackay and Wong 1996) The themes addressed by Peirce also form a central component of this dissertation. Here, I examine whether ESL students’ ability to speak in the classroom is constrained by the teacher’s institutional power and authority to control classroom interactions. I also examine whether and how students challenge institutional power relations in order to maximize opportunities to speak English. A potential limitation to Peirce’s research is that she does not present or analyze actual instances where learners interact with target language speakers. Instead, she uses students’ reports and interpretations of these interactions to form her arguments. It is a generally accepted notion in the social sciences that what people do and what they say they do are often different (e.g. how speakers under-report or over-report report their own use of linguistic variants (Trudgill 1983)). Indeed, I show this to be the case with respect to the ESL teacher’s view of student talk as beneficial compared to the ways in which he and his assistants work to minimize student
talk in the classroom. Also, I show that students talk about their talk in the classroom as if it is a problem but nevertheless continue to evade the constraints that are placed on their talk in the classroom setting. It is my contention that careful analysis of spontaneous interactions, such as the ones discussed in this dissertation, will allow for a clearer picture of how power relations are reproduced or challenged interactionally and how processes of second language learning are affected by this. Before moving on to this investigation we need to discuss in greater detail the complex intersection of language and power in institutional settings and in the school in particular.

LANGUAGE, POWER, INSTITUTIONS.

Fairclough (1989) distinguishes between two ways in which power is exercised through language. These he refers to as power through discourse and power behind discourse. The former refers to the way in which power relations are manifested and subsequently challenged or reproduced through face-to-face interaction (Fairclough 1989: 43). Much of the research into linguistic interactions in institutional settings has revealed how aspects of institutional interactions such as what is to be talked about, the allocation of turns at speaking, and the way in which 'acceptable' discourse must be presented are typically controlled by the institutional agent (e.g. doctors, lawyers, judges, police officers, etc.). For example, research by Erlich and King (1996) examines how the questions asked by lawyers and supposedly impartial 'judges' at a university tribunal worked to construct an act of rape as consensual sex. Studies by Conley and O'barr (1990) show how litigants' use of 'rule-oriented' vs. 'relational-oriented' testimony affect their chances of success in small claims court proceedings. Litigants who deliver rule-oriented testimony, which
emphasizes contractual, as opposed to social, relations, tend to be received more sympathetically by judges. Fisher and Todd (1986) examine the ways in which doctors subtly persuade female patients to choose particular forms of birth control by strategically presenting information on different birth control options. McElhinny’s analysis of police officer-citizen interactions (1992) shows how police officers often ignore the interactional goals of citizens (e.g. gaining a sympathetic ear) by focusing exclusively on the institutional requirements of police work, such as report taking. In general, institutional representatives control the flow of information by retaining the right to ask most of the questions and to receive answers (Agar 1985: 150). Research into school classrooms (e.g. McHoul 1978, 1985, Mehan 1979, Heller 1995b, 1996, Martin-Jones and Saxena 1996) shows a similar tendency in that teachers, rather than students, control the content and direction of classroom interactions.

The notion of power behind discourse refers to how orders of discourse, as dimensions of the social order, are themselves shaped and constituted by relations of power, such as class, ethnic, or gender relations. One important manifestation of this power includes the differentiation of dialects of a single language into ‘standard’ and ‘nonstandard’ varieties (Fairclough 1989: 43, cf. Milroy and Milroy 1991) as well as the differentiation of different languages into ‘dominant’ and ‘subordinate’ ones (cf. Grillo 1989). The education system plays a vital role in the differentiation of particular linguistic varieties, and consequently speakers of these languages, into positions of domination and subordination. The school functions to impose dominant varieties on speakers of other languages or dialects who are compelled to display their mastery in order to succeed in the education system (Bourdieu 1977b, 1991, Heller 1995a). It is
through this process of imposition and judgment that the education system is complicit in
the reproduction of linguistic and social hierarchies.

In Canada, English (or, more precisely, a particular variety of English) is the
politically and economically dominant language, with the exception of French in Quebec.
English has served as a mother tongue for between approximately 50-60% of the
Canadian population since at least the 1930s and as the ‘home language’ for over two
thirds of Canadians since at least the 1970s (Castonguay 1998: 38). Although the
predominance of Canadians of British and French origin has been in decline over the past
century, Canadians of British origin remain the largest linguistically homogeneous
segment of the population, and, as such, continue to influence language use in Canada
(Castonguay 1998: 37). This numerical predominance is bolstered by the fact that, along
with French, English has enjoyed ‘official’ language status since the passing of the

Goldstein (1997) shows how the historical introduction of ESL programs Canada,
and Ontario in particular, is linked to particular immigration, multicultural, and language
policies. After the Second World War, when the Canadian government gradually
removed many of the overtly racist barriers to immigration, policy was influenced heavily
by Canada’s labor needs (Goldstein 1997: 23; cf. Hawkins 1988, Troper 1985). In
particular, policy has supported the recruitment of unskilled labor from countries such as
Italy and Portugal. In deliberately recruiting laborers with limited skills and education
from such countries, Canadian immigration policy has helped to create and maintain an
ethnically stratified class system (Goldstein 1997: 24). Although policy has since shifted
in favor of immigrants in possession of recognized skills and training (Hawkins 1988)
and the fact that more recent waves of immigration have included other ethnic groups (e.g. from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean), ethnic groups in Canada continue to form what Porter (1965) refers to as a ‘vertical mosaic.’

One attempt to deal with the problem of ethnic stratification in provinces such as Ontario has been the funding of language training initiatives for those immigrants who do not speak English upon their arrival (i.e. work- and school-based ESL programs). This initiative is driven by the argument that “ethnic stratification in Canada is at odds with Canadian liberal democratic ideals of diversity, equality, change, and achievement,” (Goldstein 1997: 26), and that the maintenance of ethnic stratification is, in part, attributable to the fact that many immigrants cannot speak English. This argument and subsequent initiatives are best seen in light of the 1971 policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework, which put forward the idea that people should be encouraged to participate in Canadian society by maintaining their own ethnic cultures (or, more precisely, certain aspects of their culture) while at the same time recognizing the utility of gaining access to the official languages in order to access economic and political power (Goldstein 1997: 26-27). In other words, ESL programs were developed in order to redress what was recognized as a system of ethnic and class stratification based on differential access to and competence in English, the politically and economically dominant language.

The distinction made by Fairclough outlined above is useful as it allows us to separate for the purposes of analysis two ways in which power relations are manifested in and through language. In this dissertation I explore how these two levels of analysis both contribute to an understanding of how social relations of power influence the process of
ESL learning in the Canadian school setting. At Barton School ESL students are placed in particular classrooms for the explicit purpose of learning English. One might reasonably assume that ESL classrooms exist in order to facilitate minority language speakers’ access to and ability to learn English. My examination of the processes of language learning in the ESL classroom at Barton School is an attempt to show how these two aspects of the relationship between language and power are connected by showing how minority language speakers’ ability to practice and thus learn English is limited by the ESL teacher’s control over student rights to speak in the classroom setting. In other words, students’ ability to master the dominant language (and by extension their ability to access the power that this variety represents) is systematically limited by the teachers institutionally-mandated power to control talk in the classroom.

STRUCTURE OF THIS DISSERTATION.

The remainder of this dissertation is separated into eight chapters. In the chapter that follows I provide a descriptive portrait of the social makeup of Barton School and the surrounding environment. Focusing in particular on ethnic background I move from a description of the neighborhood immediately surrounding Barton School to a description of the school population itself (both teachers and students), comparing it with statistical information on the Toronto Board of Education in general. Finally, I focus on the ESL student population. I provide a description of the ESL classroom and discuss how ESL students are positioned socially at Barton School.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of gathering ethnographic data among young students in a school. I begin by discussing two key
aspects related to conducting ethnographic research in schools. First, I discuss the formal procedures that are required in order to gain access to students in schools and how I ultimately received permission to observe, interview, and record ESL students at Barton School. Following this discussion, I review some of the key theoretical discussions of the methodological issues surrounding conducting ethnographic research in schools in particular and among children and adolescents in general. I also detail some of the strategies that I used to gain the trust of the students that I worked with at Barton school and point out some of the limitations facing adults who conduct ethnographic research in schools. I also briefly discuss the three main methods that I used to gather the data on which this dissertation is based. Finally, I end this chapter by outlining some of the issues that arose as a result of choosing to conduct ethnographic research at a field site close to home.

In Chapter 4 I critically review the available literature that discusses the ways in which teachers in traditional classrooms manage student opportunities to talk. I argue that the motivation to control and ultimately minimize student talk in traditional classrooms evolves from a school-based language ideology where student talk is seen as distinct from, and antithetical to, students' work. In this chapter I show that, in addition to the use of meta-pragmatic directives (e.g. 'stop talking'), the management of student talk is achieved in part by the way in which classroom interactions are structured in the classroom setting. In particular, I examine the predominant turn-taking procedures that operate in classrooms, the nature of interactional sequences in classroom lessons, and teachers' use of 'contextualization cues' in order to show how these features structure and limit student participation as speakers in classroom interactions. Following this, I
examine several arguments that have been put forward to explain the phenomenon of classroom management, in particular the management of student talk by teachers. Finally, I attempt to link classroom discourse management to larger social forces. Specifically, I review the notion that schools function to reproduce forms of social inequality and explore what role classroom discourse management plays in this process.

In Chapter 5 I turn to an examination of the ESL classroom at Barton and ask whether student talk is distinguished from work as it is in more traditional classrooms. Researchers studying processes of second language acquisition (e.g. Swain 1985) argue that talk is part of the labor students must perform in order to learn a second language. In this chapter I examine whether this idea is embraced by the ESL teacher and his assistants at Barton school. I also ask whether, and to what extent, the language ideology separating student talk and work that was discussed in Chapter 4 is incorporated into the ESL classroom. In this analysis I draw from interviews conducted with the ESL teacher and his assistants as well as recorded ESL classroom interactions, and pose three questions:

1. Does the ESL teacher and/or his assistants sanction student talk in the classroom? If so, to what extent?

2. What turn-taking procedures are in operation in the ESL classroom? What effect, if any, do turn-taking procedures have on opportunities for ESL students to talk?

3. What are the routine activities and tasks that students perform in the ESL classroom? To what extent do these contribute to students’ need to practice speaking English?

In addition to this general analysis, I conduct a detailed analysis of the use of elicitations by the ESL teacher and his assistants with students. I do so in order to ask whether the use of particular elicitations can affect opportunities for students to talk in the ESL
classroom. I end Chapter 5 with an analysis of how the students themselves view the ‘problem’ of classroom talk and examine the degree to which ESL students agree or disagree with the ideological separation of talk and work and the consequent limitations placed on student talk in school classrooms.

While Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 focus exclusively on the classroom setting and ask whether and to what extent student opportunities to speak are controlled and limited there, in the following chapter I examine interactions among ESL students in a variety of settings: the classroom, the library, the schoolyard, and the mall. In the teacher-student interactions analyzed in Chapter 5 English is the preferred code. Students, to the best of their abilities, always speak English when interacting with the teacher in the ESL classroom. In contrast, in Chapters 6 to 8 I examine other kinds of interactional situations, where students can, in theory, choose to speak or not to speak English. At Barton school ESL students routinely interact with other students in ways that call into question the rigid separation of the identities ‘teacher’ and ‘student’. In Chapter 6 I examine one of the ways in which students can claim participatory status in interactions by attempting to claim to a ‘teacher-like’ identity when talking to other students. I show how this identity is invoked in two particular kinds of student interactions: when students initiate repair sequences in order to correct the speech of others; and when students issue metapragmatic directives to other students. Of particular interest in this analysis is how ESL students attempt to claim institutional power as a resource in order to create a space for themselves as a participant in interactions with other ESL students.

In order to explore this further in Chapter 7 I present and analyze two extended interactions that take place among one ESL friendship group. I also conduct a semiotic
analysis of key distinctions in school space in order to show how different spaces constrain students’ ability invoke this ‘teacher-like’ identity with other students. I end this chapter by asking whether some ESL students are more likely to engage in this behavior than others, and, to the extent that this is the case, speculate as to why this is so.

In Chapter 8 I briefly discuss how the code-switching and code-regulating activities that characterize ESL student friendship groups contribute to theories of conversational code-switching.

In the final chapter I conclude the dissertation by summarizing my research findings and explicate how these findings contribute to theories of social reproduction and the role that the practices of subordinate groups play in the process of reproducing power inequities as well as to theories of second language learning. I end with a brief discussion of how the findings presented in this dissertation might be used to develop more equitable public school curricula for ESL students.

---

1 All the students’ names in this dissertation, and the names of the assistants in the ESL classroom are made up. In this dissertation, I refer to the ESL teacher simply as ‘teacher’.

2 In Chapter 2 I explain the distinction between those students at Barton who learned English as a second language, those classified by the school board as ‘ESL,’ and those enrolled in the ESL program at Barton School.

3 This position rests on the understanding that talk about talk (i.e. metapragmatic language), where language ideologies are often most explicit, is a form of practice, and that ideologies, although perhaps less explicit, also reside at the pragmatic level. Such an understanding allows us to grasp the complex and potentially conflicting array of ideologies that individuals can articulate at various levels of practice.

4 Ortner (1984: 151) argues that practice theorists, particularly Bourdieu (e.g. 1977a) draw from a theory of motivation (i.e. What motivates human action?) that posits a rationally minded actor choosing a course of action that gets him/her what is materially and/or politically useful for him/her within the context of his/her particular (and changing) cultural and historical circumstances. Peirce’s notion of ‘investment’ draws
heavily on the work of Bourdieu at the same time that she distances herself from psychologically-based theories of motivation. As Ortner suggests, however, there may be drawbacks to a wholesale abandonment of such psychologically-based theories.
Chapter 2:
'Barton School' and the surrounding neighborhood: a profile.

In this chapter I give a descriptive profile of Barton School and the surrounding neighborhood. I begin by discussing the social demographics of this area of Toronto, focusing in particular on the neighborhood surrounding Barton School and the ethnic and linguistic characteristics of area residents. I then talk about the school itself: its history, its physical layout, and the kinds of programs and classes offered there. From there I proceed to discuss the student population at Barton School, focusing specifically on students’ ethnic backgrounds and what languages they speak, which I compare to students attending schools in the Toronto Board of Education as a whole. I also profile the faculty at Barton and compare it to the students attending the school. Following this I focus in particular on the ESL student population at the school. I discuss the structure of ESL student friendship groups. I also describe the physical layout of the ESL classroom. I end this chapter by discussing some of the ways in which ESL students are positioned socially at Barton School, both in terms of the institutional practices which put them into a position of ‘difference’ vis-à-vis ‘mainstream’ students as well as in terms of their relationships (or, more precisely, their lack thereof) with non-ESL students.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Barton School is situated at the intersection of two main city streets at the edge of Toronto’s downtown core. Figure 2-1 below shows the location of Barton School and the neighborhood surrounding it. The school is bounded to the north by a major east-west
Figure 2-1: Barton School and surrounding neighborhood.
artery which is crammed with commercial storefronts housing small businesses selling a variety of goods and services ranging from pizza stores and lunch counters to stores selling retail merchandise (e.g. clothes, furniture, bicycles), to discount ‘dollar stores’. A few of the store fronts on this street are vacant, lending the area a slightly gritty image. Below the school, to the south, is a shopping mall surrounded by a large parking lot. Over the last few years, this mall has been in the process of renovating its facilities in an attempt to shed its ‘strip mall’ image and attract more upscale businesses and consumers. At the same time, however, the two largest retail stores in the mall are a discount clothing and housewares retailer, and a discount grocery chain. The mall also has more than one dollar store. The fact that the mall is in close proximity to several schools, and therefore a large population of potential adolescent consumers, seems to have been noticed by mall retailers, and may account for the disproportionate number of stores devoted to selling brand-name athletic shoes and ‘urban’ (i.e. hip-hop and rave inspired) clothing. Together, the food shops and stores on the street to the north of Barton School and the mall (especially the food court at the south end) were the two most common lunch-time destinations for Barton students. Indeed, only twenty to thirty students (approx. 6-10% of the school population) ate their lunch in the school cafeteria on any given day. To the southeast of the school is a public park, containing a combination of open field, treed areas, a playground for young children, two outdoor ice rinks, and a building which functions as a change area for skaters and hockey players and as a community drop-in for area residents (young and old). The smaller streets on all sides of Barton School are the site of modest, mostly semi-detached two- or three-story homes, although there are several high-rise apartment buildings in the surrounding neighborhood.
The area surrounding Barton school was traditionally settled by southern European immigrants, especially from Portugal and Italy. Demographic information on the ethnic origins and linguistic backgrounds of area residents is available through the Statistics Canada Census (the most current figures are from the 1991 census (Statistics Canada 1992)). However, Statistics Canada does not analyze demographic information by ‘neighborhood’. The smallest geo-political unit available for analysis is the city ‘ward’ which is larger than an individual neighborhood. Below I provide information on the ward where Barton School is located (which I refer to as ‘Barton ward’ for the sake of convenience). It should be noted that the figures may not exactly reflect the ethnic composition of the neighborhood immediately surrounding Barton School, though my feeling is that, if at all different, this neighborhood would appear even more multi-ethnic than Barton ward as a whole. Table 2-1 below shows the relative proportion of ethnic groups that reside in Barton ward compared to the City of Toronto as a whole. From this we can see that residents claiming Portuguese, Italian, or another European ethnicity make up 55% of Barton ward residents while residents claiming Chinese or another Asian ethnicity make up another 15%. These concentrations of European and Asian residents are much higher than for the City of Toronto as a whole, while, conversely, the proportion of residents claiming British ethnicity is somewhat lower than the figure for the city of Toronto as a whole.

When we turn to linguistic identity, Barton ward appears even more distinct from the City of Toronto as a whole. Table 2-2 below shows the relative percentages of major languages spoken by Barton ward residents compared to those spoken in the City of Toronto as a whole. As many as 62% of Barton ward residents claim a language other
than English as their mother tongue, a figure which is almost double the figure for all City of Toronto residents, where English is clearly the majority language (64%). In light of the figures shown in the previous Table (2-1) it is not surprising that Portuguese ranks high as a mother tongue for Barton ward residents, with Chinese and Italian ranking high as well. Also of interest is the proportion of residents who claim no working knowledge of English. The figure for Barton ward residents is 17.3%, more than three times the figure for all city residents. This figure indicates a large pool of potential ESL learners, although how many of these would be of school age is not known.

**Table 2-1: Proportion of ethnic groups in ‘Barton ward’ compared to City of Toronto (Statistics Canada 1992).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Ward (%; n=68,060)</th>
<th>City (%; n=2,332,150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Indian</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other single origin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other multiple origins</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2-2: Languages spoken as a mother tongue in Barton ward compared to City of Toronto (Statistics Canada 1992).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Ward (%; n=68,060)</th>
<th>City (%; n=2,332,150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents without working knowledge of English</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers presented in Table 2-1 and 2-2 provide some information as to the ethnic and linguistic characteristics of the area surrounding Barton school. At the same
time, similar demographic information on the school itself (discussed in the following section) indicates that this area is changing from an ethnic and linguistic point of view, moving from one dominated by (predominantly southern) European immigrants to one populated more and more by immigrants from Asia and the Caribbean.

THE SCHOOL AND THE STUDENTS

Barton School is situated on a ‘campus’ along with two publicly-funded secondary schools, with which it shares a playing field and other facilities (e.g. a swimming pool and track). Students completing grade eight at Barton School feed into these secondary schools as well as several other collegiate, vocational, and commercial public and separate (i.e. Catholic School Board) schools in the surrounding area. Barton school was built in 1910 to accommodate growing numbers of families settling in the area as a result of the westward expansion of the City of Toronto. Originally a school for students from kindergarten through grade eight, in 1950 Barton was selected to become a prototype of a new kind of school housing only grade seven and eight students, called a ‘senior public’ school, and has remained so ever since (Barton Handbook 1996-97).

The original building is a large, three-story structure with wide hallways and high ceilings. Most of the classrooms are located in this part of the school (including the ESL class at the north end of the main floor), as are the Science classroom and the staff lounge on the main floor, and the library and Design and Technology and Family Studies classrooms on the second floor. The basement—large, gray, and cavernous—houses the in-school child-care facilities (provided for mothers attending nearby high schools), the lunch rooms, and the school’s physical plant—an area which is off limits to Barton
students. In the more recent past, a large, two-story addition was added to the south end of the school. Housed in this addition are the administrative offices (main office, nurse's office, guidance office) as well as the Special Education classroom on the main floor, and the music room and one core classroom on the second floor. The gymnasium is also part of this addition (presumably Phys-Ed. classes were originally held in one of the basement rooms). Although the hallways in the newer part of the school are narrower and the ceilings lower than in the original structure, the addition was designed to take advantage of the natural light outside. The result is a feeling of spaciousness in spite of the loss of physical breadth.

Students are assigned lockers which can be found throughout the school. Photographs of Barton School sports teams, choirs, bands, and clubs from years past adorn the walls above the lockers. In some places, such as the main entryway to the school, examples of student artwork can be found. Large photographs of past graduating classes can be found in several places in the school, particularly near the main foyer. The classrooms and hallways are painted a neutral off-white. The one exception to this is the main office which is pink (a color purported to reduce aggression).

Other areas where students congregate during school hours are the library and the gymnasium. The library is located on the second floor and is made up of two main rooms divided by a half wall. The stacks are positioned on the peripheral walls, giving the library an open, inviting feeling. The larger of the two rooms has several tables for students who are working on assignments. This is also where the non-fiction collection is housed. The smaller room houses works of fiction and has couches for quiet reading. Computer terminals are located in the library as well. The school has only a part-time
librarian so the room is open sporadically. The librarian is assisted by student volunteers chosen from each class who help charge and reshelve books.

The school gymnasium is located in the southwest wing of the new addition. High on the walls are pennants from past Barton School sports teams who have won or been finalists in city-wide competitions. In addition to housing Physical Education classes and sports team practices, the gym is used for school assemblies, dances, talent shows, and plays. During school assemblies classes are brought to the gymnasium by their teacher. Students sit on the floor facing the stage, while faculty sit on benches against the walls of the gym.

Senior Public schools are structured in order to provide a transition from Primary (Kindergarten to grade 6) to Secondary (grade 9 to 12/13) schools, maintaining some aspects of the former and introducing aspects of the latter. They provide opportunities for grade seven and eight students to take part in some of the activities that are more commonly available to high school students and structure daily activities in ways that are similar to those found in most high schools. Barton School is no exception. Students at Barton move through the school on a limited rotary schedule, limited in the sense that they continue to take ‘core’ subjects such as English and Math with one ‘homeroom’ teacher but, like high school students, rotate to other classes (e.g. Physical-Education, Keyboarding, Family Studies, Science, French, Music, Art, History, Geography, etc.) with different teachers for periods of the day (but cf. discussion of ESL students below). Like their older high school counterparts Barton students also have opportunities to participate in student government and in other extracurricular activities such as working on the school yearbook. As is the case in most high schools, students at Barton are
allocated locker space for storing their belongings. Some students personalize their lockers with photographs, pin-ups, and other creative embellishments. There are two ways in which senior public schools continue to be like primary schools. The first is that in senior public schools students are not allowed to choose which courses they wish to take. Like elementary schools (but not high schools), there are no 'optional' subjects; all classes are compulsory. The second similarity is in the way students pass or fail. In senior public and primary schools students pass or fail the entire year (so, for example, a student could be required to 'repeat' the seventh grade if he or she fails a certain number of individual subjects). In high school students pass or fail individual courses rather than an entire school grade. The principle similarities and differences between primary, senior public, and secondary schools are outlined in Table 2-7 later in this chapter.

In Barton School’s overall student population there are several core grade seven and eight classrooms, a Special Education classroom for ‘gifted’ students, a Special Education classroom for students with learning disabilities, and a full-time classroom for ESL students. In addition to the core student population, Barton school also houses a full-time child-care facility, offers day-time ESL classes for adult learners, and has a special ‘school within a school’ called ‘Youngtown’, for students with behavioral difficulties. One notable feature of the different classes and programs offered at Barton is how they are positioned in the socially inscribed space of the school. In general, it would seem that non-mainstream classes (i.e. classes other than regular ‘core’ grade 7 and 8 classes) are peripherally located throughout the space of the school. This includes the ESL classroom, the adult ESL class, the Special Education classroom, ‘Youngtown’, and the childcare facilities, although the ‘gifted’ class was more centrally located. In this way the non-
mainstream status of these classes and the student enrolled in the programs offered there, is both reflected in, and strengthened by, their peripheral location in the school space.

The student population at Barton School is both ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous. According to statistics compiled by the Toronto Board of Education for the 1996-1997 school year (see Table 2-3) just over one half of the over 300 students who attend Barton School were born outside of Canada in one of more than 40 different countries. This compares with just under 21% of students in the Toronto School Board as a whole. Students from Vietnam, China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Trinidad-Tobago, Jamaica, and Portugal, represented over half of the foreign-born population at Barton School. Asia and the Caribbean were two major regions of origin for immigrant students.

**Table 2-3: Place of birth of Barton School students compared to students from all Toronto Board schools (Toronto Board of Education 1996-97).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>Barton School (%)</th>
<th>All Toronto Board Schools (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad/Tobago</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Caribbean</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central/South America</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Middle Eastern</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nationality</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At Barton School only 35% of the students reported that English was the sole language spoken in their home compared to 63% for Toronto Board students in general
At Barton School languages other than English with a high representation of speakers were Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Urdu, Tamil, Spanish, and Punjabi which together accounted for 49% of the student population. Speakers of 25 different minority languages attended Barton School.

The student population at Barton School appears multi-ethnic and multilingual, especially when compared to the student population for the entire Toronto Board of Education. Furthermore, when we compare the figures for Barton school to the census figures for the surrounding ward we can see the changing ethnic and linguistic character of this area of Toronto. In particular, the number of students at the school who claim European ethnicity (e.g. Portuguese, Italian) is dramatically lower than the figure for Barton ward residents as a whole while the figures for students claiming Asian and Caribbean ethnicity are higher. Since the figure for ward residents includes older age groups, this may indicate a changing social demographic; fewer recent immigrants to this area of Toronto come from Europe while more come from Asia, the Caribbean, and other regions.

Linguistic data for Barton school and Barton ward show a similar picture. Students claiming Portuguese as a language spoken in the home is much less than the figure for ward residents claiming Portuguese as a mother tongue. At the same time, the figure for Barton students claiming an Asian or South Asian language as a home language is much higher than the figure for Barton ward residents as a whole.
Table 2-4: Language spoken in the homes of students attending Barton School compared with students from all Toronto Board schools (Toronto Board of Education 1996-97).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Barton School (%)</th>
<th>All Toronto Board schools (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(% n=302)</td>
<td>(% n=42,881)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>incl. in ‘other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch/Flemish</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>incl. in ‘other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pashtu</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>incl. in ‘other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>incl. in ‘other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>incl. in ‘other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twi</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>incl. in ‘other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbo-Croatian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and French</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (&lt; 0.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at the faculty at Barton school a rather different picture is presented, specifically in terms of the ethnic and linguistic background of this group. The faculty chiefly consists of people of Anglo-Canadian descent. 15 out of 24 faculty (not counting administrative staff, caretakers, lunch supervisors, or itinerant faculty (e.g. music teacher)) are of Anglo-Canadian descent. Of the remainder of the faculty, two are Black (one a native speaker of French, the other English), two are of Portuguese descent (both spoke English fluently), one is from Pakistan (and a native speaker of Urdu) and the
other is from India (linguistic origins unknown). The ethnic and linguistic background of three faculty was not known. Thus, rather than reflecting the heterogeneous student population of Barton School, the faculty is relatively homogeneous, and more closely reflects the dominant Anglo-Canadian population of Canada.

**ESL STUDENTS AT BARTON SCHOOL**

One quarter of the students at Barton School are classified as ESL. As is shown in Table 2-5 below, this figure is close to the figure for students in the Toronto Board of Education as a whole. Students are termed 'ESL' by the Board of Education if they have lived in Canada for less than five years and have emigrated from a non-English speaking country. Hence, the figures in Table 2-5 include students who were not enrolled in an ESL class (at Barton School or elsewhere) at the time of the survey, through they may have been prior to the survey date. Also, since the Board classification of individual students as ‘ESL’ only makes them eligible to be enrolled in an ESL class, the figures in Table 2-5 are not necessarily indicative of language proficiency; students are classified as ESL whether or not they possess competence in English. Whether a student is actually placed in an ESL program or not is decided on the outcome of tests administered by the Board of Education.

**Table 2-5: ESL status of students at Barton School compared to all students in the Toronto Board of Education.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESL status</th>
<th>Barton School (% n=302)</th>
<th>all Toronto Board schools (% n=42,881)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-ESL</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of students enrolled in the ESL class at Barton School, while changing constantly as new students arrive and others move on, hovers around 20, or
approximately six to seven percent of the student population. The ESL class is also ethically and linguistically diverse. At the time of the study, students came from sixteen different countries and spoke one of eleven distinct language varieties.

Table 2-6: Country of origin and language(s) spoken by students enrolled in the ESL program at Barton School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's name</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Other languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Shanghaiese</td>
<td>Mandarin, Cantonese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitty</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amir</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Persian (Farsi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Jamaican Creole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corina</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marguerita</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuila</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nireka</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salima</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanaza</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susheela</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahira</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatima</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following section I look at how these students formed into friendship groups.

The structure of ESL student friendship groups at Barton School.

Figure 2-2 below is a sociometric representation of ESL student friendship groups at Barton School. It should be noted that not all of these friendship groups were investigated to the same extent, and the majority of audio recordings made and subsequently analyzed for this dissertation involved the South Asian girls, the Latina girls, and, to a lesser extent the East Asian girls. These groups have been highlighted on
Figure 2-2: Sociometric profile of ESL student friendship groups at Barton School.
the sociometric diagram. However, there are a number of general features associated with ESL friendship groups generally, and which I wish to discuss here. First, the students represented in Figure 2-2 are, for the most part, a single externally-defined group, defined as such on the basis of members' competence in speaking English (with obvious variation in individual abilities). The majority of these students are or were once enrolled as ESL students at Barton (Cindy, Cynthia, Bill, and Jim are examples of former ESL students). Others speak the same first language as their friends in the ESL class (e.g. Paolo, Noor, and Amina (Fatima's older sister)) and learned English as a second language at some point prior to their arrival at Barton. A third subsegment of the students shown in this diagram were not ESL students (e.g. Winnie and Devon). These students were enrolled in the Special Education class for learning disabled students (dubbed the 'retard class' by some students in mainstream grade 7 and 8 classes). A second feature of ESL student friendship groups is their tendency to be divided along the lines of gender. However, there were some significant exceptions to this tendency. For example, George and Daniel sometimes joined Kitty, Melanie, and Lily on the playing field during lunch where they would play tag. Paolo (and occasionally Jose and Eduardo) would sometimes associate with Corina, Gloria, and Miranda on school grounds or at a nearby sandwich shop during lunch. Paolo was a longtime neighborhood friend of Miranda and had a romantic interest in her friend Gloria (and possibly in Marguerita as well). At the same time, romantic interest in people of the opposite gender did not necessarily mean that boys and girls would associate with one another outside of the classroom. Corina, for example, had an on-again-off-again romantic interest in Amir, but they rarely interacted within or outside of the classroom. Two of the ESL student friendship groups, the first composed of south
Asian girls from India and Pakistan and the second composed of Asian girls from Hong Kong, China, and Vietnam tended not to have interactions with boys at all, although members of the former group teased each other about 'liking' boys on a regular basis.

A final and important feature is the tendency for ESL students to form into groups who speak the same first language. Overall, this tendency may help to explain some of the exceptions to the gender segregation tendency discussed above. It would appear that, for ESL students, speaking the same first language is a more important factor in making friendship choices than gender, although this cannot be demonstrated conclusively. The tendency to group according to first language is more pronounced among girls than boys. This may be attributable to the relatively small number of boys in the ESL classroom, who consequently have fewer choices when making friends. Boys also seem to engage in activities which bring them into contact with speakers of other languages. At the same time, these activities are such that a person's ability to speak is less critical. For example, Miguel, George, Daniel, and occasionally Eduardo routinely play soccer on the field adjacent to the school with students from other classes and even students from one of the nearby high schools. Players come from a number of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. However, language choice and language skills are not critical issues because players tend not to speak to one another very often and, when they do, their speech tends to be limited to simple 'attention-getters' or directives such as 'Pass!' or 'Yo! Here!'.

It must also be noted that, although ESL students tend to make friends with others who speak the same first language, friendship groups are rarely linguistically homogeneous. Usually one or two members speak a different first language than the
others. For example, Linda, a Vietnamese speaker, often spends lunchtime at the mall with Cynthia, Susan, and Hanna (who spoke Cantonese when together), dividing her time between this group and her friend Cindy, a former ESL student at Barton who speaks Vietnamese, who she meets at the sandwich shop. Marguerita, a Portuguese speaker from Brazil often eats lunch at the sandwich shop with Corina, Gloria, and Miranda who all speak Spanish. Other times Marguerita accompanies Linda to the mall with Cynthia, Susan, and Hanna. Nireka, a Tamil speaker, is friends with several Urdu-speaking girls.

The tendency for ESL students to group by first language, at the same time that these groups are partially heterogeneous, emerges as a critical factor when examining the ways in which students interact in these groups and how language choice figures in group interactions. This will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

The ESL classroom.

The ESL classroom is situated at one end of the building on the main floor. Figure 2-3 below is a diagram of the interior of the classroom. The physical arrangement of the ESL classroom is different from that found in many traditional classrooms where students are typically arranged in rows facing forward with the teacher seated in front of the class at his or her desk. From a semiotic point of view, the traditional classroom arrangement—a kind of ‘top down’, vertically oriented spatial hierarchy with the teacher at the ‘head’ of the class—seems to reflect the dominant position traditionally accorded to the teacher vis-à-vis his or her students. In the ESL classroom students’ desks are arranged in a ‘U’ shape. Although the teacher has a desk at the front of the class, he spends most of the time at a work table in the middle of the room when not addressing the entire class (e.g. to explain a homework assignment). From this central position the
Figure 2-3: The ESL classroom at Barton School.
teacher calls individual students to him to have their work checked and corrected. Students also approach the teacher to do the same or to ask his permission to get a drink of water or to go to the library. When the assistants are present they circulate around the class working with students at their desks. Alternately, they may sit at the work table at the back of the class with small groups of students. On some occasions assistants will take small groups of students to work in the library in order to relieve congestion in the classroom.

Rather than signaling a non-authoritative orientation, the alternative spatial orientation of the ESL classroom is merely employing a different spatial metaphor, shifting from a ‘top down’ arrangement to a ‘core-periphery’ one. In the ESL classroom the teacher occupies a central point in the spatial layout. Students are obliged to approach this point from their peripheral location, while directives to students and judgments of their work emanate from this central point. These two orientations also tend to emphasize different modes of surveillance. The traditional classroom arrangement emphasizes the teacher’s ‘panoptic’ position at the head of the class (cf. Foucault 1977); it is from this position that the teacher is able to maximize the potential for visual surveillance of student behavior. In the ESL classroom, the teacher’s position at the center of the class differs in that, depending on where he is seated at the work table, some students are out of sight at any given time. However, what this position loses in its panoptic capabilities it makes up for in its ability for auditory surveillance—what could be called its ‘pan-auditory’ capabilities. Whereas in the traditional arrangement the teacher loses the ability to hear voices as students are seated further and further from his or her position at the front of the class, a central position is such that one can hear all student voices equally.
While this may be a way to compensate for ESL students' tendency to speak softly, I believe that this spatial orientation is significant for additional reasons that are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 which investigate how and to what extent student talk is controlled in the classroom setting, and in the ESL classroom in particular.

The social position of ESL students at Barton School.

In this final section I outline some of the ways in which ESL students occupy a marginal position relative to mainstream students at Barton School. To begin, ESL students are housed in a single ‘self-contained’ classroom. Unlike other ESL programs which work on a ‘withdrawal’ principle (where language learners spend most of their time in classes with native speakers and ‘withdraw’ into an ESL class for part of the day), ESL students at Barton are segregated from mainstream students. The only class where ESL students are in contact with mainstream students is Physical Education (approx. 2-3 forty-minute periods per week). Outside the classrooms, there is little contact between ESL students and mainstream students who could serve as model target language speakers. As was shown in Figure 2-2 above the only non-ESL students that have friendship relationships with students in the ESL class come from the Special Education class, another stigmatized group at Barton School. Students in mainstream classes generally avoid friendship relations with ESL students. Some are openly disdainful. In 1996-97 a program was initiated where ESL students were paired with students from the ‘gifted’ program in the library on a weekly basis. Called ‘reading buddies’, the purpose of the program was to have ESL students read to native speakers and receive assistance from them on their pronunciation, etc. However, while no one disputed the benefits this accrued to the ESL students, the program was dropped in 1997-98 due to time
constraints. The ESL teacher attempted to salvage the program by pairing ESL students together, but the contact between ESL students and target language speakers was lost.

Table 2-7: Similarities and differences between primary, senior public, and secondary schools, and the ESL program at Barton School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rotary subjects</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Senior-Public</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>ESL program at Barton School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core’ or ‘homeroom’ subjects</td>
<td>English, Math, Social Studies, Physical Education, Science, (possibly Art, Music)</td>
<td>English, Math, Drama</td>
<td>no core subjects; ‘homeroom’ used primarily for attendance and bureaucratic purposes</td>
<td>Language, Math, History, Geography, Science, Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction between ‘compulsory’ and ‘optional’ courses</td>
<td>all compulsory</td>
<td>all compulsory</td>
<td>some compulsory some optional</td>
<td>all compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Pass/fail’ system</td>
<td>student passes or fails entire year</td>
<td>student passes or fails individual courses</td>
<td>student passes or fails entire year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student government</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockers</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The type and range of subjects that ESL students take is also different from those offered to mainstream students. In general, ESL students at Barton School have much less rotation than their non-ESL counterparts. Although they take Physical Education, Keyboarding, and Design and Technology/Family Studies, they do not take Science, History and Geography, or Music as separate, rotary subjects (although the ESL teacher does try to incorporate topics in these subjects into the ESL curriculum). ESL students do not receive any instruction in French, another rotary subject. A consequence of this minimal rotation is that the ESL classroom looks more like classroom in a primary school and less like the transitionary system offered to mainstream students at Barton School, as
can be seen in Table 2-7 above. It should also be noted that the rotary subjects which are offered to ESL students (e.g. Gym, Family Studies) tend to be those which are less ‘intellectually challenging’ than subjects such as Science, History, or Geography.

A final way in which ESL students are marginalized at Barton School is visible in the school’s annual awards ceremony held during grade eight graduation. There, the school presents, among other awards, the ‘Barton Award’ to a student “who has shown overall excellence during their career at Barton School. They have demonstrated academic proficiency, leadership qualities in many school activities, good attendance and punctuality.” Candidates are nominated by their homeroom teacher and recipients are selected by a vote of all eighth grade students (Barton Handbook 1996-97). ESL students are not nominated for this award. Instead, they can be chosen to receive the ‘ESL Award’, just as students enrolled in the Special Education classroom can receive the ‘Special-Ed. Award’. One gets the impression that ESL students are competing at a lower level, although the criteria outlined for candidacy for the Barton Award could easily be fulfilled by an ESL student.

---

1 These were the most current statistics provided to me by the Principal of Barton School.

2 The number of students claiming ‘English only’ as a home language is potentially misleading. Students who come from the Caribbean and who speak an English-lexified Creole variety would most likely list their home language as English, due in part to the negative stigma attached to Creole varieties. The fact that only four students in the Toronto Board (# of student respondents: 42,881) listed their home language as ‘Creole’ or ‘Patois’, as well as the fact that neither term appeared in the Table for Barton School despite having many students from countries where English-lexified Creoles are commonly spoken (e.g. Trinidad/Tobago, Jamaica) indicates that this is probably the case. The result is that there may be fewer students who speak ‘English only’ at home than the student survey indicates.
One potential weakness of this interpretation of the demographic statistics is that Census Canada uses the term ‘mother tongue’ while the Board of Education uses the term ‘home language’. The former term implies that the respondent is able to speak the language while the latter does not carry such an implication. On the other hand, neither term provides information about whether or not the respondent currently uses the language.

The static representation of ESL student friendship groups in Figure 2-3 tends to downplay the fact that friendship relations shifted and changed over the course of the research period.

On one occasion I met Melinda, a former Barton Student, at the mall during lunch. She asked how I was doing and what I was doing at Barton that year. When I explained that I was studying ESL students she grimaced and said “Why would you want to study them? They don’t even speak English.”

Many ESL students expressed a desire to take French as a subject and were disappointed that they did not receive such an opportunity. The teacher’s response was typically that they were having enough trouble with English and that they could not afford to spend time learning French.
Chapter 3: Methodology.

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of gathering ethnographic data among young students in a school. I begin by discussing two key aspects related to conducting ethnographic research in schools. First, I discuss the formal procedures that are required in order to gain access to students in schools and how I ultimately received permission to observe, interview, and record ESL students at Barton School. In the next section, I review some of the key theoretical discussions of the methodological issues surrounding conducting ethnographic research in schools in particular and among children and adolescents in general. I also detail some of the strategies that I used to gain the trust of the students that I worked with at Barton school and point out some of the limitations facing adults who conduct ethnographic research in schools. In the following section, I briefly discuss the three main methods that I used to gather the data on which this dissertation is based. Finally, I end this chapter by outlining some of the benefits and drawbacks associated with conducting ethnographic research 'close to home'.

OBTAINING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AMONG STUDENTS IN A SCHOOL SETTING

Obtaining permission to study in this particular ethnographic setting involved getting the project approved by the local board of education, by the principal of the particular school that I ultimately attended, by the ESL instructor whose class I observed over the 1997-98 school year, the parents of the students that I observed and recorded, and by the students themselves. Each of these levels of permission—which I discuss in detail in this
section—was a different “gate” that I had to open. The first three levels were staffed by “gatekeepers” who controlled access to students and were charged with acting in what they believed to be the best interests of the students. Only the last level, that of the students themselves, was controlled by gatekeepers who were acting primarily in their own interests.

The Research Review Committee

The school boards to which I applied have committees who are charged with the task of evaluating the research proposals that are submitted to them for review. Committees are primarily composed of school principals. At least one research committee was headed by a full-time director who chairs meetings and acts as a liaison between the committee, the candidate, and the school(s).

Securing permission to conduct research in a school from school boards was a lengthy and, at times, frustrating process. I began by applying to the Scarborough Board of Education in the Spring of 1996. After being turned down, reapplying, and being rejected a second time, I applied to two other school boards in the Toronto area, the Toronto Board of Education and the North York Board of Education, and finally received permission from the Toronto Board in early 1997—almost an entire year later.

During my initial application to the Scarborough Board I had simply filled out the forms as completely as possible and submitted it with no direct communication to any member of the review committee. When I started on the second set of applications I decided that I needed to take a more active approach. In particular, I thought that my chances of success would benefit from having an ‘advocate,’ someone who could identify my project when the research committee met to say that we had discussed the project
together and that, in her opinion, the project had merit. Fortunately, in the case of the Toronto Board of Education, I was able to contact one of the committee members through an acquaintance who was her colleague. I sought out her assistance before I submitted my application and she expressed interest in the project. She also made some suggestions to improve the application. Another thing I neglected to do the first time I submitted an application was specify which school I wanted to work at. I thought that my chances would be greater if I left it up to the committee to match me with a suitable school. I reasoned this time that having the principal of a candidate school willing to accept me there might raise the profile of the application in the eyes of the committee as well as make their job easier. I short listed several potential Senior Public schools in the City of Toronto, Barton being my first choice because of its central location and multi-ethnic student population. I contacted the principal of Barton on the telephone and asked if he would allow me to visit his school to conduct the proposed research. He agreed in principle as long as the project passed the committee.

Unfortunately, when I finally applied, the committee member that I had discussed the project with did not attend the meeting (due to illness) and the project was turned down with no explanation. Extremely upset at this rejection, I immediately contacted the Director and pleaded with him to reconsider the project. When he realized that my “advocate” had not attended the meeting he agreed to meet with me to try to boost the chance of having my proposal accepted at a subsequent meeting. We met on several occasions and he turned out to be extremely helpful, and, in a way, became another advocate for my project (although he insisted that the committee, not he, would decide the fate of the application). He pointed out some areas of my proposal that the committee
might object to (usually liability issues that were related to the school’s need to obtain parental permission for students to participate in any extra-curricular activity). He also provided me with some sample research that had recently been conducted on behalf of the Toronto Board of Education and strongly suggested that I try to incorporate some of the findings of these studies into my research program and to tailor my research to address questions that the school board was interested in. In short, he implied that the committee would want to know what my project would do for them. I endeavored as best I could to portray my project as one that had applied significance to the school board (although I subsequently changed my research program when I started conducting fieldwork at the school) and when my proposal was submitted for a second time it passed.

When I began the application process, and picked up the required forms, I was immediately struck by the kinds of questions that were being asked (see Appendix III for an example of a typical application form). Specifically, I found there was a bias toward the kind of short-term quantitative data collection that is typical of the research conducted in schools. I found it challenging to explain the scope of my very long-term and open-ended research project within the confines of the application form. In addition, judging from the application, the research review board seemed less interested in the theoretical aspects of my research and more interested in its potential applied import and in the day-to-day practicalities of my research program. When would I be doing what? Who would be my subject population? How would I access my subject population and how would I gather the particular data that would answer my research question? What would I be doing at all points of the research program? It is somewhat expected among anthropologists that what one sets out to do and what one ends up investigating are often
very different, because for many anthropologists the process of doing fieldwork involves discovering analytical categories from the native point of view. However, I surmised that this would not be a suitable response to their request for specific information. They were accustomed to researchers doing finite studies on particular subject groups in a set time frame with research instruments that had been carefully designed and successfully piloted. Stating on the application that I wanted to “hang out” with students did not convey the impression that I was a serious and professional researcher. At the same time, I could not ignore that a committee would judge my application on the basis of how I answered these questions; so I had to answer them as best I could. One of the benefits of being rejected several times was that it gave me an opportunity to practice making my project appear more finite and rigid that it would normally have appeared. I also hoped that in addition to submitting a written application I would be allowed to meet with members of the review committee to discuss the project in a face-to-face, and hopefully less formal, situation (some applications stated that this would potentially occur). When I was rejected by the first school board I asked to do this but was turned down on both occasions. As a bureaucratic institution, they retained the privilege of making anonymous decisions.

To summarize, although my dealings at the administrative level were ultimately successful, they consumed a great deal of time. At times, I felt my initial enthusiasm for the project waning with each day spent waiting for approval. I often resented the fact that I was being forced to open up my project to such close scrutiny to people who most likely did not understand the theoretical nuances of my research and probably had never conducted research themselves. In addition, I was being asked to account for every detail
of my research program in order to ask students some questions and record how they talked, while on television I watched camera crews walk into school and record and interview students on a regular basis. I knew they didn’t have to apply to the research committee although their “data” would reach many more people than mine ever would.

**The Principal**

When the project was finally approved I contacted the principal to arrange a meeting in person. Although the principal’s concerns were somewhat similar to those voiced by the research review committee, his tended to cluster around two main issues: how I would minimize my disruption of teachers and students, and what risk, if any, I posed to students.

The principal’s main concern was that I pose a minimal disruption to the daily routines of the school. Initially, when I arrived I explained to him that I did not wish to observe inside the classroom and that I would primarily be conducting my research with students outside the classroom (e.g. at lunch, before and after school, between classes) on the students’ own time and without disrupting their schoolwork. While this ultimately changed, for reasons that are explained below, I endeavored not to disrupt the normal school routine.

The principal’s other main concern was for the safety of the students and for his responsibility to protect the students from harm while they were attending Barton school. While this is understandably a reasonable concern for anyone entrusted with the care of minors its importance was unfortunately underscored at this particular time and place. When I began to attend Barton School there had been two recent cases of attempted child abductions in the area. Everyone was on high alert for strangers entering the building. As
a precaution the principal requested that I submit to and pay for a police background check (which I did). The fact that I was being allowed to roam the corridors of the school, coupled with this state of high alert toward possible intruders, led the principal to request that I also wear an identity tag with the school’s crest on it, in order to prove that I was there for “legitimate” purposes so that students would not report me as a stranger. I wore this for the first several weeks but after that I took it off when I was convinced that my face had been around long enough for people to know that I was legitimately allowed to be in the school. I didn’t like wearing the identity tag because I felt it might signal that I was attending Barton school “on behalf of” rather than simply “with the permission of” the institutional powers that be, which might put me at odds with the students (more on this below).

I asked the principal not to introduce me to students in the classroom or at an assembly (for reasons explained below) but he insisted that he introduce me to the faculty. I was invited to a staff meeting where I was asked to say a bit about myself. I told them what I wanted to spend time observing groups of students in the school, how they formed into groups, and the role that language use played in this process. Although most teachers didn’t offer an opinion (to me) on what I was proposing to do, one or two did object to my presence in the school. They argued that by observing students I would be intruding into their lives. I answered, somewhat defensively, that the students would ultimately decide whether or not they wanted to talk to me and that I would do my best to respect their right to privacy. The principal added that he and the school board had approved the project and they did not feel that what I proposed to do would be a problem. I resolved to keep my distance from these teachers and to not give them cause to support
their initial objections. Even so, they observed me with suspicion for some time. For example, several weeks into my research I decided to bring a camera to school to take pictures of students and the building. The next day I was called aside by the principal who had been “tipped off” by one of the teachers. He asked me why I needed to take pictures and berated me for not clearing it with him first. I sheepishly promised to do so in the future and left secure in the knowledge that my every move was being watched. From time to time I would update the principal on what I was doing and how the research was progressing. However, he was very busy and, provided I stayed out of trouble, he generally let me do what I wanted.

The ESL Instructor

My relationship with the ESL instructor at Barton School began early in the first year of research, although I didn’t formally begin doing research in the ESL classroom until September 1997. He approached me one day as I was watching his students during their gym class. He walked across the gymnasium in order to show me an article that he was reading in a British newspaper about an anthropologist who had allegedly been having sexual relations with children at his research site. I was unsure (and still am) whether the teacher was showing this to me because it was a story about an anthropologist or because, like the anthropologist in the story, I was a researcher who worked with children. I decided not to ask, but told him that I would like to get a copy of the article to read. Over the next few months we continued to talk about the school as well as on more general topics. I discovered that we shared similar attitudes toward educational policies and our relationship remained amicable. When I focused my research interests on ESL learning, I approached him about the possibility of observing his
classroom during the 1997-98 school year. He agreed without reservation, and, in September 1997, I began to attend the ESL classroom on a regular basis.

The students and their parents

I discuss these two groups together because, in an important way, they were interrelated. A preliminary issue at this level was what I had to get permission for. According to the Research Review Committee I would need permission to gather any data via any method: observation, recording, interview or survey questionnaire (which I originally intended to use but eventually decided against). When I discussed the project with the principal he only insisted on getting permission to record and conduct interviews (which I planned to record anyway). I would be permitted to observe and interact informally with students without explicit parental permission. As the students that I wanted to study were legally minors, I was obliged to obtain written permission from their parents before I could ask them to participate in interviews and recordings. I believe there is potential that this requirement risks constructing adolescent students as incapable of making a decision for themselves, and ignores the extent to which students can influence parental decisions. For ESL students this influence is heightened by the fact that, in many cases, students’ knowledge of English is superior to that of their parents, and they often help their parents communicate with teachers and other school authorities (although translators are available and forms are often translated into the parents language). Thus, while parental permission and student consent are in theory separate issues, they appear, especially for ESL students, to be interwoven.

I drafted a consent form in English and asked the principal if I could use the school’s letterhead to make the form appear more “official”. He agreed provided that he
be allowed to view the form in advance. Once he approved the content of the form, I proceeded, with the assistance of several volunteers, to have it translated into the parents' languages (Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, Portuguese, Tamil, Vietnamese). After two or three weeks of being in the ESL class I asked the teacher if I could address the students about the research project. I told them about the project and what I wanted to do. I explained that I wanted to understand what it was like to learn English and that I would like to ask them questions throughout the year and sometimes record them when they were talking. I stressed that I was not interested in how well they could speak English but only in how they learned to speak the language. I asked them to take the permission forms home and to have their parents indicate whether or not they would allow their son or daughter to participate. Once parental permission was obtained I thought that I could then approach the students and ask them to participate in interviews and recordings. However, after a week only a few forms had trickled back in. I quickly realized that there were several problems with this approach. First, I depended on students not only to bring the forms home but also to explain to their parents who I was and what I wanted to do. But since they did not know very much about me how much could they really say? Second, the students were themselves learners of English. Although I labored to explain my intentions clearly and simply it was impossible to gauge whether the students understood what I said. Finally, if the students were initially uncomfortable about participating it was possible that they would not even tell their parents or give them the permission form. In short, although it was the parents that I was addressing, the students exercised a great deal of control over how their parents were to understand me and my intentions. One might even argue that it was the students, not their parents, who were
really making the decision. I decided that if things were going to work I would need more
time to cultivate a stronger relationship with the students before I bombarded them with
forms and questions. Over the next few months I continued to give students copies of the
forms and asking them to get them signed. As time passed, more forms came back and
eventually I had enough that I felt I was ready to proceed.

Getting the students themselves to consent to being recorded and interviewed was
another challenge. What incentives could I provide for them? I did not have much money
while I was conducting research so I could not offer students any direct or indirect
monetary compensation for participating in interviews or group sessions. When I had
been in the ESL class for some time and had been helping some of the students with their
school work on a more-or-less regular basis (I discuss this further below), I played with
the idea of tying my work with them to their work with me. But I was wary of asking
students to participate out of a sense of obligation to me for at least two reasons. First, I
did not want to strengthen the link between my research and their schoolwork because I
felt that this might foreground any institutional identity that they could attribute to me
(more on this below). Second, I did not want to create a strong sense that students were
obliged to me in any way. If they resented being in my presence because they felt
pressured I doubted that they would answer my interview questions candidly. In the end, I
only mentioned to one student that I would appreciate her cooperation since I helped her
with her work almost every day that I was in the classroom. The other students who
ultimately participated did so without further prompting.9

I had assumed initially that students would be wary of participating in recording
sessions since most people tend to get nervous, or behave in uncharacteristic ways, when
an audio or video recorder is in operation. However, I never expected interviews to pose a problem. In reality, students were more likely to object to participating in a one-on-one interview, while only a few seemed intimidated by the idea of being ‘caught on tape.’ One possible reason that students were reluctant to be interviewed was that I chose to interview them individually while the recordings were done among groups of friends where students might feel more secure. But because I was asking them about their friends I wanted to keep them separated so that they could say things that they might not want to say in front of their friends.

THE RESEARCHER’S PRESENTATION OF ‘SELF’ IN THE SCHOOL

Between these two levels [teacher and student] yawns the gap of status distinctions, which a participant-observer cannot necessarily bridge. To participate and observe involves to some extent shedding the researcher role, since participation means accepting in some degree a normal role within the social situation. But to accept such a role, whilst facilitating the process of absorption into the community, entails limitations on material obtained and bias in its interpretation...By accepting a teacher role, I was absorbed into the community of the teachers...[y]et the gap between the teachers and the pupils could not be bridged (Hargreaves 1967: 204).

The above quote neatly illustrates two points that I wish to make in this section. First, ethnographers who choose to conduct research in schools need to construct a role for themselves that will facilitate one’s entry into the community that is the school. However, there are obvious limitations attached to the role that one ultimately accepts in terms of how different roles provide or limit access to different groups and practices within the school community. In particular, for Hargreaves to adopt a teacher role for his research meant that he could pass unnoticed in the school. However, in adopting this role
he found it difficult to observe and learn about the lives of the pupils outside the narrow confines of the classroom.

Doing ethnography in a school involves conducting research in a setting where subjects are primarily oriented to the relationship inhering between two institutionally-constructed identities: teacher and student. Other identities and occupations in the school environment, in comparison, play supporting roles to these two primary identities. Furthermore, the relationship between teacher and student is marked by differences in relative power and authority. Teachers have the authority to judge and discipline students but students, while they may judge teachers in a variety of ways, do not have any institutional authority to do so. Nor do their judgments have any significant impact on teachers’ careers. In primary and through most of secondary school, the difference between these two institutional identities in most cases is reinforced by differences in age, height, modes of dress, as well as interactional asymmetries (e.g. the teacher’s ability to direct and evaluate the worth of student interactions).

While there are many occupational identities that move through schools and play supporting roles (e.g. counselor, custodian/caretaker, nurse, school psychologist), ‘anthropologist’ is not an identity that most students and probably many teachers can readily fit in to their understanding of how the school operates. As an adult researcher working with adolescent students, I had to recognize and deal with the probability that students would assign me an identity in order to make sense of my presence in the school. This would include the possibility that I would be perceived as a teacher, with the power and authority over students that this identity entails. Since I wanted to learn what students’ lives were like outside of the classroom, in particular the kinds of activities that
they took part in outside the immediate institutional control of the school, the potential to be seen as a teacher or somebody allied with the interests of the school meant that I risked losing access to practices that are typically out of bounds to people who claim these identities. In response to this potential barrier, I adopted strategies for ‘impression management’ (Eckert 1989) in order to convey to students that I was less like a teacher and more like one of them. In this section, I review selected literature on the methodological strategies used for conducting research in schools and among children and adolescents in general. I then proceed to discuss the strategies that I used and how they fit in to scholarly understandings of the methodological problems associated with doing research in the school setting.

One of the central methodological problems facing an adult participant observer conducting research with children or adolescents concerns the membership role. How will the researcher construct his or her relationship with the people s/he is studying? While most researchers doing participant observation with children and adolescents agree that it is not feasible to maintain the stance of a detached observer, there is disagreement over whether or not, or the extent to which, one can become part of these subjects’ social worlds. In the case of studying children, Fine and Sandstrom (1988: 13-17) argue that any legitimate interaction between researcher and subject(s) depends on adult authority. Since it is unexpected for an adult to simply “hang out” with children it is impossible to adopt a complete participant role with this subject group. Fine and Sandstrom further argue that the possible roles that a researcher can assume when studying children vary along two dimensions: affective and authoritative. The affective dimension refers to the extent of positive contact between adult researcher and child subject, while the authoritative
dimension refers to the extent to which the adult researcher has any direct authority over
the child subject (Fine and Glasner 1979). These dimensions give rise to four prototypical
roles which the researcher could potentially adopt. For Fine and his associates, the role of
“friend” is the preferred alternative for conducting participant observation with children
and adolescents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+ AUTHORITY</th>
<th>+ AFFECT</th>
<th>- AFFECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘leader’</td>
<td>(e.g. teachers, camp counselors, coaches)</td>
<td>‘supervisor’ (e.g. authoritarian teachers, camp supervisors, religious instructors)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| - AUTHORITY | ‘friend’ | detached observer (not compatible with participant observation) |

**Figure 3-1: Possible social roles for conducting participant observation with children (adapted from Fine and Sandstrom 1988).**

Fine and Sandstrom (1988: 17) explain that,

> [t]he key to the role of friend is the explicit expression of positive affect combined with both a relative lack of authority and a lack of sanctioning of the behavior of those being studied. In turn, adopting a friend role suggests that the participant observer treats his or her informants with respect and that he or she desires to acquire competency in their social worlds.

Furthermore, they argue that researchers embracing the role of “friend” need to emphasize that, unlike parents and teachers, they will not be a disciplinarian and to back that up with consistent behavior (Fine and Sandstrom 1988: 29). Whenever the researcher feels the need to intervene in or direct the activities of children or adolescents (e.g. stopping a fist fight), it should be clear that the intervention is personal and not because of institutional concerns.¹⁰

Mandell (1988: 433) argues that there are three possible observer roles that researchers can adopt when studying the behavior of children: the detached observer, the friendly, non-authoritative, marginal role, and the fully participating member. She argues
that researchers advocating the first (detached) role assume that the worlds of children and adults are so separate that adults can only research children from an objective, impersonal stance. On the other hand, advocates of the semi-participatory role (she includes Fine and his associates in this group) recognize some dimension of age and authority separating children from adults. In this understanding, the goal is to minimize these differences by assuming a less threatening role of non-interfering companion (i.e. ‘friend’). Drawing from research conducting participant observation with children enrolled in day care centers, Mandell argues that child-adult differences are more ideological than previously acknowledged. She advocates the third role, that of a full participant (what she refers to as the “least-adult” role). In this role, the researcher suspends all adult-like characteristics except physical size, and attempts to put aside ordinary forms of adult status and interaction (e.g. authority, verbal competency, social mastery), in order to participate as a child in the child’s social world (Mandell 1988: 435, 438).

My reason for presenting these methodological strategies for conducting participant observation with children and adolescents is not to argue for adopting one approach over the other. In fact, once the theoretical arguments are put aside, the actual strategies associated with adopting the ‘friend’ role or the ‘least-adult’ role look remarkably similar. Instead, I argue that the success of doing participant observation with children or adolescents depends on the researcher’s skill as an ethnographer and on the particular strategies s/he adopts, and not on the particular theoretical model he or she happens to accept. I discuss these approaches in order to underscore the point made that researchers must actively construct and manage a role for themselves that will be
accepted by those they are studying, in this case adolescent students. This notion of role construction is similar to the notion of ‘impression management’ espoused by Penelope Eckert in her research among adolescents in suburban Detroit high schools (Eckert 1989). Eckert’s notion can itself be traced back to Erving Goffman’s notion of ‘face’ and ‘face work.’

Goffman (1967: 5) defines ‘face’ as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes.” The notion of face is based on an understanding of humans as dramatic actors and assumes that people construct images of themselves (faces) which they work to maintain during interactions with other people who are concerned with maintaining their own self-image. Goffman uses the term ‘face work’ to refer to “the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face” (Goffman 1967: 12). While I take ‘face work’ and ‘impression management’ to be synonymous, it should be pointed out that Goffman’s term refers to actions that are performed at an unconscious level, while Eckert’s term refers to a consciously strategic construction of a particular self-image that will facilitate relations with one’s research subjects. One might get the sense that a researcher who uses impression management is engaged in a willful deception of his or her subjects, creating a false impression that differs fundamentally from, and masks, one’s ‘true’ self. However, in this thesis, I subscribe to a more post-modern sense of self, one that is multiple, complex, and not reducible to some unitary and essential core. In this research project I did not willfully convey a deceptive image of my self and my research intentions to students (or teachers, or Review Committee members, or the principal, or students’
parents). Rather, I manipulated the presentation of my self such that certain characteristics were foregrounded while others were not in order to convey an impression of my self that was accessible and agreeable to students and those others who controlled access to the school and students.

While conducting ethnographic and sociolinguistic research among adolescent high school students, Eckert found that her main job in impression management was to distance herself from the norms and authority structure of the school and to establish for herself an identity that did not resemble an existing institutional role (Eckert 1989: 29). Although the strategies that she used to construct a suitable impression of herself were specifically chosen for conducting research in schools, Eckert notes that impression management is a research strategy that is employed by ethnographers in more traditional research settings.

...the challenges and responsibilities of doing participant-observation in an American high school are not very different from those facing an ethnographer working in any other culture or age group. I was an outsider trying to get to know and understand a community. I needed to gain the confidence and trust of the members of the community so that they would allow me access to their activities and knowledge, and I needed to become sufficiently part of the local woodwork to be able to observe activities without producing a distraction...And I needed to overcome the mistrust of a subordinate community towards me as a member of a dominant power group (Eckert 1989: 25-26).

In order to do this, Eckert adopted a variety of specific and general strategies aimed at maintaining the impression that, while being an adult, she was primarily allied with the interests of students. She spent each day at the school much like a typical student. She arrived at the beginning of the day and stayed until nothing else was going on. Occasionally she went to fast food restaurants where students went to avoid class or wandered the streets with someone who was skipping school. She sometimes went to
students' homes or to parks and other places where students could be found. However, most of her research took place in and around the school during school hours. When in the school she avoided classrooms to keep from being associated with the official functions of the school or with the authority of teachers and school administrators. She decided against having her own room in the school in order to convey the impression that she was an outsider with no great status. She chose to make her own informal introductions to students rather than being introduced by the principal and she introduced herself to students as “Penny Eckert”. Eckert also dressed in a style that reflected the dress of many of the students in the school. Finally, she specifically chose not to ask students about certain kinds of activities (sex and drugs). In the case of drugs, she wanted to avoid being seen as a ‘narc’ or as someone who could notify authorities of students’ illicit activities (Eckert 1989: 28-35).

Other scholars conducting ethnographic research in schools have faced similar issues. For Example, in her research with fourth and fifth grade elementary students, Barrie Thorne was also attuned to the possible problems facing an adult doing research with young students, although she did not explicitly address the notion of impression management.

My greater size; my access to special relations with the principal, teachers, and aides; and my sheer status as an adult in an institution that draws sharp generational divisions and marks them with differences in power and authority, posed complicated obstacles to learning from kids. I knew that if I were too associated with adult authority, I would have difficulty gaining access to kids’ more private worlds. Nor did I want the tasks of a classroom or playground aide. The practical constraints of keeping order and imposing an agenda would, I quickly realized, run against the open-ended curiosity and witnessing that ethnography requires (Thorne 1993: 16).
Thorne employed strategies to distance herself from adult authority. She encouraged students to call her by her first name. She also addressed teachers as "Mr. X" or "Ms. Y" in order to show that, like students, she was also required to show respect for teachers and that she did not share in their high status. She accompanied students in their daily activities, sitting in the scaled-down chairs and desks. She moved with them through the school, ate with them, and followed them during recess. In general, she avoided positions of authority and rarely intervened in a managerial way. Although students sometimes tried to appeal to her adult status in order to resolve problems, she explained to them that she did not have the authority to help them in that way. When students openly violated school rules in her presence (e.g. swearing, blowing bubbles) she felt that her strategies were successful. While Thorne’s strategies were geared towards minimizing the social distance between herself as an adult researcher and her young subjects, she also notes that as an adult visitor to the school she could come and go as she pleased, she was free from the control of teachers and the principal, and she could even enter the school when kids were not allowed to. In many ways, then, she maintained a status that was also different from most students in the school (Thorne 1993: 13-19).

Like Thorne and Eckert I was keenly aware that I needed to present myself to students in a particular way if they were going to allow me into their lives, both in the classroom and away from the panoptic lens of the school. Below, I describe some of the impression-management strategies that I employed when observing and interacting with students at Barton school.

I mentioned above that when I initially arrived at the school I chose not to accept the principal’s offer to introduce me to students in their classrooms. Like Eckert, I did not
think it would be wise to be associated with the formal setting of the classroom, particularly during the initial stages of the project. I also did not want to be associated too closely with the principal. Instead, I asked that I be allowed to gradually introduce myself to students in an informal manner. I met students when I wandered the halls, and sometimes stood at the door of the gymnasium and in other places where I would not be intruding on a lesson in order to quietly watch what was going on. I sat on the couches in the library talking with students and writing in my notebook. The principal also offered me a room for conducting student interviews which I politely declined so as to show students that I had no special school privileges. Instead, I asked if I could have a locker to store my coat and my equipment. I would go to my locker during times when students were doing the same. Some of the first students that I met were my 'locker mates'. When I attended school assemblies I sat on the floor like students did rather than on the wooden benches that were reserved for faculty. I made a special effort to appear clean shaven whenever I attended Barton, and I attempted to dress in a style that somewhat resembled that of many of the boys who attended the school: baggy jeans or khakis, baggy t-shirts, and brand-name sneakers.

During the first stage of the project (February 1997 to June 1997) I did not conduct any research inside the school classrooms. Instead, when in school, I met with and talked to students in the hallways or in the library. During lunch hour and after school I would encounter students out in the yard, in the cafeteria, or at the mall. The fact that I met with students in the yard and at the mall—places where teachers were rarely seen and did not normally interact with students—may have helped convey the impression that I was a different kind of adult.
Finally, the way that I talked to students assisted in the construction of my 'non-teacher' identity. While I never became fully competent in the local adolescent vernacular, I made a conscious effort to use language in order to convey the impression that I was a 'youthful adult', and someone with some knowledge of and interest in adolescent popular culture. The fact that I listened to and could talk about various styles of contemporary music (in particular the genres that many adults find irritating—e.g. hip hop, grunge) helped to establish credibility with some students. I always introduced myself to students using my first name “Warren” or sometimes a shortened form “War”. I consistently referred to teachers and the principal by their title and last name like the students did.¹² In the end, students used a variety of terms to refer to me ranging from Warren and War to Mr. Observer, Observer Warren, Mr. Canada, Mr. Warren, Oliver, and Gretzky.¹³ Although I asked students to call me by my first name, I never pushed the issue and, in general, they called me what they wanted.¹⁴

It is not possible to prove the success of the impression-managing strategies that I used. It is possible, however, to discuss some of the indications that the strategies that I used either worked or did not. In reality, every act on the part of students that could be interpreted to mean that my strategies were working also functioned as a test of the impression that I was continually constructing of myself in their presence.

During the first stage of the project, there were several indicators of success in impression management. On more than one occasion, particularly during the early weeks of research, students would ask if I could let them into a room that had been locked (many of the doors in the school are locked for security reasons), obviously thinking that I was a teacher, or perhaps a custodian, and had the keys to let them in.
As I gradually met and fostered friendly relations with some of the students, the indications that I was being treated differently from a teacher were clearer. Most of the time, students would openly swear in my presence and I tailored my speech to suit such occasions. One thing that I was unprepared for was the amount of physical contact that adolescent students have with one another, constantly touching, pushing and poking. Thorne (1993: 15) argues that most adults perceive this level of physical contact to be an invasion of personal space and reports that students did not engage with her physically. Unlike Thorne, I was continually being bumped, poked, and sometimes even wrestled. Although I was uncomfortable with the kind of physical engagement that students had with one another and with me (and needless to say that I did not want to reciprocate), since I never witnessed this behavior between teachers and students, I interpreted it as an indication that I was being treated like other students would be treated.

One of the clearest indications I received that my impression management was working occurred late one afternoon in the Spring of 1997. A student that I had been talking to on and off for several months approached me in the hall and told me that there was going to be a fight after school in the yard and that I should be there to witness it. I was initially hesitant to go, lest I be seen by one of the teachers or by the principal, who might interpret my presence as condoning any actions that had occurred. But since I had been explicitly invited, I felt that I had to attend. After all, this person was indicating to me that I could be trusted not to tell the school authorities that a fight was about to occur. When I arrived there was a large group of people surrounding two boys that were about to spar. I heard somebody say that the fighters should stop when they saw me approaching. To my surprise, somebody said that I was ‘OK’ and that I would not get anyone in
trouble. At the time I felt nervous at being seen by a member of the school faculty or staff and somewhat upset at the violence that I was witnessing. At the same time, though, I felt elated that I was being trusted to ‘watch and learn’ an act that is explicitly forbidden by institutional regulations and which is taken very seriously by the school authorities.

Another occasion which indicated that my impression management was working occurred in the school library where I had been talking with two girls. The glass doors at the entrance had been locked as the librarian was not present at the time. Two boys came to the door and knocked to get in. The girls initially refused to open the door, but eventually let the boys in. Once inside, the boys began jostling with the girls and yelling at them for not opening the door earlier. One of the boys came over to where I was sitting and showed me that he had a small knife in his pocket. I became panicky, not for my own safety, but because he was roughhousing with one of the girls and I was afraid that either of them might trip and get stabbed and that I was the only adult present. I decided not to do anything and nothing happened thankfully. I counted all of us lucky and took it as a sign that my alliances were being tested.

At the beginning of the second stage of the project (September 1997 to June 1998), after I had decided to focus my research on the ESL student population at Barton, I arranged to attend the ESL classroom as part of my research program. I made this decision partly because I wanted to observe the day-to-day operation of the ESL classroom and how the students learned English, both in the classroom setting as well as outside. I also chose to attend the classroom because I felt that it was necessary to meet and make arrangements with potential research subjects as quickly as possible. This was especially important given the fact that I had to go through the process of obtaining
written permission from the students' parents which I knew would take some time. Since all the ESL students were grouped together into one classroom, by attending the class I would not have to meet them one at a time. In spite of this benefit, the fact that I was now attending classes put a strain on my ability to manage my 'non-teacher' identity that seemed to have been successful over the first several months of research. A conflict arose between the wish to avoid being seen as a 'teacher-like' adult and the ethical need to minimize the disruption of my presence in the classroom on the learning process. I felt that I could not simply sit at the back of the class, watching and listening (although I obviously spent considerable time doing just this) when both the teacher and the students were struggling with their collective situation. The teacher was clearly struggling to cope with more students than he should have reasonably been expected to teach, and I felt an obligation to him because he had generously opened the doors of his class to me. In addition, because I could not directly compensate students for their assistance with my project, and because the teacher did not have the time to give each student the attention he or she needed, even with the help of part-time assistants, I felt obligated to pitch in. Thus, I endeavored to help students with their math or language work when they approached me to do so. This strategy differed somewhat from the teacher and his assistants who would actively seek students to work with. Thus, I managed to differentiate myself from the behavior of the teacher and his assistants and remain someone who could help when needed but who was not overly concerned with whether or not the students actually did work.

Often, when the teacher needed to leave the classroom to make photocopies or to go to the bathroom, he would leave me in charge of the class. He never explicitly said
what I had to do, just that he ‘had to leave for a few minutes’. Although I was hesitant at having any authority bestowed on me, I never refused his request, resigning instead to not intervene in whatever the students might do in his absence.

Thus, the teacher also saw me as capable of filling several adult roles (e.g. confidante, friend, helper) and assumed that he would benefit from my presence in the classroom. Both students and the teacher demanded behavior and activities from me in order that I could continue to have access to their worlds. The fact that these demands were often contradictory made it all the more difficult to negotiate a stable identity. There were indications that, at times, my impression-managing strategies were not entirely successful.

Adolescents often actively seek autonomy from adults. In addition, the school allots specific times when students are not under their direct control. For most students at Barton these times were spent at the mall, in the shops nearby the school, or in the yard. But these were the very situations that I wanted to access: the student activities and practices that unfolded away from the panoptic gaze of the school. Sometimes when I was observing or interacting with a group of students I got the feeling that they wanted to get away from me, although no student ever told me to go away, or that they did not want to be bothered. Sometimes they would simply walk away. Although disheartening, I understood how my presence could easily become tiresome, and I never followed students after their discomfort with me became more apparent. It is obvious judging from these situations that students, although they may not have seen me as a teacher, were also not seeing me as a ‘friend’, but rather as an interested adult outsider who they sometimes tolerated and, at other times, sought to avoid.
Thorne addresses an important ethical issue that researchers who study controlled and subjugated groups must acknowledge: whether and how one's research can undermine these groups’ struggles against those who control them.

Several kids asked me if I was a spy, and, in a way, I was, especially when I went in search of the activities and meanings they created when not in the company of adults. Schools are physically set up to maximize the surveillance of students, with few private spaces and a staff who continually watch with eyes that mix benign pedagogical goals, occasional affection, and the wish to control. Kids sometimes resist this surveillance, and I wanted to observe and document their more autonomous collective moments. But in the very act of documenting their autonomy, I undermined it, for my gaze remained, at its core and in its ultimate knowing purpose, that of a more powerful adult (Thorne, 1993: 27).

Students at Barton may have rightly wondered if I was a spy for the school authorities. Once, when I was walking through an alleyway behind the mall, I saw three girls from the school in the distance ahead. When I approached I noticed that they were smoking cigarettes. When they saw me they quickly threw them on the ground and pretended that nothing had happened. I resisted the adult urge to lecture them on the dangers of smoking and instead I told them to relax and that I would not tell anyone. Clearly relieved, they thanked me and I left them alone. Their initial fears were based on the assumption that I was a potential spy who was in the position to report student transgressions. This was an impression that I had to fight at every available opportunity.

The concept of impression management is a valuable tool for ethnographic researchers. However, through the course of doing research at Barton, I found that there were limitations to this concept and that sometimes it just did not work. Some limitations were tied to the fact that, in order to ensure the continued goodwill of those who let me conduct research at Barton, I was required to maintain a professional distance from my research subjects. My access to the school was contingent on the fact that I was an adult.
researcher who was different from students and that I would not act in ways that could jeopardize the students’ safety, make the school board liable, or that the school authorities found objectionable. For example, I could tell students that I would not turn them in if I saw them smoking, but I would not have dreamed of lighting up a cigarette with them (although I smoked at the time and could theoretically have used smoking as a way to ‘bridge the gap’ with these students), because, as an adult, my presence in students’ illicit activities would be interpreted by school authorities as a form of condonement. When students playfully hit me or attempted to wrestle with me, I could not fight back because I was an adult and I knew that I would be held accountable should anyone get hurt and that my research would be in jeopardy if I did. I couldn’t participate in other activities that were banned by the school such as snowball fights (although most of the students ignored the ban) for the same reasons.  

Although I consistently tried to eschew any authority that went with my adult status, students sometimes exploited my ‘older person’ status to achieve particular ends, and this conflicted with the impression of myself that I was working to create. For example, one afternoon I sat and watched a group of students in the basement of the school who were purportedly working on an act for an upcoming talent show. In reality, they were not really working but talking and having fun. The principal came down the hall and asked them what they were doing and who had given them permission to do it. They replied that they were ‘with me’ which, to my surprise, the principal accepted as valid. Another time, the ESL teacher left me ‘in charge’ of the class while he went to use the photocopier. After a few minutes the noise level in the classroom began to increase. On top of this, two boys began to shout at one another across the room which rapidly
escalated into a shoving match. More than one of the students asked me to tell the two boys to shut up. This was one of the only times where anyone had directly asked me to take a position of authority toward students. I said that I would not intervene because I was not their teacher. To my surprise, the students then became angry with me. One even called me stupid for not telling the boys to shut up. Luckily, the teacher entered the classroom soon after and I did not have to do anything more. Although it is apparent that students did not always interact with me as if I were a teacher (even in the last example a student called me stupid—something I believe she would not have said to a teacher), the above examples show how, in order to achieve their own ends, students could strategically construct an identity for me that conflicted with my own strategies of impression management. Furthermore, the need to guarantee further access to the school meant that I could not participate in students’ lives as another student might, even if they had let me.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The data which forms the basis of this dissertation was gathered through the use of three main ethnographic methods:

1. through participant observation among ESL student friendship groups in the classroom and outside the school;

2. by conducting interviews with ESL students, the ESL teacher, and the educational assistants who worked in the ESL classroom; and,

3. by audio-recording of ESL student friendship groups inside and outside the classroom

In this section, I discuss how these methods were used.
Participant observation

In my research I wanted to know what it was like to be a learner of English in the school, so I sought to observe and learn about the kinds of things that ESL students did to learn and practice speaking English. This meant observing ESL students in the classroom as well as when they were ‘on their own’ in the school yard, on the street, or at the mall. I spent an entire school year (September 1997 to June 1998) observing and interacting with the ESL students at Barton school, in addition to spending several months (February 1997 to June 1997) engaged in preliminary observation, learning the layout and rhythms of the school. I chose to conduct a longitudinal study of one group of students, rather than study a larger sample, because I felt that it was more important to get to know the students as much as I could so that I could observe and record their interactions without disturbing their activities too much. In effect, I wanted to minimize the effect of the observer’s paradox. I made notes based on my daily observations in a small notebook that I carried with me at all times. Taking notes in the presence of students was sometimes challenging. Often, they wanted to know, and see, what I was writing, and if it was about them. On many occasions, my desire to be open and forthcoming with students regarding what I was doing and writing down conflicted with my need to preserve student anonymity, as students would inevitably see what I had written about other students. I explained that I would allow them to read what I had written about them, but not about other students. Fortunately, in most cases this problem was avoided by the fact that I have very messy handwriting. I also developed the practice of only writing down keywords when taking initial notes which I would expand on later when students were not around. In this way, my notebook was usually out of sight.
Interviews

In addition to the day-to-day routine of participant observation, I also conducted one-on-one interviews with students, the ESL teacher, and his assistants. I chose to do interviews in order to ask questions that had arisen as a result of participant observation as well as to collect needed background information on students and teachers. In total, I conducted formal interviews with the ESL teacher, the three ESL assistants, and seven students. All interviews were audio-recorded for purposes of accuracy and then transcribed (for content only). ESL students were all recorded in the library while the teacher and the assistants were interviewed in the classroom when students were not present. Although the number of one-on-one interviews with ESL students was low (for reasons that I attempt to explain above), they are supplemented by many discussions that I had with students during the course of day-to-day observation. These informal interviews were not recorded but on many occasions I was able to take notes on the spot or write in my notebook after the student had left.

Audio-recording

Data were also gathered by audio-recording interactions among ESL student friendship groups inside and outside the classroom. To a lesser degree, I also recorded classroom interactions (i.e. where the teacher or an assistant interacted with the students in small groups or with the whole class). In total, over 45 hours of recordings involving ESL students as participants were made. All interactions were recorded onto standard audio cassettes using a Sony TCD5M stereo cassette recorder and a wide-angle clip-on microphone. Although the participants were aware that I was recording their interactions, I also wanted to minimize the intrusion of the recording device, in order to obtain a
realistic representation of the kinds of interactions that occur when they are not paying attention to the recorder. For language learners, who I often found to be apprehensive about speaking in general, this was a particularly important issue. In order to minimize the intrusiveness of the recording device, it was kept out of sight in a small leather briefcase that I carried on my shoulder. The microphone was clipped to the exterior of the briefcase and could be pointed in the general direction of the interaction that was being recorded. In general, the students did not seem to be affected by the recorder once it was presented in this manner. However, an earlier attempt to record students (non-ESL students that I arranged to record during the first stage of the project) with the recorder out in the open resulted in much talking and yelling directly into the microphone and generally a good deal of attention being paid to the recording device itself.

Although I was successful in gathering a large corpus of recorded data containing many significant and revealing teacher-student and peer interactions, not all of the corpus was of a high sound quality due to the fact that interactions were recorded using a wide-angle microphone, which picked up a lot of extraneous noise from passing cars and buses as well as from students that were not part of the group that I was recording at the time. However, I could not use a narrow-angle microphone as I wanted to record the voices of all participants in an interaction without having to point the microphone at each participant when they spoke. In future, I plan to avoid this problem by using several narrow-angle wireless microphones, one attached to each participant. Also, using a four-track cassette recorder instead of a standard stereo (i.e. two-track) recorder would allow each speaker to be recorded on a different track. This setup would theoretically allow for each participants’ voice (to a maximum of four) to be isolated for the purposes of
transcription while all tracks could be bounced onto a single cassette for playback purposes. While the sound quality would not be as high as that obtained from a digital recorder, the four-track would easily make up for that in ease of transcription, which I found to be the most difficult part of the data-analysis process.

After I finished the data-gathering stages of this project, I reviewed each cassette in order to produce a catalogue of all the interactions contained in the corpus. The catalogue listed information including where each interaction took place, the participants, the tape count, and a brief summary of what was occurring in each interaction. This allowed me to quickly locate particular interactions that I wanted to transcribe, and it gave me an overview of all the interactions that had been recorded. The particular interactions that are presented in subsequent chapters of this dissertation (chapters 4-8) were transcribed using (in slightly modified form) the conventions employed in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) and developed by Jefferson.17

**DOING FIELDWORK ‘CLOSE TO HOME’**

My decision to conduct ethnographic research in a setting that was close to where I lived and worked as a graduate student was one that I came to early in my career as a graduate student. There are several implications tied to conducting research ‘close to home’—some positive and some negative. In this final section I explore some of the benefits and drawbacks of this decision.

Some of the more obvious benefits of conducting research close to home were related to the physical proximity of the research site both to my home and to the university. This meant a number of things. First, the expenses of travel to and from the
research site were virtually eliminated. I was able to walk, bicycle, and occasionally take the transit to and from Barton school. Second, in principle I would be able to return to the research site after I had formally completed the research, which would be helpful if I needed to answer questions that I had neglected to consider earlier. Third, doing research 'close to home' meant a minimal disturbance of the relationships that I have with my family and friends. I did not have to suffer the burden of being separated from my partner and the rest of my family and I could count on them for support when I needed it. Finally, I had the option to continue working at the university as a Teaching Assistant and part-time Instructor so that I could afford to continue conducting research at Barton while still covering the day-to-day expenses of living.

At the same time, there were potential drawbacks that accompanied all of the potential benefits discussed above. The costs associated with living and conducting research in a city such as Toronto meant that I had to work at the same time as I was conducting research. This meant that a significant amount of time was spent preparing and doing work that bore little relation to my research. As well, there were times when it was not possible to go to Barton at all due to my other responsibilities. Being close to the university meant that I was also in some way tied to the activities that were going on in the department. Although I do not regret having the opportunity to participate in scholarly activities apart from my research project, it meant that my research experience differed from traditional understandings of fieldwork as a total immersion in one's field setting. In contrast, I often found it difficult to feel that I could immerse myself in my fieldwork, which has traditionally been seen as an important factor in arriving at native understandings of social phenomena. For me, research was but one (albeit important)
element in my daily routine which involved other kinds of work, time spent with family, and friends, and preparation for impending parenthood. The fact that I could count on my partner and family for support meant that I was also obligated to remain in their lives and to participate in our lives together. I feel that if I had been alone doing research far away my fieldwork experience would have been quite different, although no more or no less valid.

But what constitutes valid fieldwork is based on what is considered a valid 'field.' One does not simply choose to conduct research in specific field settings as opposed to others. Rather, the choice is based in part on what is to be considered an appropriate site in which to conduct anthropological research. This, in turn, is often defined according to "shifting entanglements of anthropological notions of 'culture areas,' the institutional politics of 'area studies,' and the global order of nation states" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 8-9). At the same time, these processes of 'field construction' are often obfuscated; anthropologists rarely reflect on the institutional and disciplinary routes that lead them to select particular sites as appropriate for conducting fieldwork. Thus,

[w]hat is...surprising is the recurrence of anecdotes in which experienced fieldworkers relate how they 'stumbled' on to their field sites entirely 'by chance.' Just as the culturally sanctioned discourse of 'hard work' and 'enterprise' enables the structurally patterned outcomes of career choice in competitive capitalism to disappear from view, so do the repeated narratives of discovering field sites 'by chance' prevent any systematic inquiry into how those field sites came to be good places for doing fieldwork in the first instance (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 11).

Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 12) argue that the construction of 'appropriate' anthropological 'fields' is based on traditional (primarily Malinowskian) conceptions of fieldwork that retain an archtypical status within the discipline. This conception of fieldwork is premised on the radical dichotomy between the spatial location of 'home'
(typically Western, urban) and ‘field’ (typically non-Western, rural), between the identity of researcher ‘self’ (typically white and male) and researched ‘Other’ (non-white, indigenous), and between different types of knowledge (i.e. exotic/‘different’/‘local’ vs. familiar) and the consequent privileging of the former. The radical distinction between ‘field’ and ‘home’ also serves to hierarchically organize potential ‘field’ sites into more or less ‘field-like’ locations, with the most ‘field-like’ locations being those that least resemble ‘home.’ Although many anthropologists now conduct fieldwork in non-traditional settings, Gupta and Ferguson argue that this idea often continues to separate those anthropologists who have done ‘real fieldwork’ from those who have not. This separation functions as a gatekeeping mechanism for entry into professional positions, for publication in anthropological journals, and other necessities of professional development (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 13-15).

In what way does this dissertation bear on traditional understandings of ‘the field’? On the one hand, it could be argued that the simple fact of conducting fieldwork in a non-traditional ‘field’ serves as a means to underscore the legitimacy of conducting ethnographic research in such locales. At the same time, although I discuss the procedures that I had to follow in order to obtain permission to conduct research at Barton School in order to show that I did not simply ‘stumble’ on my field site, I believe it would be unreasonable to claim that my project exemplifies a radical critique of traditional conceptions of the field and of fieldwork. My decision to conduct research in Toronto was made more with the desire to preserve important personal relationships and a way of living to which I had grown accustomed than a desire to deconstruct ‘the field’ as an anthropological construct.
At the same time, it must be acknowledged that each gatekeeper has his or her own interests at stake. These interests may be professional (e.g. How will this project affect the image of our school board/my school/my classroom?) or personal (e.g. What questions will this person ask about my family?).

The research described here took place before the school boards in the now defunct Metropolitan Toronto were amalgamated into one school board when the cities and one borough comprising Metropolitan Toronto were amalgamated into the City of Toronto.

One school board that I applied to stated that their new policy was to not accept applications for research that they did not solicit. In other words, the only research to be conducted in their schools was on topics that were specified by the board as approved topics.

This underscores the importance of having an advocate in order to get permission at the administrative level to conduct research.

These teachers did not seem to acknowledge that they engaged in systematic observation of students on a daily basis, arguably with more impact on students lives than my research could ever have.

Again, I felt unjustly scrutinized. Teachers, students, and others routinely took pictures in the school. One co-op student working in the ESL classroom spent an entire afternoon snapping pictures without incident. For some reason my status as a “researcher” meant that I had to clear any act that might generate “data”.

Eckert (personal communication) told me that for her research in high schools in the suburban Detroit area she was only required to get consent for audio recording. When I told her about my dealings with the school boards in Toronto and their objections to my research program she was amazed at what level of consent they were asking me to obtain.

In addition, as newcomers to the country, there was the possibility that the students’ parents might be suspicious of strangers who wanted to ask probing questions. In addition, the possibility that the legal status in Canada for many of these people was tenuous (and that some might be here illegally) may have added to their reluctance. While I stated on the permission form that no people would be identified, there was little more that I could do to quell any suspicions.

Fine and Sandstrom (1988: 24) argue that there is a danger for researchers who use rewards and gifts to gain entrance into the social situations they wish to study because they ultimately become accepted for what they provide rather than “who they are” and may be seen as useful only so long as they continue providing these things. On the few occasions when I offered to buy students lunch, they refused, saying they would help anyway.
Fine and Sandstrom argue (1988: 26, 71) that while the participant observer can justify not interfering with the illicit actions of adults, the justification becomes problematic when the research subjects are minors because there is the expectation, especially when permission has been granted by adults and school authorities, that the adult researcher is responsible when the subjects are in his or her "charge". They further argue that the issue is clear when the subjects are young children, but with adolescents it is less so because they are often capable of making adult decisions but they lack the social right to do so.

One of the ways in which I maintained an ideological distance from the principal was to tell students that I was afraid of him. The fact that he was very tall and had the habit of standing over and looking down on people, and the fact that most students I knew were afraid of him, helped to convey this impression. In fact, I was somewhat intimidated by him. On one occasion I was called to his office over the P.A. system. The students I was talking with at the time heard the announcement and teased me that I was about to get into trouble.

After several months, the ESL instructor insisted that I call him by his first name. I did but only when not in the presence of students. When I was with students I wanted to retain a formal distance between him and myself.

"Oliver" is a common mispronunciation of my last name "Olivo". Several students from one class called me "Gretzky", saying that I resembled the famous hockey player. I also felt that, since I bear only a general resemblance to Wayne Gretzky, perhaps they called me by this name because, like Gretzky, I was white and Canadian-born.

One ESL student, Salima, always called me 'Mr. Warren'. I told her that it was just 'Warren' and that she did not have to call me 'Mr.' assuming that she was calling me that because she was associating me with a teacher identity. Her reply was that in her culture (she is Muslim from Pakistan) elders, even older siblings, are referred to with an honorific title.

The question of whether students knew that I was not a student and used this knowledge to do things to me that I could not do to them (e.g. fight me or throw snow at me) is an interesting one, but one which did not occur to me at the time.

Mandell (1988: 441-42) argues that children have little experience with adults as participatory and nonjudgmental which is why they initially protested her refusals to adopt an authoritative position and intervene on their behalf. The encounter that I discuss here occurred toward the end of my research after carefully constructing a non-authoritative impression of myself. Either Mandell is incorrect in suggesting that by demonstrating one's commitment to being non-authoritative one can overcome this tendency, or I failed in impression management.
Below I have listed the transcription conventions used throughout this dissertation which were modified from those used in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). For the sake of clarity I have attempted, where possible, to adapt transcripts taken from other sources (e.g. in Chapter 4) to this set of conventions. The use of these conventions allows for the researcher to show the content of particular interactions (the words that participants are literally saying) as well as to show other features of talk-in-interaction that contribute to the meaning of particular utterances, for example speech volume, intonation, or laughter, as well as the ways in which utterances are linked together and the ways in which interactions are locally-managed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thic</td>
<td>word cut off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mathrm{X}$</td>
<td>inaudible syllable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mathrm{V}$:</td>
<td>colon represents elongated vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mathrm{(M)}$</td>
<td>timed pause, $\mathrm{M}=$ time in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\cdot$</td>
<td>pause of less than one second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\textit{boldital}$</td>
<td>word stressed through intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mathrm{ital}$</td>
<td>English gloss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$&lt;$words$&gt;$</td>
<td>transcriber’s comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>question intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mathrm{CAPS}$</td>
<td>loud speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mathrm{und}$</td>
<td>quiet speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mathrm{<em>word</em>}$</td>
<td>word or words stressed through slow speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[$]</td>
<td>overlapping speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>${}$</td>
<td>point where parallel interaction begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>${}$</td>
<td>point where speaker changes interactions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reality, although many questions were raised after I had begun analyzing my data, over half of the students had already left Barton School at the same time that I ‘exited’ the field (June 1998). The rest were gone by June 1999.
Chapter 4: 
Discourse management in traditional classrooms.

This chapter and the following one investigate the phenomenon of ‘discourse management’ in the classroom setting. In this chapter I look at the management of student talk in traditional classrooms while in Chapter 5 I turn to an investigation of discourse management in the ESL classroom at Barton School. I argue in this chapter that classroom discourse management is motivated by a language ideology (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskry 1998, Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, Rumsey 1990) where student talk is conceived of as antithetical to their ability to do ‘work’. Since doing ‘work’ is seen as a means toward the acquisition of academic knowledge, teachers actively manage their classrooms in order to minimize the amount of student talk that occurs there.

In this chapter, I critically review the available literature that discusses the ways in which teachers in traditional classrooms manage student opportunities to talk. I argue that, in addition to the use of more obvious meta-pragmatic directives (e.g. ‘stop talking’) to discourage particular forms of student talk, the minimization of student talk is also achieved by the way in which teachers structure classroom interactions. I examine the predominant turn-taking system that operates in the classroom setting, the nature of interactional sequences in classroom lessons, and teachers’ use of ‘contextualization cues’ in order to show how these features structure and limit student participation as speakers in classroom interactions. Following this, I examine several explanations for the phenomenon of discourse management in the classroom setting.
IN CLASSROOMS, ‘TALK’ ≠ ‘WORK’

Teachers are likely to have thirty or more potential speakers to manage, often within a central communication system in which whoever is speaking is supposed to be heard by all. It is not surprising, then, that ‘irrelevant talk’ and ‘excessively noisy talk’ figure so prominently in reports of pupils misbehavior, or that such a high proportion of teachers disciplinary actions are directed against talking out of turn (Edwards and Westgate 1994: 46).

I argue that traditional classrooms operate under the assumption that working and talking are antithetical. That is to say, there is a kind of ideological wedge driven between work and talk. Moreover, in this dichotomy, working is clearly the preferred element as it is students’ work that is seen as a means toward acquiring academic knowledge, which is the rationale for having children attend school in the first place. The importance of this language ideology in traditional classrooms is linked to the teacher’s institutional role as an evaluator of students’ work as well as a manager of the classroom and the activities (including talk) that occur there. A classroom where talk is present, but where it is not clearly directed at some task or goal, is typically seen as one where work is not being carried out. Too much talk (as defined by the teacher), or talk that is not clearly elicited by the teacher, often prompts the teacher to call for quiet. The ideology separating talk and work is clearly audible in the directive, ‘Quit talking over there and get back to work!’ or, ‘Turn around and get back to work!’ in addition to other examples that I overheard being used in classrooms at Barton school. Although these are important examples in that they clearly illustrate the teacher’s understanding that particular forms of student talk interfere with students’ ability to do their work, in this chapter I focus on the less visible means by which teachers exercise control over talk in the classroom. While such means do not eradicate student talk they nonetheless control student opportunities to
talk and consequently work to minimize its occurrence.

In this section I critically review the literature on classroom interaction in order to outline some of the ways in which teachers exercise control over talk in the classroom. This discussion includes an overview of the predominant mode of teacher-student interaction, classroom turn-taking procedures, and the use of ‘contextualization cues’ by the teacher to direct students’ attention. In the section that follows I turn to the question of why teachers engage in classroom management, in particular the management of student talk, in order to ask why teachers see classroom control as such an important skill.

Based on her research in schools on the Warm Springs Indian reservation, Susan Philips argues that,

[i]n traditional grade school classrooms, children are expected to master not only the content of the curriculum material presented by the teacher, but also the socially appropriate use of communicative resources through which such mastery is demonstrated (Philips 1983: 73).

Philips further argues that students receive instruction in how to behave in ways that convey they are attending to the teacher and how to take turns at talk in an orderly fashion. Teachers give directives to students about how to properly proceed if they violate classroom turn-taking procedures (e.g. ‘Don’t talk when someone else is talking.’) (Philips 1983: 92).

What are the turn-taking procedures that operate in the classroom? Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson’s (1974) analysis of turn-taking procedures in conversation is based on the premise that that conversation exists at one extreme along a linear array of different kinds of talk, and that the chief difference between ‘ordinary’ conversation and other kinds of talk (e.g. lecturing, interviews, ceremonial talk) has to do with the extent to which turns at talk are pre- or locally allocated. Sacks et al (1974:730) speculate that
other kinds of talk in this array represent transformations on the basic turn-taking system used in ordinary conversation. Building on this premise, McHoul posits four transformational rules to account for turn-taking procedures in the classroom:

(I) For any teacher’s turn, at a turn-relevant place...
   (A) if the teacher uses a ‘current speaker selects next’ technique, then the right to speak is given to a single student; no others have such a right or obligation.
   (B) if the teacher does not use ‘current speaker selects next’ technique, then current speaker must continue.
(II) If Ia is effected, for students turn...
   (A) if the student uses ‘current speaker selects next’, then the right to speak is given to the teacher; no others have such a right.
   (B) if student doesn’t use ‘current speaker selects next’, then self-selection may be instituted by the teacher.
   (C) if the student doesn’t use ‘current speaker selects next’ then current speaker (the student) may continue unless the teacher self-selects.
(III) For any teacher’s turn, if I-A or I-B has not operated and the teacher has continued, then rules set I-A - I-B reapply at each subsequent transition-relevance place until transfer to a student is effected.
(IV) For any student’s turn, neither II-A or II-B has operated and II-C is in operation, then the rule set II-A - II-C reapply at each subsequent transition relevant place until transfer to the teacher is effected (adapted from McHoul 1978: 188-189).

McHoul generalizes these transformational rules into a summary rule: only teachers can direct speakership in any creative way. Students are not supposed to select themselves as speakers nor can they select the next speaker unless it is the teacher (which, according to McHoul, does not constitute a choice insofar as it is a choice of one only). These rules and the summary rule present the resources by which the right to speak is differentially distributed among inhabitants of the classroom. Given this, one would not be surprised to see that teachers in traditional classrooms do the bulk of speaking. McHoul (1978: 208) estimates that 80% of the utterances in his data on classroom interaction came from the teacher.

Philips (1983: 74-81) argues that the talk which occurs in classrooms is organized in two main ways: the ‘official’ structure of teacher-student(s) interaction and the covert
‘infrastructure’ of interaction among students. The ‘official’ structure represents the channel through which curriculum content is transmitted and is controlled by the teacher. “When a student speaks, that student cannot be said to have the floor unless the teacher attends. The teacher can choose to attend to another, or to speak” (Philips 1983: 76).

Thus, the “teacher determines who is to be defined as speaker and through responding, the teacher determines who will be defined as having spoken” (Philips 1983: 76, cf. Bourdieu’s 1991 notion of legitimate speaker/hearer). In fact, Philips argues that in the ‘official’ classroom interactions, the teacher participates in each interaction either as speaker or hearer. In Philips’ research, teachers structured student participation in ‘official’ interactions through the use of three turn-taking procedures: requests for ‘choral’ responses; the use of ‘rounds’ where students are chosen in sequence to respond; and the use of a ‘first come first served’ system where students bid for the floor through, for example, the raising of hands (Philips 1983: 77-78). These mechanisms for allocating student turns at talk are all controlled by the teacher. The turn-taking mechanisms also correspond roughly with the different ‘participant structures’—structures through which teachers and students interact—that exist in the classroom. Situations in which the teacher interacts with the class as a whole are typically characterized by the use of choral responses or first come first served invitations to bid. When the teacher works with smaller groups of students, interactions are usually characterized by the use of rounds. Interactions between the teacher and individual students are characterized by first come first served invitations to bid. During periods where students are working individually at their desks typically no one is permitted to talk. Hence, opportunities to speak are not allocated by the teacher at all (Philips 1983: 78-81).
Philips argues that interactions characterized as ‘infrastructure’ involve two or more students and are usually not concerned with curriculum content. These interactions are initiated and maintained by students. Unlike ‘official’ interactions, the rules governing turn-taking procedures in these interactions are locally-managed rather than pre-specified (cf. Sacks et al 1974). The teacher is rarely involved in these interactions except to terminate them (Philips 1983: 90-91). Hence, while the ‘official’ activities of the classroom are controlled by the teacher and are governed by the use of pre-specified rules of interaction and specific turn-taking procedures, Philips demonstrates that students bring to the classroom other ways of interacting that potentially come into conflict with the ‘official’ agenda of the classroom. The significance of this point will become clearer when, in the following chapter, I look at how ESL students create opportunities to speak within the overall structure of classroom interaction that has been set up by the teacher.

Perhaps the most prevalent feature of classroom interaction is the use of triple utterance sequences that take the form ‘initiation’, ‘response’, and ‘evaluation’ (Mehan 1979). Mehan examines the social organization of interaction in an elementary school classroom. In his study he describes the structure of classroom lessons and the interactional activities of teachers and students that construct lessons as social events. According to Mehan, ‘lessons’ are interactional accomplishments that are governed by rules for turn-taking, and these rules are tacitly agreed upon by teacher and students alike. During lessons, students not only absorb and display knowledge about the curriculum; they also learn about the norms of communication that operate in the classroom, such as turn-taking procedures. Thus, being a competent student involves matters of form as well as content. Students must learn the appropriate form in which to cast their academic
knowledge. "They must know with whom, when, and where they can speak and act, and they must provide the speech and behavior that are appropriate for a given classroom situation" (Mehan 1979: 133).

For the purpose of analysis, Mehan divides 'lessons' into three phases: an opening phase, and instructional phase, and a closing phase. Opening phases, in which information is provided about what is going to happen during the main (instructional) phase of the lesson, and when participants are physically rearranged to prepare for instruction, are marked by the predominance of directive and informational sequences. Instructional phases are marked by the predominance of elicitation sequences that take the basic initiation-response-evaluation form (Mehan 1979: 36). Different elicitation types seek different kinds of information and will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Closing phases are typically mirror images of opening sequences, where participants formulate what they have done during the lesson (Mehan 1979: 46).

During lessons, each sequence initiated by the teacher is followed by a reply from students (though not necessarily verbal responses, as, for example, in the case of a response to a directive to move to another place in the classroom). Furthermore, there is a tendency for response acts to correspond to initiation acts (e.g. directives to move correspond to students moving, or elicitations correspond to verbal responses). Once a sequence has been initiated, interaction continues until symmetry between initiation and reply acts is established. If an acceptable reply occurs in the next turn of talk it gives rise to a three-part sequence, as in the following example:

Transcript 4-1: Three-part interactional sequence (Mehan 1979: 50).

Initiation  teacher  Now who knows what this one says? This is the long word. Who knows what it says?
Response   student  Cafeteria.
Evaluation teacher  Cafeteria...good for you.
Three-part interactional sequences of this type contain two coupled adjacency pairs. The first pair is the initiation and response. When completed, this pair becomes the first part of the second pair. The second part of this pair comments on and evaluates the completion of the first adjacency pair (Mehan 1979: 54). In cases when a reply is not immediately forthcoming, the initiator employs various strategies (e.g. prompting replies, repeating elicitations, or simplifying elicitations) in order to elicit the appearance of an acceptable response, giving rise to more extended interactional sequences. Mehan (1979: 80) reports that in his data on classroom lessons, teachers initiated interactional sequences over 80% of the time (cf. McHoul 1978). This figure indicates that teachers exert a great deal of control over the direction and content of classroom interactions.

Mehan further demonstrates how teachers maintain order during classroom interactions through the use of three basic turn-allocation procedures: 1) individual nomination; 2) invitations to bid; and 3) invitations to reply. In the case of individual nomination the teacher calls on a particular speaker to answer, either by name or by some non-verbal means (e.g. pointing). In the case of invitations to bid the teacher asks students to raise their hands or asks 'who knows the answer to...?'. A respondent is then selected from a pool of potential respondents. Bidders normally raise their hands to indicate their willingness to reply, although they sometimes bid by saying 'I do' or 'I know', etc. Finally, in the case of invitations to reply students are allowed to state what they know directly, without being named or by obtaining the floor through bidding. In such cases, students often reply in unison (Mehan 1979: 84-95). Mehan further argues that there are co-occurrence relationships between the turn-allocation procedure used by the teacher and the response received. For example, the student chosen to speak by the
teacher in an individual nomination sequence is the one who must reply. Student responses that do not follow these procedures are violations of the turn-taking procedures and thus subject to sanction by the teacher (Mehan 1979: 103). Table 4-1 below summarizes the interactional sequences that formed his corpus in order to demonstrate the existence of these co-occurrence relationships.

Table 4-1: Summary of interactional sequences (Mehan 1979: 106).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT ACTION</th>
<th>TEACHER EVALUATION</th>
<th>Applied as predicted</th>
<th>Not applied as predicted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>normal forms of interaction</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
<td>sanctioned violations</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>451</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interactions where responses followed the form specified through the turn-allocation procedure put in place by the teacher account for over 88% of all interactions, whereas violations of the particular turn-allocation procedure in operation were sanctioned by the teacher approximately half of the time. In total, interactions ended predictably (i.e. student responses were not sanctioned when they followed the turn-taking procedure in operation, but were sanctioned when turn-taking procedures were violated) in just under 94% of all cases.³

Thus, during lessons, teachers control the form that particular interactions take by maintaining the right to initiate interactions. At the same time teachers allocate participation rights to students by controlling different turn-taking procedures.

The teacher’s use of the turn-allocation machinery...functions to distribute participation among students according to different classroom circumstances. It can be used to provide the teacher with an effective method for controlling replies...or to facilitate the participation of...students (Mehan 1979: 123)

Mehan’s research thus focuses on ‘lessons’ as the primary types of interactions
that occur in the classroom. He argues that teacher and students 'cooperate' to produce lessons as interactional accomplishments (Mehan 1979: 72). However, by focusing on the production of lessons as cooperative enterprises, Mehan tends to downplay the possibility of simultaneous and alternative activities (e.g. talk among groups of students) that may come into conflict with, or disrupt, lessons (cf. Philips 1983: 74-76, Bloome and Knott 1985: 58) or other forms of student participation in 'official' interactions, such as small group work, where student talk is allowed to some extent. In the following chapter, I look at some of the ways in which the ESL students at Barton participate in 'official' interactions or lessons and examine the extent to which student participation in these activities conflicts with or evades the teacher's control over classroom discourse.

Another linguistic tool that contributes to teachers' control over classroom discourse is the use of 'contextualization cues' (Dorr-Bremme 1990; cf. Gumperz 1982). Contextualization cues convey information that people use to interpret one another's 'situationally relevant social identities and the nature of the activity at hand' (Dorr-Bremme 1990: 379). Dorr-Bremme investigates how contextualization cues can serve as a means to regulate the flow and content of talk in the classroom, thereby playing an important role in the enactment of teachers' authority in the achievement of orderly classroom interactions (Dorr-Bremme 1990: 380). Contextualization cues are routinely used to verbally mark the boundary between classroom activities. Teachers use such terms as 'all right', 'right', 'okay', or 'now', usually followed by a brief pause, to direct students toward the teacher's official agenda. Thus, they serve as a means of regulating discourse and enacting the teacher's authority as a teacher. Contextualization cues as boundary marking devices function to help the teacher maintain control of the floor in
order to sustain his or her teaching agenda, to resume activities after interruptions, or to regain control of the class when order breaks down (Dorr-Bremme 1990: 388-389). On the other hand, the absence of such cues at activity boundaries is often treated as a significant omission. Students routinely act as if such an absence means that the teacher has opened the floor for conversation (Dorr-Bremme 1990: 389). Through analysis of video-recorded classroom interactions, Dorr-Bremme shows that when the teacher utters a contextualization cue at an activity boundary the students always wait silently with faces and bodies oriented toward the teacher, often throughout an extended pause as in the example below:

Transcript 4-2: Contextualization cue used as boundary marker (adapted from Dorr-Bremme 1990: 392).

1 teacher Arthur (0.7) now. (0.8) Shh! Last time, too. (2.1) Elaine.
2 (3.0) <turns away from group to reach something, turns back> All right. (4.3) <slides chair back, glances at calendar, scans group> Does anybo[dy
3 [ 6 Laura Today is December eleventh.
4 teacher You’re right. That’s right, today is! What day is it?
5 students Wednesday.

This interaction develops at the beginning of an ‘official’ activity, where the teacher speaks to students who have not quite settled themselves. However, once the marker ‘all right’ is uttered at line 3, students attention is immediately focused on the teacher and remains focused throughout the long pause that follows (4.3 seconds). In contrast, in all cases where cues are absent at activity boundaries, the teacher’s control over the students talk lapses, and students begin to call to the teacher, converse with other students or glance about. Furthermore, order is only restored when the teacher utters one or more contextualization cues. When the teacher does so, the students re-orient their gazes to the teacher immediately and soon fall silent (Dorr-Bremme 1990: 390). The example
transcribed below illustrates this point:

Transcript 4-3: Absence of contextualization cue at activity boundary

1  teacher  We stopped at twenty three. (0.5) We usually have how
2  many?
3  students  Twenty four.
4  teacher  So how many people are not here?
5  students  One.
6  teacher  One, and it’s Ronald.
7  Lana     Ronald.
8  Kara     Ronald’s not here.
9  teacher  You’re right. It is Ronald. (1.1) Katie, would you go
10  shut the door please?
11  Billy    Ms. Wright, [is the calendar up here yet?]
12  Rachel   [I don’t want to hear them.]
13  teacher  (to
14  Billy)   What?
15  Billy    Is it up here yet?
16  students <whispered talk>
17  teacher  Excuse me. (0.6) Excuse me.
18  students <continue whispering>
19  teacher  Yeah, you’ll have to put the stool against it <student
20  is closing the door>
21  Kara     Ms. Wright
22  Billy    I think that, uh
23  students <begin raising hands, waving them>
24  teacher  Wait a minute Billy. (0.5) Wait a minute Rico. (1.2)
25  Billy    I think [I got work now
26  teacher  What?
27  Billy    I think I got to go work now.
28  teacher  I think you can probably wait a few minutes.
29  Gina     I can count [up to twenty.
30  Alice    Ms. Wright, Ms. Wright.
31  Susan    <undecipherable talk>
32  teacher  Susan (0.9) Susan! (1.7) <turns to Alice> No thank you.
33  Laura    Ms. Wright.
34  students <whispering>
35  teacher  <scans group> All right. (0.6) No no. Whose turn? Come
36  on. I want you to finish this up today then I’ll talk to
37  you. (1.2) This morning (4.2) <scans group>

In this example, one activity ‘seeing who is absent’ ends unmarked at line 9 and students
begin to call the teacher’s name and to wave their hands in the air in bids for individual
recognition. Others initiate topics with questions and statements (e.g. lines 11, 28), while
the teacher attempts to silence the group and regain the floor. She repeats the words
‛excuse me’ to the entire group and issues individual directives to several students (e.g. lines 16, 23) as well as using non-verbal means to generate silence. None of these strategies generates the desired effect until at line 34 the teacher utters the marker ‘all right’ and the students begin to fall silent and seat themselves facing toward her.

The examples provided by Dorr-Bremme demonstrate how the teacher’s use of markers signal to students that the context is changing while contributing to the accomplishment of that change. Markers function both as contextualization cues and as means of social control.

I have outlined some of the key features of classroom interaction in order to show the means by which teachers control talk in the classroom. These features are summarized in Table 4-2.

**Table 4-2: Summary of teachers’ mechanisms for controlling ‘official’ classroom interactions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURES OF ‘OFFICIAL’ CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS</th>
<th>DISCOURSE CONTROLLING EFFECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Classroom interactions take the form of ‘initiation’, ‘response’, ‘evaluation’ sequences.  
1) Teachers initiate interactional sequences.  
2) Teachers evaluate student contributions to interactional sequences. | 1) Teachers control the interactional agenda; student talk is mainly in response to teacher initiations/elicitations.  
2) Teachers define whether or not a student’s response is valid, correct, etc. |
| Teachers control the turn-taking system and choose which turn-taking procedures are in operation at a given time. | 1) Students must speak within the confines of the turn-taking system in operation.  
2) Students are chastised or their talk ignored when turn-taking procedures are violated. |
| Teachers use 'contextualization cues'. | Cues used…  
1) to mark topic shifts in ‘official’ interactions:  
2) as a means of securing the floor;  
3) to establish the ‘official’ agenda of subsequent interactions. |

**WHY DO TEACHERS CONTROL STUDENT TALK?**

Before reviewing the explanations to the above question, it is worth mentioning the relative importance placed on classroom control as a skill to be attained by those in the
teaching profession. My own search of the University of Toronto library database under the heading 'classroom management' turned up just under five hundred entries, the majority of which were prescriptive texts written for teachers which provided diagnoses and offered solutions to classroom management problems.

Asking why teachers control student talk allows us to explore the range of possible answers that have been put forward to explain this phenomenon. Many explanations of classroom control see it as means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Most teachers...realize that students are not in school primarily to learn how to sit quietly, behave in an orderly manner, and follow prescribed routines. These objectives are valued principally because of the belief that they contribute to the academic learning of students.... Classroom management is a subordinate objective, important because of its contribution to other objectives (Sloane 1972: 7).

In this view, then, classroom management is seen as a means to promote an atmosphere conducive to student learning, which is the primary objective in the classroom. One of the principal reasons given for classroom management is that it is necessitated by the demographic reality of most classrooms. The sheer number of students, as well as the student-to-teacher ratio demands that the teacher be able to control the amount of talk that goes on in a classroom. Otherwise, cacophony would ensue and students would accomplish little work. Of course, this notion is predicated on the understanding that students’ ability to learn by doing their work is put in jeopardy by their propensity to engage in talk.

Denscombe (1984, 1985) provides an extended discussion of classroom control from a sociological perspective. He sets out to describe and explain why teachers find it necessary to exert control in classrooms and how this is achieved. Denscombe emphasizes the social causes of the problem of classroom management rather than
explaining it in terms of individual student or teacher behavior. He also examines these social causes from a micro-analytic perspective rather than linking the phenomenon of classroom management to larger social forces (cf. Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Bowles and Gintis 1976), arguing that on “…the vast majority of occasions, the efforts of teachers to control pupils…are inspired by far more parochial, practical factors that operate at a routine level within the institution of the school” (Denscombe 1985: 6-7).

Based on research in schools and interviews with teachers, Denscombe argues that teachers understand that classroom control is a vital component of their occupation. Control is not simply a desirable complement to teaching skills, but an absolute imperative without which teaching cannot take place. Teachers who cannot control their class are seen as poor teachers, no matter how brilliant they may be (Denscombe 1985: 52). Several factors shape teachers’ understandings about the importance of classroom control. One such factor is that part of teachers’ work involves a custodial element which requires an ability to control the behavior of pupils. Teachers operate in loco parentis, and, as such, have the right, within reasonable limits, to exercise discipline. Also, since teachers can sometimes be held liable for the actions of students in their care, they also have an obligation to control them. Teachers thus recognize that success at their job requires a capacity to establish and maintain control. Also, in most cases teachers are expected to work as individuals. ‘Closed’ classrooms that are spatially segregated from one another reinforce the autonomy of the teacher with respect to his or her class. Teachers are rarely in the position to observe, let alone supervise or control, the activity of colleagues. Thus, what goes on in the classroom is more or less protected from direct surveillance, supervision, or direction. This autonomy, however, is a double-edged sword
since the burden of achieving control is placed on the shoulders of individual teachers. Also, since classrooms are segregated and immune to direct surveillance or supervision, other teachers, principals, and faculty are rarely in the position to observe colleagues at work. This is where control over classroom ‘noise’, and student talk in particular, becomes important. Student talk which escapes the classroom can be taken as evidence that the teacher lacks control over his or her classroom.

One aspect of the social significance of noise...rests on its status as ‘evidence’ about a state of affairs in closed classrooms—specifically the ability of the teacher to achieve control of the class and the consequent implications of this for their competence as teachers (Denscombe 1984: 137).

Since teachers see quiet classrooms as ones in which learning can best take place, and see their jobs as working to ensure learning, then noisy classrooms must indicate that the teacher is not in control of his or her classroom. Thus teachers work to minimize the amount and level of student talk. On the other hand, students who are silent are often wrongly perceived by the teacher as being academically involved (Denscombe 1984: 153). Also, activities that pupils do that do not involve talk, but which are obviously subverting the teacher’s agenda (e.g. not listening to what the teacher is saying), are often accepted more readily by teachers than activities which involve talk (Hargreaves et al 1975: 37).

Thus, according to Denscombe, it is for these reasons that teachers tend to monopolize classroom talk and strive to minimize the amount of student-initiated talk. Since teachers must also elicit talk from students (e.g. during lessons), this talk must be carefully monitored in order to maintain classroom control.
If pupils begin to talk amongst themselves spontaneously it poses a problem because it moves the focus of interaction away from the teacher and it takes the initiative for interaction away from the teacher—both of which are regarded as vital for control through domination (Denscombe 1985: 104, italics in original).

Denscombe provides a detailed explanation for why teachers see classroom control as vital to the work that they do. However, his explanation does not answer why classroom silence is equated with control in the first place. Denscombe's focus on micro-relations within the school leaves him unable to link teacher's understandings of classroom control to larger social forces. The answer to this question lies in the ideological separation of talk and work in the school that was outlined at the beginning of this chapter. I believe answering this question requires that we seriously examine the arguments put forward by educational theorists interested in how schools are complicit in the reproduction of social inequality.

In a 'reproduction theory' of education (e.g. Bowles and Gintis 1976, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Willis 1977), the school is not understood a means toward human emancipation. In contrast to 'liberal' theories of education (e.g. Dewey 1966), reproduction theorists argued that the primary function of the education system is the reproduction of social inequality, particularly the class structure. In a capitalist economy, schools are given the task of reproducing labor power for an industrial order where occupations are organized hierarchically (Willis 1977:x). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), the importance of institutionalized knowledge and qualifications lies not in their potential for technical or humanistic advance, but the role that they play in processes of distinction and social exclusion. The education system does not teach valued skills so much as it judges who has them and who does not, and directs people toward
different roles based on whether or not they possess these skills.

Reproduction theorists have examined how the school demands that students be able to perform in the classroom using specific styles that are consistent with a white, middle-class culture. Examples of these styles can be found in the school's emphasis on individualistic learning, submission to and respect for authority (e.g. teachers and parents), competence in literate forms of discourse and in other forms of discursive practice (cf. Bourdieu 1977). While some of these things are part of the school's formal curriculum (e.g. learning to read), other aspects of the school experience constitute what some scholars have called the 'hidden curriculum' of the school (e.g. Jackson 1968, Apple 1971, Dale 1977). This concept refers to the processes of ideological transmission that are linked to the teaching process itself, and foregrounds the education system as an institution of social control, rather than a means toward freedom (Dale 1977:45). Thus, the features of 'official' classroom interactions found in traditional classrooms function to reinforce asymmetrical power relationships between student and teacher. Students are taught to recognize and respect institutionalized power inequalities through these procedures. Those who do not (i.e. who talk out of turn, or talk back to teachers) are often labeled 'disruptive' or 'troublemakers' and suffer the consequences of this stigma. This understanding is in line with Philips' (1983) argument that the turn-taking system used in traditional classrooms is such that it prepares students (or alternatively judges students' suitability) for the kinds of interactional situations they are likely to encounter in future institutional and occupational realms. The turn-taking system used in the classroom is also used for organizing interaction among people in the occupational world that most eventually enter, “a world which is typically organized around hierarchies of positions.
which have associated with them the same kind of differentiation of interactional prerogatives that distinguish teacher and student. Thus, at business meetings, it is the 'boss' who regulates employee turns at talk" (Philips 1983: 94-95). In this understanding teachers' control over classroom discourse is an end in itself as it prepares students for future adult roles. In other words, the ideological separation of talk and work, and teachers' subsequent control over student talk in the classroom are the means by which unequal social relationships are reproduced in the school setting, and the means by which students are socialized into the unequal social relationships they will encounter outside the school.

...appropriate participation requires of pupils that they listen or appear to listen, often and at length. They have to know how to bid properly for the right to speak themselves, often in competitive circumstances....They have to accept that what they do manage to say in answer to a teacher's question will almost certainly be evaluated..., may well be interrupted if judged to be irrelevant to the teacher's purposes, and may be so heavily modified and translated to fit the teacher's frame of reference as to be no longer recognizable as their own contribution at all (Edwards and Westgate 1994: 40).

The above quote nicely summarizes the limitations placed on student participation in 'official' classroom interactions. In the following chapter I examine the extent to which control over student talk is practiced by the ESL teacher and his assistants at Barton School. I also ask whether the ideological separation of talk and work is reflected in the way the ESL teacher and his assistants talk about the ESL classroom and what goes on there. Finally, I examine the ways in which ESL students understand the value placed on student talk in the classroom, and ask whether ESL students at Barton School challenge the control placed on their ability to talk by the teacher and his assistants.
The dichotomy between 'ordinary' and 'institutional' forms of talk has been subject to critique by McElhinny (1995). In this dissertation, I am also critical of this dichotomy. In Chapter 6 I examine cases where participants act in institutionally sanctioned ways in what would typically be considered 'ordinary' peer interactions.

I would dispute the claim that rights to speak are always given to one student only, although this is often the case. Philips (1983: 78), for example, found the use of 'choral' responses among her student subjects. Mehan also discusses the use of 'invitations to reply' by the teachers which often elicit responses from more than one student (Mehan 1979: 95). However, the argument that teachers still direct classroom interaction remains valid.

In choosing the term 'infrastructure' Philips lends an air of legitimacy and importance to forms classroom talk that might otherwise be seen as trivial and which detract from the official agenda of the classroom.

McHoul (1985: 57) refers to this sequence of interactional moves as 'question', 'answer', and 'comment'. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 21) refer to the same basic sequence as 'initiation', 'response', and 'feedback'. Mehan (1979: 43) argues that the use of grammatical terms such as 'question' is misleading in this case because an utterance may take a particular grammatical form while its illocutionary force may be of a completely different utterance type. For example, 'Can you stop talking please?', when uttered by a teacher would tend to be interpreted by a student as a directive to stop, and not as a question as to whether or not the student can or wishes to stop talking. As such, Mehan prefers the use of the terms 'initiation', 'response', and 'evaluation'. Because Mehan provides the most comprehensive analysis of these interactional sequences, I have adopted his terminology here.

'Unwarranted sanctions' refer to cases where the teacher sanctions a student who has not clearly violated turn-taking procedures. 'Unsanctioned violations' refers to cases where the teacher does not sanction a student who was observed to have violated a turn-taking procedure. Mehan explains that the majority of tokens which appear under the 'not applied as predicted' column can be explained by the teacher's use of 'improvisational strategies' in which the 'normal' turn-taking procedures are temporarily suspended for various reasons (Mehan 1979: 106). However, these occurrences account for only a small fraction of classroom interactions and will not be dealt with here.
Chapter 5:
‘Where would you rather be?’: Discourse management in the ESL classroom.

In the previous chapter, we saw how activities in traditional classrooms are structured by the teacher in order to minimize student talk. I argued that this practice is based on an ideological belief that operates in traditional classrooms where student talk and work are understood to be antithetical. In this chapter I turn to an examination of the ESL classroom at Barton school in order to ask whether student talk is kept ideologically separate from work as it is in more traditional classrooms.

Researchers studying processes of second language acquisition (e.g. Swain 1985) argue that language learners require opportunities to practice speaking in order to develop their language skills. Talk is thus seen as part of the labor students must perform in order to learn a second language. The idea that ESL students need to speak in order to learn was generally accepted by the ESL teacher and his assistants. The benefit of practice was a point which cut across the interviews I conducted with the ESL teacher and his assistants.

1) Warren: THAT WAS GOING TO LEAD INTO MY NEXT QUESTION: RULES ABOUT TALK.

Sandra: Silent reading you say ‘Stop talking’ but other times— I have quite a tolerance for noise as long as it’s conversational. Of course there’s no yelling and screaming but I feel that in an ESL class especially a self-contained class I would encourage them to talk. Off topic is okay too but if they’re working say in small groups on a particular project then I would encourage them to stay on topic. If it gets off topic as long as they’re doing their work that’s fine. I feel that talk is how they learn and how they get to know each other and how they acquire skills so I have quite a tolerance for noise and talk in the class.
2) Warren: *DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC RULES ABOUT TALKING?*

Pat: *I'm always open for discussion. Even if we're in the middle of doing some school work and they want to talk about something else I figure if it's something they really want to talk about I'll stop and listen because that's part of communicating and learning English too. I don't think school has to be such an uptight experience. It should be more relaxed where they feel that they can talk if they want to.*

3) Warren: *WHAT ABOUT RULES THAT ARE BASED AROUND TALKING? WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO TALK? WHEN IS IT NOT APPROPRIATE TO TALK?*

Teacher: *...talk about the class and what's going on if they have a problem or are discussing a point or something like that that is good. I like them to talk about what they're doing because they've got to use the language. They help one another.*

The above examples all show that for ESL students talking is seen as beneficial to the process of second language acquisition. This suggests the existence of a local language ideology where talk is part of work, rather than antithetical to it. In this chapter I ask whether the traditional language ideology outlined in Chapter 4 is incorporated into the ESL classroom where there is the explicit aim of getting students to talk. In order to answer this question, I draw from interviews conducted with the ESL teacher and his assistants and conduct an analysis of recorded ESL classroom interactions, focusing on three main things:

1. Does the ESL teacher and/or his assistants sanction student talk in the classroom? If so, to what extent?

2. What turn-taking procedures are in operation in the ESL classroom? What effect, if any, do turn-taking procedures have on opportunities for ESL students to talk?

3. What are the routine activities and tasks that students perform in the ESL classroom?

To what extent do these contribute to students' need to practice speaking English?
In addition to this general analysis, I conduct a detailed analysis of the use of elicitations by the ESL teacher and his assistants with students in order to see whether elicitations contribute to students’ need to practice speaking English.

The analysis outlined above focuses on the institutional structuring of student talk in the classroom setting. As a counterpoint to this ‘top-down’ analysis, this chapter ends by examining some of the ways in which students structure their own opportunities to speak in the classroom setting. This final section leads us into the following chapters which focus primarily on student interactions with other students in the classroom as well as outside the school in the yard and the local environment and looks at how students structure opportunities to speak in these settings.

THE SEPARATION OF TALK AND WORK IN THE ESL CLASSROOM: EVIDENCE FROM INTERVIEWS AND CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

It was noted above, that generally the ESL teacher and his assistants viewed student talk as being beneficial for processes of language learning. However, when asked about classroom rules, and about rules related to student talk in particular, the ESL teacher and his assistants pointed to the existence of specific kinds of talk that were not considered to be beneficial. The ESL teacher referred to this type of talk as ‘socializing’. Socializing was generally perceived as a form of talk that was not part of work, that hindered students’ ability to do their work, and which did not play a role in the process of language acquisition. Again, there was a general consensus about this kind of talk among the ESL teacher and his assistants.
4) Warren: *DO YOU EXPECT STUDENTS TO ABIDE BY PARTICULAR RULES WHEN YOU'RE WORKING WITH THEM? ARE THERE ANY SITUATIONS WHERE YOU MIGHT STEP IN AND SAY ‘STOP WHAT YOU’RE DOING’ OR ‘DON’T DO THAT’?*

Mona: *Not really. I mean they’re kids. At times they may get talking when they’re not doing their work or something like that but not really.*

5) Pat: *You know if it’s something really ridiculous I’ll say ‘Come on let’s get back on track now’ and we’ll talk about it later. It just depends what they’re talking about. If they’re just being silly I say ‘Let’s get back to work’.*

Warren: *WHAT DO YOU MEAN ‘SILLY’?*

Pat: *You know if they’re just— you know how they can just start getting silly after a while. They’ll start talking about another person in the class or ‘You know what he did yesterday?’ and I’ll say ‘No you tell me that later. Right now we’re doing this’. They want to discuss what’s going on between them.*

In the example immediately above, Pat talks about being ‘silly’ as a form of student talk that is primarily concerned with social relations among students (talking about what other students did or said) and which she stands in contradistinction to the work that students are supposed to be doing (‘If they’re just being silly I say “Let’s get back to work”’). In her interview, Sandra also indirectly touched upon this kind of talk.

6) Sandra: *If [students’ talk] gets off topic as long as they’re doing their work that’s fine.*

For Sandra, this kind of talking is acceptable only insofar as it doesn’t interfere with students’ work. In this understanding, different kinds of talk can relate to, or detract from, students’ work, but talk is not, in and of itself, a form of work. This understanding of talk-as-socializing stands in contradiction to the previous idea expressed by the ESL teacher and his assistants that talk is an important part of the labor one must put into learning a second language.
The teacher also discusses ‘socializing’ as a form of student talk that is not useful to the classroom.

7) Warren: WHAT KINDS OF RULES DO YOU HAVE AS A TEACHER IN TERMS OF HOW THE CLASSROOM OPERATES?

Teacher: I don’t have a whole list of rules in my head. I like the kids to work hard. I can’t stand wasting of time.

Warren: WHAT WOULD YOU SEE AS WASTING TIME?

Teacher: Laughing joking and doing nothing. I like a nice warm atmosphere. As you know I like fun but I get frustrated when I see kids who don’t get much done.

Warren: WHAT ABOUT RULES THAT ARE BASED AROUND TALKING? WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO TALK? WHEN IS IT NOT APPROPRIATE TO TALK?

Teacher: Well, I really don’t like it when they just socialize. If it’s just out and out socializing – and you do get some and I don’t like it.

Thus, ‘socializing’ as a form of student behavior that includes ‘laughing’, ‘joking’ and generally ‘doing nothing’ or ‘being silly’ was distinguished from acceptable forms of student talk, the ‘hum of activity’ that is the mark of a classroom where work is being carried out.

Socializing was not perceived as a valid verbal activity in the classroom, and was an activity that could be sanctioned by the teacher or his assistants. The corpus of recorded classroom interactions contains literally dozens of examples where students are sanctioned for what the teacher or his assistants perceives as socializing, or engaging in talk for purposes other than doing work. Below, I discuss several examples where student talk is sanctioned for this reason.

In the first example below, the teacher claps his hands loudly as a sanction, and then states that the students are socializing when they are supposed to be working.
Transcript 5-1: Classroom (15/A/489).

On most occasions, however, sanctioning of this kind of student talk is much less explicit; students are told to be quiet but they are not explicitly told that they are violating the ‘no socializing’ rule. Thus, in the following example, Corina is sanctioned for acting ‘silly’. In this interaction, the teacher approaches the table at the back of the class where Corina, Gloria, and Jose are seated with their exercise books in front of them. The teacher greets Jose. However, before Jose can respond, Corina begins to speak to Jose in English in a rapid voice that contains many stock ‘language learner’ phrases (How are you? I am fine. My name is...). Corina’s utterance could be interpreted as a joking imitation of a stereotypical language learner. Features of this style include the use of ‘me’ as a subject pronoun (e.g. “Me no speak English.”) and the use of short, simple sentence constructions. I occasionally observed ESL student using this speech style with one another. However, I believe that Corina’s utterance could also be interpreted as an attempt to demonstrate her knowledge of English in front of the teacher, as Corina rarely spoke English at all in the classroom. Evidently, the teacher subscribed to the former interpretation, and at lines 3 and 4, he sanctions Corina and tells her to ‘shush’. The teacher seems to interpret the laughter of Corina and Gloria at lines 5 and 6 as further evidence that Corina’s utterance at line 2 is not serious, as he subsequently threatens to send Corina from the class for acting ‘silly’ and ‘messing around’. Although the teacher never uses the term ‘socializing’, acting ‘silly’ and ‘messing around’ are cited as evidence that Corina is not working. Thus, her talk is not seen as a legitimate classroom activity.
Transcript 5-2: Classroom (8/A/82).

1 teacher Hello Jose.
2 Corina How are you Jose fine thank you my name is Cori[na].
3 teacher Corina
4 shush.
5 Corina <laughs>
6 Gloria <laughs>
7 teacher That's what I'm afraid of you get silly you'll go-
8 I'll put you outside if you mess around.

The following example involves several students, most of whom speak Spanish, who have gone to the library to work on their exercises under the supervision of one of the assistants, Pat. One of the students, Eduardo, has his report card with him at the table and several of the other students are commenting on the marks that are written on it. In a parallel interaction, Pat is explaining the meaning of some words to another student. The students' talk continues for some time until, at line 33, Pat enters the interaction and tells the students to 'shh' in order to bring it to a close. Although she does not explicitly sanction the students for socializing, her directive for students to concentrate on their work clearly demarcates what she wishes them to do from what they are currently doing, and thus constructs their talk as not working.

Transcript 5-3: Library (23/B/105).

1 Jose Peter lookit. Zero X
2 fifty fifty cero cero right
3 (. ) cero cero right right
4 cero cero cero
5 Miranda <gasp > Oh my god
6 Eduardo Because {} I missed the classes=
7 Pat This (1) is when
A something with sticks.
B Kay it's (1) s- stuck
C (1.5) you X it up kay?
D So that's stuck this
E means it come off it
F flo:ws off it gli:des
G (.) or you could just
H run it off but this is
I it's stuck it s:ticks so
J listen to these words
K flow means it flo:ws
L
Miranda (trans.)
Jose (trans.)

In a third example below another assistant, Mona, is seated at a table at the back of the class with several students including Eduardo, Corina, and Miranda. Mona asks Eduardo where another student, Jose, is. She then begins to question Eduardo on the specific relationship that he has with Jose (i.e. are they brothers, as Eduardo claims, or cousins, as Mona believes). Note that from the beginning of the interaction to line 16 Mona uses the typical Initiation-Response-Evaluation pattern for classroom interaction,
controlling the interaction by adopting the teacher's prerogative to ask questions and seek answers from Eduardo. At lines 9 and 11 Miranda briefly enters the interaction to tell Mona her understanding of Eduardo and Jose's relationship to one another, which Eduardo disputes. Mona continues to question Eduardo about the relationship, but at line 19 Miranda shifts the topic slightly in order to discuss her relationship to Eduardo (his father was currently living with Miranda's mother). At this point the interaction is no longer under Mona's control and at line 22 Mona issues a directive to Eduardo to resume working. What is significant about this interaction is that, although the topic focuses on the social relations between different students from start to finish, it shifts from a legitimate use of talk (to answer questions asked by the teaching assistant) into a form of talk that is not accepted by the assistant. At the end of the interaction, Mona clearly constructs the students' talk as 'not-work' even though she initially accepted and even initiated the topic herself.

Transcript 5-4: Classroom (6/A/615).

1 Mona Where’s (1.5) Jose.
2 Corina What is X X X <parallel interaction>
3 Eduardo My brother’s not here.
4 Mona Your brother’s not here? Isn’t he your cousin? I thought he was your cousin.
5 Eduardo My brother and my cousin.
6 Mona What is he? Jose’s your brother or your cousin?
7 Eduardo My brother.
8 Miranda Cousin.
10 Mona Your brother?
11 Miranda Cousin.
12 Eduardo My brother (2) My brother.
13 Mona You live together?
14 Eduardo Yeah.
15 Mona You have the same mother the same father?
16 Eduardo X
17 Mona Yeah?
18 Eduardo Mhm.
19 Miranda My father’s not your father.
20 Eduardo I’m not talking about your father am I?
21 <Eduardo and Miranda continue to talk for several seconds>
22 Mona Okay Eduardo. Do your work now.
In the examples discussed above student talk which falls outside the parameters of acceptable discourse, and which constitutes 'socializing,' is subject to sanction by the teacher and his assistants. It should be pointed out, however, that students in the ESL classroom often worked silently in comparison to students in other classrooms at Barton school. Many times, the ESL teacher would return to the classroom from the office or some other place he had been, to find the students working silently at their desks. On more than one occasion he turned to me sitting at the back desk and proclaimed, 'Warren, is there anywhere you would rather be?' In other words, the teacher believed that one of the principal virtues of the ESL classroom was the fact that his students were quiet and well behaved in comparison with students in other classrooms. When I asked the teacher about rules in the classroom he told me that he felt that he did not have to impose rules because the students were so well behaved.

8) Teacher: *No kids swear in this room. There's not one mean malicious kid. That means your discipline is not as imposed. You don't need to impose it. You don't have any horror stories. You're not nervous about any particular kid misbehaving. I don't like it when they don't work, if they mess around-not that they're causing a disturbance but they're just not getting much done. It doesn't help them and it doesn't help me. I don't like chewing gum. They know they're not supposed to chew gum. But I'm not one for ranting and raving. I can. I have done but I find that's the beauty of this situation. I don't have to. There's no tension. I don't feel tense at all whereas I have and on rotation you can have situation where the next class is oh my God. I've had lots of that but that's the beauty of this. I don't lie in bed now thinking, 'God I'm going to see that group tomorrow' and so forth. We have a case in the school as you know where there is one teacher who just doesn't see a particular class because of the problems that several students in that class are causing. The teacher is almost sick because of it. I don't have that.*

Sandra also felt that the students in the ESL classroom were very polite and well behaved.

9) Warren: *Is there anything in particular that you find very enjoyable about teaching ESL students as opposed to students in other classrooms?*
Sandra: I really like ESL students. Maybe it’s because I’m drawing on my own experience and background and a lot of the other teachers I’ve talked to who have taught ESL they find it really rewarding too. I think one of the reasons why it’s rewarding is that they don’t bring in a lot of the behavior problems. They don’t tend to show a lot of these behavior problems that might be displayed in other classes.

Warren: LIKE WHAT?

Sandra: Like talking back. They can’t talk back to you a lot of times. Compared to [name of teacher’s] room <another class at Barton> it’s very ...

Warren: THEY SHOW POLITENESS?

Sandra: I think that’s partly because of the lack of language skills. They can’t challenge you. They can’t talk back to you. Also because of being new in the country they tend to be a bit wary a bit more shy at first so there’s that. The behavior problems tend not to show up at least at the beginning.

Unlike in other classes, then, ESL students are seen as polite students who do not show many ‘behavior problems’, problems which would be indicated by such things as ‘talking back’ to the teacher or to other school staff. Furthermore, ESL students’ general politeness is seen to be a direct result of their limited skills in speaking English. Hence, both the teacher and Sandra see ESL students’ lack of behavior problems, which is directly linked to their limited speaking skills, as a virtue. However, it is imperative to note that far from passively enjoying the virtues of the silent and polite ESL student, the teacher and his assistants actively worked to maintain a quiet and orderly classroom. The active management of ESL student discourse, to achieve this end, was carried out in several ways, an important one being the policing of student talk for ‘socializing’, which was discussed above. Other ways in which ESL student discourse was controlled in the classroom are discussed in the remainder of this section. Table 5-1 below lists the various ways, both verbal and non-verbal, in which student talk was sanctioned by the teacher
and his assistants. These sanction types could be used independently or in combination.

Table 5-1: Types of verbal and non-verbal sanction of student talk in the ESL classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANCTION TYPE</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Non-verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Teacher calls student(s)' name.</td>
<td>2) Teacher tells student to 'be quiet' or to 'shush'.</td>
<td>1) Teacher claps hands loudly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Teacher tells student to 'be quiet' or to 'shush'.</td>
<td>3) Teacher says 'shh' or 'please'.</td>
<td>2) Teacher glares at student(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Teacher says 'shh' or 'please'.</td>
<td>4) Teacher tells student(s) to move away from one another.</td>
<td>3) Teacher puts finger to mouth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perhaps the most obvious manner in which the teacher controls talk by students occurs when he sanctions talk that competes with his own talk in the classroom. The first example of this type of interaction occurs at the transition between two classroom activities. Students have been asking the teacher questions about an upcoming end-of-year field trip to a local amusement park. The previous discussion was quite animated as the students were clearly excited about the trip. As such, many students were talking among themselves as well as directing their talk toward the teacher. At line 1 the teacher attempts to end this activity and begin a new one. In a loud voice he utters 'Right. Now...'. The use of these terms functions as a 'contextualization cue' (Dorr-Bremme 1990, also see discussion in previous chapter) signaling the transition to a new activity while simultaneously directing students’ attention to the teacher (their attention being signaled by their silence as well the direction of their gaze). However, some students persist in talking for several seconds until at line 2 the teacher utters 'Eh' in a very loud voice. At this point most students stop talking. The teacher begins to introduce the new topic, a film on diving accidents, but pauses at lines 3 and 4 to sanction Linda who has continued to talk about the field trip to one or two other students. Although seemingly annoyed at being asked to stop talking, Linda agrees to desist. The teacher then continues to introduce the new topic.
Transcript 5-5: Classroom (33/A/298).

1 teacher  RIGHT. NOW. ON TO THE MATTERS OF TODAY (2) Excuse me
2 (1) EH. <most students stop talking> The swimming
3 instructor asked me to show you this film. Shh. Linda
4 shush.
5 Linda <annoyed tone> Okay.
6 teacher It’s called ‘Sudden Impact’ <continues>

In another example, shown below, Miranda begins by asking the teacher whether or not they can participate in some activity during an upcoming field trip. The teacher proceeds to explain that they will learn what the rules are at an assembly to be held in the afternoon. Throughout the interaction other students are talking amongst themselves in the background. As the teacher is talking, and has thus claimed exclusive use of the floor, he sanctions competing voices, although he singles out one student, Peter, at line 3 and line 7, threatening to remove him from the class unless he stops talking. He then proceeds to discuss the official regulations for students taking field trips.

Transcript 5-6: Classroom (33/A/75).

1 Miranda  Mister <name of teacher> are we allowed to X X in that X
2 teacher  I don’t know you’re going hear everything that you can
3 do and can’t do. Peter I don’t want to hear you. You’re
4 going to find out this afternoon (1) those things you
5 can do and those things you can’t X X X
6 students <talking in background>
7 teacher  Uh (. ) listen. Shh. PETER there’s a door there. The
8 Board of Education regulations are <continues>

In the following example of sanctioned student talk, two parallel interactions are taking place. Miranda and Peter are seated at table at the back of the classroom, and are supposed to be working on their language exercises while the teacher talks to another group about an assignment they have just received. At line 4 Miranda and Peter begin to argue about the removal of some objects from the area where they are working. Around the same time the teacher begins to discuss the assignment with the other students. These interactions occur simultaneously between lines 4 and 14. At line 15 the teacher
postpones his participation in one interaction and enters the other in order to bring
Miranda and Peter's dispute to an end. The teacher says 'shh', identifies Miranda, and
tells her to 'shush'. In this case, the teacher's sanction brings the competing interaction to
an end, as Miranda agrees to desist.

Transcript 5-7: Classroom (17/A/217).

1  Miranda It is. We went to
2    the old thing.
3  Peter Oh: some were boys.
4  Miranda Take {} this thing
5  Peter off where they're
6    going to X.
7  Peter I'm not- I can't
8    take them off.
9  Miranda You do you have to.
10  Peter I don't have to.
11  Miranda Look [you put all
12    that garbage in
13    there
14  Peter I I don't
15  Peter (Shh. Hey
16  Miranda Shush.
17  Miranda Okay.

Finally in the example shown below, the teacher attempts to get students to return
to their seats so that he can introduce a new 'helper' (a high school co-op student) to
them. As in a previous interaction (Transcript 5-5), the teacher uses the contextualization
cues 'Okay' and 'Right' in a loud voice to signal an activity change as well as to signal
that students should direct their attention towards him. However, although Miranda
agrees to follow the teacher's directive to sit in her seat, she continues to talk in an
attempt to retrieve her eraser from Peter's possession. The teacher responds to this by
sanctioning Miranda's speech at line 6. In this case, however, Miranda continues to talk
to Peter in order to get her eraser from him. This does not result in a repeated sanction
from the teacher. Instead, the teacher utters another contextualization cue, 'OK', to signal
that he is about to being the new activity. He then begins the new activity—the
introduction of the co-op student.

Transcript 5-8: Classroom (15/A/278).

1 teacher OKAY (4) just a minute XX RIGHT everybody sit down please
2 in your seat (..) Miranda.
3 Miranda Okay X down X here.
4 teacher Corina.
5 Miranda <to Peter> Give me my eraser man.
6 teacher Shh shh shh.
7 Miranda <to Peter> Give me (. .) my eraser.
8 Peter X stupid.
9 teacher Okay we are uh (1) we have a new visitor X to help us Emma
10 and she's a co-op student she goes to <gives name of
11 school> <continues>

In examples 5-5 to 5-8 discussed above, the teacher does not explicitly state why
students should stop talking. It is worth pointing out that in each of these four examples,
the teacher is himself talking to all or part of the class. As such, there is the expectation
that he will be in sole control of the floor, and perhaps he feels that he need not explain
this rule to them. However, there are many instances where the teacher sanctions student
talk when he is not himself engaged in an official classroom interaction, situations where
the sanction also does not include an explanation of why students should desist. On other
occasions the teacher’s sanction does include an explanation of why students should not
be talking. Often, the teacher’s call for students to be quiet was a result of the classroom
activity that was occurring. For example, the following two transcripts show instances
when the teacher announces that students should begin reading their books. ‘Reading
time’ was an activity which occurred during the last classroom period of each day.
Students were required to sit in their seats and read a book. Talking during reading time
was not allowed, a point which was underlined by the teacher on many occasions.
Transcript 5-9: Classroom (26/A/576).

1 students <students talking>
2 teacher <claps hands 3 times> X in your seats.
3 student Gimme it.
4 Amir I don't have the book.
5 teacher Uh its reading time quiet reading time.

Transcript 5-10: Classroom (27/A/617).

1 students <students talking>
2 teacher OKAY its ruh- quiet time no talking (. ) right (1.5) back
to your seats X no talking (1) OKAY X X X.

Students were also not permitted to talk during activities such as spelling tests, which occurred occasionally in the ESL classroom. In the following example, the teacher explains that he does not want students to talk during a test designed to gauge the students' knowledge of the English plural -s. Despite the explicit advanced warning not to speak, Linda mimics the teacher's pronunciation of one of the words on the test. This results in a sanction from the teacher at line 6.

Transcript 5-11: Classroom (29/B/549).

1 teacher Okay (1) remember? -IZ -zz -ss kay? -iz -zz -ss. (2.5)
2 Ready? Uh I want X I don't want any comment I want- just
3 listen and put a checkmark at the appropriate place (1)
4 Names <pronounced [nem-zə]> (3.5) Names <same emphasis>
5 Linda Names <imitates teacher's emphasis>
6 teacher Shh (2.5) Houses. Houses. <continues>

Another reason for sanctioning student talk was if it was perceived to be in violation of the turn-taking procedures in operation at the time. The sanctioning of this behavior was an extension of the teacher's control over the floor during official classroom activities (see examples 5-5 to 5-8 above). When he is himself not speaking, the teacher controls student access to the floor, either by nominating students to speak or by inviting students to bid for the floor. Thus, in the example shown below, the teacher selects individual students to speak and sanctions other students who are speaking out of turn.
His sanction includes an explanation that their talk is in violation of the turn-taking procedures in operation (one person speaking at a time).

Transcript 5-12: Classroom (30/B/519).

1 teacher Right Amir number one <students talking; teacher claps hands> (2) Shh.
2 Amir <begins answering question for approx. 8 seconds; students talking>
3 Linda Louder.
4 teacher Shh. Hey wait a minute (4) <students talking; teacher claps hands 3 times> I- there’s one person speaking (2)
5 Amir (4) One person (1.5) not ten not twenty one. Right
6 teacher Amir please finish the answer X
7 Amir <finishes giving answer>

In another example, the teacher is taking up the previous night’s vocabulary homework.

In this case, he moves between the use of choral response and individual nomination turn-taking procedures (the teacher rarely accepted choral responses from students, preferring to nominate individual students to answer questions). At line 2 he receives a choral response while at line 3 he selects Marguerita to answer the next question. At line 7 students once again answer in choral form. The next two turns are taken by individual speakers, Jack speaks spontaneously (he sits next to Marguerita and thus perhaps deduces that he will be called to speak next) while Amir is nominated by the teacher. At line 17 the teacher begins to set up the next student turn at talk. However, he does not accept the choral form in which the response is given. Hence at line 19 he sanctions the choral response and specifies an individual student to answer the question.

Transcript 5-13: Classroom (19/A/168).

1 teacher Horses cattle sheep and pigs Livestock.
2 students <several answer together> Livestock.
3 teacher Livestock um (.) Marguerita [X X a reptile
4 Marguerita X X L I [Z
5 teacher ]
6 students fresh start to turn over a new
7 teacher ]
8 students <several answer together> Leaf.
We have already seen several ways in which the teacher controls and limits student talk in the ESL classroom. In particular, ESL student discourse is limited by 1) sanctions placed on ‘socializing’ as a form of student talk that detracts from their ability to do ‘work’ 2) not allowing talk to occur during regular classroom activities such as reading time, spelling tests, or watching videos; 3) sanctioning the violation of one-speaker-at-a-time turn-taking procedures during teacher-led activities such as ‘wordsearch’ (discussed below), class discussions, and homework take-up; and, 4) by limiting access to the floor during times when the teacher is reading a story.\textsuperscript{4} Table 5-2 summarizes the official activities that take place in the ESL classroom and the ways in which student talk is managed.

\begin{table}[h!]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{CLASSROOM ACTIVITY TYPE} & \textbf{METHODS OF DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT IN USE} \\
\hline
\hline
\textbf{OCCURS DAILY} & \\
1) ‘Wordsearch’. & 1) Teacher nominates individual speakers. \\
2) Homework take-up & 2) Teacher usually nominates individual speakers. \\
3) Reading time. & 3) No talking allowed. \\
4) Language exercises. & 4) Talk policed for ‘socializing’. \\
5) Math exercises. & 5) Talk policed for ‘socializing’. \\
\hline
\textbf{OCCURS REGULARLY} & \\
1) Story time. & 1) No talking allowed except when teacher asks a question. \\
2) Spelling tests. & 2) No talking allowed. \\
\hline
\textbf{OCCURS OCCASIONALLY} & \\
1) watching television / videos. & 1) No talking allowed. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
One final way in which student talk is limited in the classroom is a result of the implicit understanding that being 'good' in a language primarily means being able to read and write as opposed to being able to speak. Although not explicitly stated, this notion was implied by Sandra when she discussed some of the challenges related to teaching ESL students.

10) Warren: *DO YOU THINK THERE ARE ANY PARTICULAR CHALLENGES WITH TEACHING ESL STUDENTS?*

Sandra: *In [the ESL] class there's also the problem with those who have studied or who have gone to school in their home country versus those who have never been to school. That's two different problems.*

Warren: *VERY DIFFERENT.*

Sandra: *Yes there's an extra challenge when they have never even been to school before. There's another challenge where they're not very good at their own first language.*

Warren: *IN TERMS OF LITERACY?*

Sandra: *Yeah. When I took the ESL course at [university] that's one of the challenges they were talking about that if they have problems in their first language then it's more of a challenge. It's harder to teach them English if they don't know their first language.*

Sandra seems to understand language competence as being primarily literary. Being 'good at language' means being good at reading and writing (the kind of 'language' that one learns in school). The teacher also foregrounded the importance of literary skills, especially the ability to write well, in developing skills in a second language.

11) Teacher: *Understanding the ability to communicate orally is quite quick. The written work takes a long time. Reading-wise they're quite good. Comprehension is good. Knowledge of grammar knowledge of punctuation spelling rules and things like that they're good at that. Writing that takes a long time. That's where you really see the very slow gradual process. Sometimes you think they're a lot better than they are until you look at the written work. They've plateaued out and the stages*
from here on in are going to be much more gradual. We’ve got to do more on that that’s for sure.

Warren: MORE WRITING?

Teacher: More writing yes. Practice makes perfect. You don’t learn the language if you don’t use it. We need more writing. But you can’t start writing too soon because they’ve got to have the words to use. Now they have a pretty good vocabulary some of them so they can use their vocabulary and pick up on their grammar verb endings and things like that. Final consonants – if they don’t say the final consonants in their language when it’s a plural they don’t put the -s at the end when they write it down.

For the teacher, writing is a primary indicator of students’ competence in English, but is a slow, gradual process. Learning to speak, in contrast, is seen as happening quickly, and perhaps more spontaneously, with consequently little need for direct support in the classroom. Thus, when students in the ESL classroom were ‘doing their language’, this meant completing reading or writing exercises. There was no parallel curricular focus on developing students’ speaking skills.

In summary, the teacher and his assistants actively manage student discourse in the ESL classroom such that students’ opportunities to speak in the classroom are effectively limited. In traditional classrooms, teachers limit talk because talk is seen as deleterious to students’ ability to work and thus learn. Furthermore, student talk indicates to other colleagues that a teacher lacks control over his/her classroom, and thus indicates his/her lack of competence as a teacher (see Chapter 4 for discussion). As such, student talk in the classroom is rigidly controlled.

There is evidence to suggest that student talk in the ESL classroom is limited for the same reasons. For example, the teacher spent quite a bit of time and energy instructing the students on the proper way to walk through the hallways at Barton, a situation where they could be easily overheard by teachers in other classrooms. Students
who talked in the halls or who walked erratically or ran were subject to sanction by the teacher and I observed him on several occasions being explicit in his instructions to students on acceptable movement through the school corridors. On another occasion the teacher discussed how he expected students to behave when they were going on a field trip to a local historical museum. In particular, the teacher focused on how students were to behave when they were working with the ‘instructors’, the people who run the museum exhibit and who supervise the student groups for the duration of their visit. Note how the teacher’s directive not to talk while the instructors are talking receives special emphasis through its slow, staccato rhythm and marked pauses immediately before and after. In addition, the teacher warns students that he will be observing their behavior and will be ready to sanction students should they break this rule.

Transcript 5-14: Classroom (32/B/450).

1 teacher What I would say th- there going to there are going to be twenty of us at least twenty I’m going to ask that you are very well behaved (2) You listen carefully (1) You *don’t* talk* (1) when the instructor’s talking. It’s very difficult for that person to talk if you’re talking.
2 Alright? And I’ll be there and I’ll be watching (2) Right?

Still more evidence comes from an occasion when the principal came into the ESL classroom to talk to the teacher. As they stood together talking for several minutes, students were talking among themselves. I noted that the volume of student talk at that time was relatively high, and was fully expecting that the teacher would stop to sanction students for talking. To my surprise, he did not, either during or after his talk with the principal. I believed that if the teacher was concerned about how other teachers (and especially the principal) perceived his competence as a teacher, then he should have made more of an effort to quiet students while the principal was in the classroom. However, another reason that the teacher gave for controlling student talk was related to the number
of students in the classroom, and hence the volume that could be generated by them.

Students were being added to the ESL class on a regular basis, a fact that the teacher, while resigned to it, did not enjoy. For the teacher, there was a clear relationship between the number of students in the class and the volume of noise generated therein, as can be seen in the following example.

Transcript 5-15: Classroom (32/B/583).

1 teacher OKAY listen when you talk it makes life very difficult we-
2 we will now have
3 student Twenty six.
4 teacher Twenty six students in in the afternoon so uh we can’t
5 afford anybody (1.5) to be talking or messing around. If
6 you- life would be intolerable.

In fact, the teacher occasionally complained to the principal (as well as to me) about his growing class size. This point may help explain why the teacher allowed students to talk loudly in the presence of the principal without telling them to be quiet so that the principal would see how large and unruly the ESL classroom had become. In effect, the teacher used his knowledge of the relationship between student talk and classroom ‘disorder’ to subtly convince the principal that the ESL classroom was too large.

In this section I have outlined the various ways in which the ESL teacher and his assistants actively control and limit student talk in the classroom, and have suggested possible reasons why this is so. In the next section I conduct a detailed examination of the use of elicitations by the ESL teacher and his assistants. In particular I look at how elicitations are structured and ask whether this has an effect on students’ ability to produce talk in response.
THE USE OF ELICITATIONS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

In this section I analyze the different types of elicitations used by the teacher and his assistants in interactions with ESL students. In particular, I consider how the teacher and his assistants structure elicitations and ask whether student opportunities to speak are limited as a result. I begin with the assumption that elicitations frame responses; the particular form that an elicitation takes constrains the kind and amount of discourse that a speaker can legitimately produce in response. It is in this way that the teacher and his assistants can control the discourse of students through the strategic use of elicitations. Hence, elicitations are another important way in which student talk can be controlled in the classroom.

Mehan (1979) argues that different kinds of elicitations seek particular kinds of information. In his study of classroom interaction, Mehan distinguished between four different kinds of elicitations that teachers employ during lessons. Below, I provide illustrative examples of these elicitations drawn from my own data.

(1) choice elicitations: this type of elicitation calls for a respondent to agree or disagree with a statement provided by the questioner. The term choice elicitation is used because the respondent needs to choose a response from a list provided by the teacher, as in the example transcribed below.

Transcript 5-16: Library (24/A/246).

1 Pat So is he a reptile? Is that a reptile?

(2) product elicitations: this type of elicitation asks respondents to provide a factual response, such as a name, place, or date, as in the following example.

Transcript 5-17: Classroom (21/B/431).

1 teacher What would be the past tense of 'I am talking'?
(3) **process elicitations**: this type of elicitation asks for the respondent to provide an opinion or interpretation, as in the example transcribed below.

Transcript 5-18: Library (32/A/20).

1  Pat  How does it make it look? <assistant is helping student write a story about decorating a Christmas tree>

(4) **metaprocess elicitations**: Mehan's final elicitation type is such that it asks students to be reflective about the process of making connections between elicitations and responses. Metaprocess elicitations ask students to formulate the grounds of their reasoning, as in the example below.

Transcript 5-19: Classroom (32/A/368).

1  teacher  How can you say that? <asked after Chinese student claimed that Chinese people are not superstitious, having already said that the number 4 is 'very bad luck'>

Mehan notes that elicitation sequences initiated by a teacher are normally followed by a reply from a student or students. Furthermore, he argues that there is a direct correspondence between initiation acts and reply acts. For example, a choice elicitation receives a choice response and a product elicitation receives a product response (Mehan 1979: 50). As such, it follows that elicitations provide a possible discursive resource that teachers can use to control student talk in the classroom.

Figure 5-1 below is adapted from data on elicitations drawn from Mehan's (1979) research on interaction in a traditional non-ESL classroom. Examining this graph, one is immediately struck by the predominance of product elicitations used by teachers during classroom lessons. Product elicitations account for over three quarters of the elicitations used by the teacher. Choice elicitations also figure prominently, accounting for roughly 17% of all elicitations used. Taken together, choice and product elicitations were used
almost 94% of the time.

Figure 5-1: Percentage of elicitation types used in a non-ESL classroom (adapted from Mehan 1979: 51).

There are a number of implications tied to this finding. The first and perhaps most obvious point to make is that choice elicitations dramatically limit response opportunities. Given a choice elicitation, a respondent is effectively limited to uttering either ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Thus, not only is the type of response limited, but so is the overall length of the response dramatically reduced. Second, product elicitations overwhelmingly involve the recitation of ‘facts’, the answer to which is typically known by the teacher. Taken together, choice and product elicitations provide the simplest means by which the teacher can gauge ‘right’ from ‘wrong’ answers, as well as the simplest way in which teachers can surmise when a response has been given. This, in turn, provides the simplest means by which teachers can provide an evaluative utterance after the completion of a response (turn 3 of the 3-part I-R-E sequence, see previous chapter). One could then argue that the use of choice and product elicitations provides an effective means by which teachers can regain control of the interactional floor during classroom interactions.

An analysis of the elicitations used by the ESL teacher and his assistants was
carried out using Mehan's classification as a preliminary framework. However, some difficulty was encountered when attempting to sort through the recorded data and fit it into Mehan's classification. For example, another type of elicitation was used where students were told to repeat an utterance spoken by the teacher or an assistant (the only recorded instances came from two of the assistants). Elicitations of this type usually took the form of a directive using the verb 'say', followed by the word or words to be repeated. To account for this, a fifth category of elicitation, termed 'repetition,' was added to the classification schema. In addition, I made a distinction between 'closed' product elicitations that requested a specific response (as in example 5-18 above) and 'open' product elicitations which, although still limited to a certain degree, sought a range of possible responses. The example below is representative of an 'open' product elicitation.

Transcript 5-20: Classroom (28/B/465).
1 nurse What are some of the things that people do to their hair?

I distinguished between 'open' and 'closed' product elicitations because I felt that open elicitations did not limit student opportunities to speak as much as 'closed' ones did.

I also noted that the form and function of particular elicitations often differed (cf. Ervin-Tripp 1976 on directive usage). The following example is illustrative, as it takes the form of a choice elicitation, but obviously the questioner seeks to elicit a product response rather than 'yes' or 'no'.

Transcript 5-21: Classroom (28/B/485).
1 nurse Does anyone know what that is? <referring to an image projected from a slide>

Elicitations of this type were coded by function rather than the form in which they appeared. Further difficulty was encountered in coding elicitations such as "Do you know
what language they speak in France?" Elicitations of this type could receive either a choice response ('No') or a product response ('French') depending on whether or not the respondent knows the answer to the question asked. Elicitations such as the above were coded as product elicitations on the grounds that they provide an opportunity for the student to utter a product response, although a choice response is often uttered instead.

**Figure 5-2: Percentage of elicitation types used in ESL classroom interactions.**

![Diagram showing percentage of each elicitation type](image)

Figure 5-2 shows the percentages of each elicitation type used in teacher-student interactions in the ESL classroom. Here, we can see that, like the classroom studied by Mehan, elicitations used in the ESL classroom are overwhelmingly of the choice and product types. Taken together, choice and product elicitations account for slightly over 90% of the elicitations used in the classroom during non-homework-related activities (see below for a discussion of these other activities), with 'closed' product elicitations figuring twice as prominently as 'open' product elicitations. Further comparison with Mehan's data, however, shows the relative importance of choice elicitations in teacher-student interactions in the ESL classroom. The figure of 38.9% is more than double that representing choice elicitations in Mehan's data.
There are two main points that can be made from this finding. The first is that, like the classroom studied by Mehan, the elicitations used by the teacher and his assistants with ESL students are overwhelmingly of the choice and product varieties. As was argued above, choice and product elicitations (especially ‘closed’ product elicitations) provide the simplest means by which teachers can insert an evaluative utterance after a student has uttered a response to the initial elicitation. The use of choice and product elicitations thus facilitates teachers’ attempts to regain control of the floor and is thus an important means by which teachers control student discourse in the classroom. Second, the finding that choice elicitations figure relatively heavily in the ESL classroom suggests an even further means by which students’ ability to speak is limited. Elicitations frame responses, and choice elicitations do this most drastically as they only provide slots for single-word responses.

Figure 5-3 shows the percentage of each elicitation type used during homework take-up activities in the ESL classroom. This classroom activity was separated from the others because of its scripted nature—students for the most part are reading responses from a sheet. It is worth noting, however, that homework take-up occurred on a daily basis for many of the students and thus many of their opportunities to speak arose during these times. For that reason it was included in an overall analysis of elicitations in the ESL classroom. From this graph one can see the overwhelming use of ‘closed’ product elicitations during these classroom activities. This finding comes as no surprise, as teacher elicitations during homework take-up are most likely intended to have students provide ‘answers’ to questions that appeared as ‘homework’ on a previous school day. However, the fact that elicitations used during this activity were overwhelmingly of the
‘closed’ product variety indicates a means by which student discourse is further controlled in the ESL classroom for the reasons outlined above.

Figure 5-3: Percentage of elicitation types used during homework take-up in the ESL classroom.

![Graph showing percentage of elicitation types used](image)

The use of elicitations by the teacher and his assistants in the ESL classroom is another means by which student talk in the classroom is limited and controlled. In the section below, I examine the extent to which students accept, resist, or evade the controls placed upon their talk in the classroom.

**THE STUDENT POINT OF VIEW**

In this final section, I evaluate how ESL students participate in classroom activities, paying particular attention to how students understand and deal with the constraints placed on their ability to talk in the classroom. This final analysis takes place at two levels: the metadiscursive level, where students talk about their talk, and the level of actual linguistic practice.

There is some evidence to suggest that ESL students recognize the constraints put on their talk in the classroom by the teacher and his assistants. This evidence comes from
spontaneous discussions I had with several ESL students (on two separate occasions) outside the classroom when I was in the process of recording group interactions. Both discussions took place on a day when students were about to receive report cards. I asked students how they were feeling about their upcoming evaluations. In each case, students mentioned talking in class as a major point of concern.

12) Warren:  *SO YOU’RE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR REPORT CARD?*

   Linda:  *Yeah.*

   Warren:  *WHAT DO YOU THINK IT’S GOING TO SAY?*

   Linda:  *Yeah, I talk so much in class.*

   Warren:  *YOU TALK SO MUCH IN CLASS?*

   Linda:  *Yeah.*

   Warren:  *YOU’RE GOING TO GET IN TROUBLE FOR THAT?*

   Linda:  *Yeah, maybe...If my mom, right...If I talk so much in class, right? [She’ll] get angry.*

13) Warren:  *SO I HEAR YOU GET REPORT CARDS TODAY.*

   Amina:  *Oh God, I’m so scared...*

   Warren:  *YOU’RE WORRIED?*

   Amina:  *I am so worried I’m praying to God.*

   Warren:  *WHAT ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT?*

   Nireka:  *I’m worried about my whole report card. Oh my God I don’t know what it’s going to be. I’m going to be in so much trouble.*

   Warren:  *WHY?*

   Nireka:  *Mr. [teacher’s name] will put ‘Too much talkative’ <turning to Shanaza> For you too. Talkative.*

   Shanaza:  *I will just erase it.*
Nireka:  *And then put ‘Shanaza and Nireka are good girls’.*

In these examples, both Linda and Nireka believe that the teacher will write on their report card that they ‘talk too much’ in class, and that they will get in trouble for this from their parents or someone else. Furthermore, when Nireka continues Shanaza’s comments and says that they will erase the ‘too much talkative’ from their report cards and replace it with ‘Shanaza and Nireka are good students’, she effectively juxtaposes talking in class with being a ‘good student’. On another occasion Amir pointed out several students to me that he considered frequent talkers as well as one student who was extremely quiet in class. Amir then proceeded to say that he would like it if all the students would be quiet. When I asked him why, he said that it would be easier for him to do his work.

14) Amir:  *XX they talk loud X *

Warren:  *<laughs>*

Amir:  *Like Hanna or X *

Warren:  *YOU THINK SHE TALKS LOUD?*

Amir:  *Marguerita. That girl right there she always talk.*

Warren:  *WHO?*

Amir:  *She never shut up.*

Warren:  *WHO MIRANDA?*

Amir:  *Yeah. You know that boy right there? The Mandarin?*

Warren:  *DANIEL.*

Amir:  *Yeah yeah. He’s quiet. He’s the quietest. I wish everybody would be quiet.*

Warren:  *UH HUH. THEN WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE?*
Amir: *Then it would be easier to do your work.*

Taken together these examples suggest that ESL students recognize that student talk is a source of problems in the classroom, and that the teacher attempts to control their talk in that setting. They also demonstrate that ESL students recognize the value structure of the school as far as student talk is concerned.

Although students talk about their talk in the classroom as if it were a problem, this is not to say that they do not engage in illicit talk at all. On the contrary, students are continuously attempting to evade the constraints that the teacher places on their talk in the classroom. As the comments by Linda and Nireka suggest, they both engage in talk in the classroom despite their fears that it will negatively affect their evaluations by the teacher. Students in the ESL classroom routinely engage in forms of talk that are not part of the official classroom agenda that is controlled by the teacher. One way in which students are able to carry this out without being sanctioned by the teacher is to avoid being detected. There are several ways through which ESL students could speak while avoiding detection by the teacher. One such method is to talk quietly, or whisper, so that the sound of talk does not reach the teacher. Another way of avoiding detection by the teacher is to avoid being seen talking. This method involves being out of the teacher’s line of sight. The simplest way to do this is to leave the classroom, although other areas of the school, such as the library, are policed for student talk by other teachers and staff. One can also avoid being seen talking by the teacher by keeping away from view within the classroom. During ‘reading time’, for example (an activity where no talking was allowed), some students got into the practice of propping up large books on their desks or in their laps so that their faces were hidden from the teacher’s view. Students would then
engage in whispered conversations with one another from behind the books. Since the teacher could not see their lips moving, and could not detect their whispering, these students were able to talk to one another despite being explicitly told not to talk during ‘reading time’.

In what remains of this section, I discuss one particular language learning activity that takes place in the ESL classroom, focusing not only on how students’ rights to speak are controlled during this activity, but also on how students evade the constraints placed on their speaking rights by the teacher in order to create opportunities for themselves and for other students to practice speaking English.

‘Wordsearch’ is a highly structured activity which occurred in the ESL classroom on a daily basis. The activity resembles the well-known televised game show ‘Wheel of Fortune’. Each morning, before students arrive, the teacher puts a series of dashes on the blackboard that correspond to a sentence of some topical significance. The secret message usually ends with a question, possible answers to which are arrived at through brief class discussion and which must then be written in the students’ journals.

‘Wordsearch’ was developed by the ESL teacher who saw it as a way of getting students to rely less on him as a source for correct spellings of words. When I asked him about it, the teacher explained to me that the purpose of the exercise was to help students to recognize written English words and to develop their ability to guess at the words given limited context clues, as well as to improve their spelling skills. Thus, ‘wordsearch’ places emphasis on written, as opposed to oral, communication, although there is a talk component to the exercise.
During the game, students' turns consist of giving a letter and/or guessing at the identity of a word or words which they must pronounce or, minimally, spell out. When the entire message is revealed on the blackboard, a student is chosen to insert the punctuation. If the student makes a mistake another is chosen until the message is properly punctuated. Finally, one student is chosen to read the message in its entirety. Typically, for the first part of the exercise, the teacher goes around the class in sequence and prompts students to take their turn at the game. Students are not permitted to verbally identify a word or words if it is not their turn. If they do, they are either ignored by the teacher or sanctioned. Students who raise their hands as an indication that they wish to speak are also ignored if they have already taken a turn. With little exception the teacher moves around the class in sequence.

Some students, especially those who have been in the classroom for some time and whose knowledge of English is relatively developed, have advanced skills at guessing the identity of the words on the blackboard. Other students, particularly those who are recent additions to the class, or who are struggling to learn English, or who have arrived in the class with limited literacy skills, rarely contribute more to the exercise than providing individual letters for the teacher to fill in. Often, the teacher would presuppose what level of participation a particular student would be likely to be at (particularly if he felt that this student was not too bright) and would tell this student to 'pick a letter'. In this way students were told that, in the teacher's opinion, they occupied, and participated at, different levels.

Given the constraints that the teacher placed on students' opportunities to practice verbally in this structured exercise, and to contribute to the completion of the game, how
did students actually play it? Did they follow the procedures set out by the teacher or did they develop their own strategies in order to maximize opportunities to participate? One strategy that students used to circumvent the participatory constraints set up by the teacher involved the use of repetition elicitations directed at other students. In the game students (in particular those who were more advanced learners of English) who could not guess at the identity of a word or words because it was not their turn would often whisper to another student what to say. This strategy was typically directed at new and struggling students who otherwise would not normally guess at a word but who would typically limit their verbal participation to providing a letter. This strategy would give advanced students increased opportunities to vocalize their contributions through the speech of someone else. In effect, they would receive a form of personal validation through someone else’s speech. The strategy would also give newer or struggling students a voice that they would not otherwise use. For newer students especially, it allowed them to hear themselves speaking English by copying what other students told them to say. They would also receive a form of ‘credit’ from the teacher for guessing at a word. For example, I observed an occasion when the teacher went over and shook the hand of Daniel (a new, Mandarin-speaking student) because he had never uttered an English word in front of the class before. However, I had previously noted that Susan, a more advanced student, had told Daniel what to say but the teacher had not noticed her whispering to him. On another occasion, I observed Marguerita doing the same thing with Casandra (a Turkish-speaking student who had recently come into the class and who sat next to Marguerita). In this situation, however, the teacher suspected collaboration because he had noticed Marguerita leaning over and whispering to Casandra. He told Casandra to
pick a letter even though she had correctly identified a word in the message. Thus, the teacher did not see the practice of student collaboration as a legitimate one.

In summary, the use of repetition elicitations by students evaded the constraints put on talk in the ESL classroom, although in ways which did not challenge the teacher’s control over the tasks being carried out in the classroom. Advanced students used this strategy in order to contribute more than would be typically allotted to them while providing cues to new and struggling students to utter English words. Both advanced and new/struggling students reaped rewards from this practice: advanced students received personal validation while new and/or struggling students received validation from the teacher. Responding to elicitations such as these gave new language learners opportunities to vocalize by repeating what other students told them to say. Thus, while essentially a literary exercise aimed at decoding the identity of written messages, ESL students exploit ‘wordsearch’ to make maximum use of opportunities for talking and developing their oral skills.

There is evidence to suggest that, at the level of language ideology, students are not openly critical of the constraints that are placed on their ability to engage in talk in the classroom. However, in practice, ESL student routinely evade these constraints in order to maximize opportunities for themselves, and for other students, to speak.

In this chapter I have examined whether the language ideology which separates talk from work in traditional classrooms is incorporated into the ESL classroom at Barton school. I found that, although the teacher and his assistants nominally accept a certain amount of student talk as beneficial to the process of learning English, they nonetheless work
diligently to control student talk in the classroom, suggesting that this ideology is deeply rooted in teachers’ understanding of the classroom. Control over student talk in the ESL classroom is achieved in a variety of ways: by designating parts of the day as ‘talk free’; by policing work activities for students engaged in ‘socializing’; and by sanctioning parallel interactions when the teacher or an assistant has the floor. In addition, the use of elicitations functions to further limit student talk as well as to facilitate and maintain control over the floor by the ESL teacher or one of his assistants. Overall, the regulation of student talk in the ESL classroom is one means by which ESL students are systematically denied opportunities to practice speaking. To the extent that ‘practice makes perfect’ (cf. Swain 1985), the interactional means by which ESL students are able to develop competence as speakers of English, the dominant language in Canada and throughout most of North America, are effectively limited in this classroom setting. In chapter 4 I briefly outlined how schools have been theorized as sites of social reproduction, in particular the reproduction of forms of social inequality such as class relations. In this chapter I have shown the interactional processes whereby limits are placed on minority language speakers’ access to the dominant language in the school setting. Limiting access to the dominant language in this way is a means by which the unequal relations between minority and majority ethnic groups are reproduced in the school setting (cf. Bolaria and Li 1988).

In this chapter I also discussed how ESL students make sense of the limitations placed on their talk in the classroom. Students appear to understand the ways in which their talk is undervalued in the classroom setting. Furthermore, the ways in which students act in the classroom seem to indicate neither an outright acceptance of this
situation, nor overt resistance to these limitations. Instead, students attempt to covertly evade the constraints placed on talk in the classroom. In this way students attempt to maximize opportunities to practice speaking English in the classroom without challenging the official agenda of classroom interactions. This final discussion leads into the following chapter, where the analysis focuses on groups of ESL students and examines how opportunities to practice speaking English are (or, are not) created interactionally, both inside and outside the classroom when the teacher is not in control of the interactional agenda.

---

1 For each transcript I have listed the location where the interaction was recorded. Following this, in parentheses, the tape number (1-32), side (A,B), and tape count (0-620) for the beginning of each interaction is given.

2 In a recent article Egbert (1996) discusses the interactional phenomenon of 'schisming'. This term refers to the practice whereby a single multiparty interaction spontaneously breaks into two or more parallel interactions. Interestingly, what is occurring in many of the examples analyzed in this section (e.g. 5-3, 5-5, 5-6, 5-7, 5-12) seems to be the direct opposite of schisming. The sanctions in these examples are intended to bring about the end of interactions that are happening alongside an interaction in which the teacher or one of his assistants is one of the main participants. Unlike schisming, however, the practice is not spontaneous, and depends on the teacher's authority to issue metapragmatic directives to students.

3 I call this mimicking because the teacher often used the same pronunciation with stress on the final [z] as a way of correcting Linda, who often did not pronounce the plural /s/ morpheme.

4 In such cases, the teacher opens up the floor by asking students questions related to the story. However, in the many instances of story time that I observed there were few opportunities for students to speak.

5 It is also probable that choice elicitations were used more often in the ESL classroom on the assumption that students require less linguistic competence in order to produce an acceptable response when compared to other elicitation types. However, in this analysis I am primarily interested in the effect that elicitations have on opportunities to speak, not on the intent that speakers have in choosing particular elicitation types over others.
Often, the hidden message written on the board was related to an article that the teacher had read in the newspaper. On other occasions, the message was of some more general topical significance. For example, the message on February 2, 1998 was an explanation of the North American celebration of Groundhog Day.
Chapter 6:  
Claiming institutional power in ESL student interactions: Student-initiated repair sequences and meta-pragmatic directives.

In the last chapter we saw that, in spite of a view of talk as beneficial to second language learning (within carefully circumscribed limits), the ESL teacher and his assistants at Barton school continue to control and limit student talk in the classroom in a variety of ways. Hence, opportunities to talk in the classroom setting, and thus to practice speaking English, are limited. The ability to control student talk in the classroom is derived from the institutional power that is vested in the role of teacher. Indeed, as Philips (1972) argues, an important concern for teachers is to instruct students precisely about the distinction between the roles of student and teacher, particularly in terms of who legitimately controls the activities that take place in the classroom, who can legitimately evaluate the knowledge and skills of others, and who cannot. In other words, students are socialized to recognize the institutional power held by the teacher (which places the teacher at a higher level than students), and students are socialized to use language in ways that validate and reproduce this asymmetrical relationship. This asymmetry is perhaps even more salient in the ESL classroom, where students must display what they know in interactions with their teacher in a language in which the teacher is at a distinctive advantage, while at the same time the teacher ultimately controls students’ right to participate in these interactions.

Thus far, the analysis presented in this thesis has centered on the student-teacher relationship, in particular in the ESL classroom, in such a way that the distinction
between these two school-based identities has been foregrounded. Of course, it should come as no surprise that the teacher-student relationship would be an important feature of an ethnographic study of language learning in the school setting. At the same time, there would be definite limitations to a study which focused on interactions between teachers and students as the only arena where language learning takes place. Students engage in language learning activities in multiple settings, many of which do not involve the teacher (or any other agent of the school) as a participant. An important aspect of this project involved gaining access to these diverse settings in order to observe how ESL students participate in language learning activities outside the boundaries of the classroom and in situations that are outside of the direct control of the teacher. Accordingly, while the last chapter focused exclusively on the classroom setting, in this chapter and the one that follows I examine interactions among ESL students in a variety of settings: the classroom, the library, the schoolyard, and the mall. One question that I ask (in the following chapter) is how student interactions are shaped by the institutional character of these settings.

Just as it is problematic to focus solely on language learning in teacher-student interactions, I also believe that there are risks associated with maintaining a rigid dichotomy between the identities of teacher and student in general. At Barton school ESL students routinely interact with other students in ways that call into question the rigid separation of the identities ‘teacher’ and ‘student’. As we shall see below, one of the ways in which students can claim participatory status in interactions is to lay claim to a ‘teacher-like’ identity when talking to other students. I show how this identity is invoked in two particular kinds of student interactions:
1. in interactions where students initiate repair sequences in order to correct the speech of others;

2. in interactions where students issue meta-pragmatic directives (which I define as directives to speak or not to speak, or to speak in some particular way (e.g. quietly, in English)) to other students.

I argue that in addition to using repair sequences and meta-pragmatic directives to participate in interactions, students also attempt to claim institutional power and invoke hierarchical relationships with other students. As these hierarchical relations are based around knowledge of English (and to a lesser degree other languages) and rights to speak it would seem that students reproduce the linguistic power relations to which they are themselves subjugated as language learners.

THE ESL CLASSROOM: CHALLENGING THE TEACHER-STUDENT DICHOTOMY.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Susan Philips (1972) has argued that a primary concern for teachers is to instruct students about the distinction between teacher and student, especially in terms of who can legitimately control the activities that take place in the classroom and evaluate the knowledge and skills of others. While this general arrangement holds in the ESL classroom, as was seen in the last chapter, the ESL classroom varies subtly from the typical pattern in ways that are important in understanding how ESL students interact with one another.

The ESL teacher at Barton school is a monolingual English speaker who is confronted with, as he calls it, the ‘league of nations’ for a classroom. As such, he cannot directly communicate with students who do not speak English. To cope with this
problem, the teacher and his assistants employ other ESL students as ‘go-betweens’, translators who act as liaisons between himself and students who have recently arrived in the classroom. Although they serve a temporary purpose, the teacher sees the use of go-betweens as a necessity, not just as something that makes his job easier:

1) Teacher:  
[Using go-betweens] has to happen in this class because of the nature of the classroom...I couldn’t survive without it...Everybody does it in this sort of situation.

The job of a go-between is to show new students the ropes, assisting them with their schoolwork and generally helping them get adjusted to the daily routine of the classroom and the school. Go-betweens translate the teachers instructions and directives, and they translate for the students should they need to explain something to the teacher. They often coach new students to utter their first English words and correct their speech. Although being a go-between carries with it a certain responsibility to assist the teacher and help one’s fellow students, it also gives these students a way of legitimately speaking in class for the purposes of helping other students that they might not otherwise get. Apart from the obvious effect it has on facilitating communication between teacher and students in the ESL classroom, the teacher also sees particular advantages for those who act as go-betweens:

2) Teacher:  
I think that some of the advantages [to using go-betweens] is that it clarifies, in the helper’s own mind, certain things. They’re having to think deeply about how to explain something, and use their own language, and think about what they’ve been doing. Rather than just doing something, they’re having to think about something, how it’s done, and that can help them.

The teacher claims not to use any special criteria for selecting students to be go-betweens, but does indicate a preference for students with relatively advanced English skills as well as for students whom he considers to be ‘intelligent.’
3) Teacher: There’s not any [criteria] that I’ve deliberately thought through. In some cases, I can’t do it because I don’t have anybody who is proficient in the language. As you can see right now, we’ve got a new girl from China, and just to make sure she understands it, I can use two students who are now doing all right in English and can explain things. Eighteen months ago, they wouldn’t have been in a position to do that. I mean, I’m struggling with the Spanish. Corina now has a bit more English than she had. She knows the routines and everything, so therefore she can tell Miguel what we’re doing. Get much beyond that and I’m not sure, because she’s still at the survival stages. She couldn’t hold a conversation in English. None of the Spanish could. It depends on who I’ve got. Sometimes I don’t have anybody, and then I’m snookered. Then it becomes frustrating. It helps a lot if they’re intelligent to start with, both people. In this case, I think they are. I mean, if it was a question of using Miranda to help somebody in Spanish, I’d be lost, wouldn’t I? I mean, she could explain the rules in Spanish or what’s going on, but she wouldn’t help them with their math and explain where they’re going from here. If it was Peter trying to explain, we’d be here till Hell froze over.

The fact that there is a preference for students with advanced language skills and a measure of intelligence means that the advantages of being a go-between that were alluded to above are unequally distributed within the ESL classroom. These benefits tend to accrue to those students who already possess increased linguistic and cognitive skills, which already give these students an advantage inside and outside the classroom. Thus, the teacher’s use of go-betweens ultimately reproduces at the level of the individual classroom the inequities that exist outside of the classroom between ESL learners and those with native-speaker competence.

‘Go-between’ is thus an institutionally-ratified identity, a median category which crosses the traditional divide between teacher and student. By being go-betweens ESL students can adopt a ‘teacher-like’ identity in interactions with other students. It should be noted, however, that the ESL teacher does not see go-betweens as occupying the role of ‘teacher’:
4) Warren: *DO YOU THINK THERE ARE ANY DISADVANTAGES [TO USING STUDENTS AS GO-BETWEENS]?*

Teacher: *I can't think of any, as long as it's used within moderation. You can't say, 'Right, you're a surrogate teacher,' you know, because they're not.*

But the understanding that they are not teachers does not mean that students do not attempt to claim some of the power associated with this institutional role. Also, whether or not they would be considered good go-betweens by the teacher does not necessarily stop individual students from attempting to adopt a 'teacher-like' identity. For example, Miranda often helps Gloria to learn how to say things in English even though she has limited literacy skills, does poorly in class overall, and is seen as a weak student (as is evident in the teacher's comments above). In spite of these limitations, Miranda's knowledge and use of spoken English is greater than Gloria's (and of many of the other students in the ESL classroom), and she often helps Gloria to learn English. For example, in the transcript below, Miranda uses the occasion of another student's mistake to teach Gloria the right way to ask for something in English.

Transcript 6-1: Classroom (10/A/582).

1 Gloria <Sp.> X X X
2 student Hmm?
3 Gloria Ella si sabe un poquito.
   (trans.) *She knows a little bit.*
4 student Oh: yeah.
5 Miranda I want (...) I want one <laughs> Eso no concuerda. I want one.
   (trans.) *That doesn't make sense.*
7 Gloria No.
8 Miranda I want one of this?
9 Gloria Hmm.
10 Miranda Can I want this? Ella para decir can I ha- (...) Mira. (...) Ella para decir can I have one of this. Ella dice can I want this.
11 (trans.) *When she wants to say 'Can I ha- ' (...) Look (...) When she wants to say 'Can I have one of this' she says 'Can I want this'.
12 Miranda Y que es eso?
   (trans.) And what's that?
14 Miranda Me- me regalas algo.
Could you give me something. <the Spanish equivalent of 'Can I have one'>

Gloria: Y como dice?
(trans.) And how do you say it?
Miranda: Can I have one. Have one. Can I have <extra emphasis> one.
Gloria: Can I have <same extra emphasis> one.
Miranda: Yeah. Y ella dice can I want this.
(trans.) And she says 'can I want this.'

**Student-initiated repair sequences.**

A common way in which ESL students attempt to invoke a 'teacher-like' identity, and claim a teacher’s institutional power, is by initiating repair sequences, interactions where one student attempts to correct the speech of another student or students. The particular form that these repair sequences take is significant. Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) argue that there is a preference for self-repair in adult conversations (cf. Goffman 1967). Adult speakers work to provide opportunities for the perpetrator of a trouble source (what is seen to be in need of repair) to correct themselves without overtly stating that a correction is in order, and, when issuing a correction, work to soften its impact through the use of hedges, delays, and other mitigating tactics. In short, adults prefer the use of 'mitigated,' as opposed to 'aggravated,' forms of correction (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 84-86). In contrast, Goodwin (1983) argues that children are much more likely to use aggravated forms of correction, which assert rather than question that a repair is in order, and often perform the correction themselves rather than provide an opportunity for the perpetrator of a trouble source to self-repair. The significance of this lies in the fact that forms of aggravated correction imply that the initiator of a repair sequence lacks confidence in the ability of the perpetrator of a trouble source to self-correct (Goodwin 1983: 657-8). In other words, issuing an aggravated correction implies that the person who makes a mistake lacks the requisite knowledge to repair their error. It
also denies the originator of a trouble source any opportunity to display such knowledge should they possess it while providing a slot for the initiator of the repair sequence to display the knowledge that they possess. Below, I discuss several examples of student initiated repair sequences that center on participants’ linguistic knowledge. In the majority of these cases, ESL students employ aggravated forms of repair.

In the first example shown below students are working on a crossword puzzle in the library. I am helping them with some of the clues. After I supply an answer to one of the clues (‘stand’) Corina attempts to spell the word. At line 2 and then again at line 8 Corina asks me how to spell the word (Miranda’s repetition of Corina’s question and Gloria’s laughter are commenting on the fact that Corina asked me the question in Spanish). She resumes her attempt to spell the word for several turns, but writes the final letter incorrectly. Seeing this, Gloria initiates a repair sequence at line 17. She uses an aggravated form, first issuing the correction, then stating baldly that Corina is in error.

Transcript 6-2: Library (27/A/60).

1 Warren Opposite of sit (.) stand
2 Corina Espela? <asking me to ‘spell (it) ‘>
3 Warren S: tand.
4 Corina C?
6 Corina E?
7 Warren No. S: t (1) s: t
8 Corina Como se scribe?
   (trans.) How do you write it?
9 Warren S. T. A. [N. D.]
   [
10 Miranda Como se scribe.
   (trans.) How do you write it.
11 Gloria <laughs>
   <approx. 2-3 seconds of parallel interaction>
12 Corina S. S. T.
13 Warren A.
14 Corina A.
15 Warren N. D.
16 Corina <writes V instead of D>
17 Gloria D. (1.5) No V <laughs>
   (trans.) D. Not V.
In another example, shown below, three Spanish speaking students are working on an assignment where they are asked to identify the English words for different fruits.

Miranda and Gloria both name an item, 'pear', and Miranda asks what this word refers to. However, neither she nor Gloria use the standard English pronunciation of 'pear'. At line 8 Eduardo responds to Miranda's question first by identifying the item in Spanish, _pera_, then by supplying the correct English pronunciation of the word, [pər]. Miranda's response at line 10 suggests that she interprets Eduardo's utterance at line 8 and my confirmation at line 9 as a repair sequence.

Transcript 6-3: Library (12/B/45).

1  Miranda  Que?
    (trans.)  What?
2  Gloria   Ya va.
    (trans.)  Hold on.
3  Miranda Est- Cual es? <laughs>
    (trans.)  Thi- Which one is it? <laughs>
4  Gloria   A mi me toca esta.
    (trans.)  I have to do this one.
5  Miranda Ah leela pues.
    (trans.)  Oh then read it.
6  Gloria   Pear. Pear. <pronounced [pir]> 
7  Miranda Pear. <[pir]> Que es pear? <[pir]>
    (trans.)  What is pear?
8  Eduardo Pera. Pear <[ptr]>
    (trans.)  Pear
9  Warren   Pear <[ptr]>
10 Miranda Ah porque yo pense que <Gloria laughs> pero deci [pir]
    (trans.)  Oh because I thought that it was said ' [pir]'

It is also worth noting that, like the example in Transcript 6-1 above, in Transcripts 6-2 and 6-3 the students initiating the repair sequences, Miranda and Gloria, are not seen by the teacher to be capable of assisting other students with their language learning and would not be chosen as go-betweens. Nonetheless, they do engage in correcting the speech of others.
In the following example, Susan initiates a repair sequence in order to point out and correct a mistake that she believes I have made. The fact that I am a native speaker of English does not stop her from attempting to correct me. As is common for student-initiated repair sequences, Susan chooses an aggravated form, stating baldly that the word 'paper' is incorrect and then supplying the correct term 'newspaper,' with emphasis on the added item, 'news'. Susan does not ask whether an error may have been committed, she asserts it. Also, by supplying the correct term herself, she further implies that I do not possess the requisite knowledge to self-repair while positioning herself as the holder of that knowledge.

Transcript 6-4: Mall (13/A/222).

1  Warren  Where d'ya get that paper.
2  Hanna  <points to someone>
3  Warren  Where did he get it?
4  Hanna  He buy it.
5  Susan  That's not a paper. That's newspaper. Okay?
6  Warren  I call it a paper for short.

A fourth example (transcript 6-5) differs from the examples discussed above in that one speaker, Cynthia, identifies a trouble source (Linda's pronunciation and syntactic realization of 'it hurts') but does not supply a correction. This sequence also differs from other student-initiated repair sequences in terms of the intonational contour used to verbally highlight the trouble source. Cynthia's use of rising intonation at the beginning of line 6 resembles more mitigated forms of repair sequence which question rather than assert that a repair is in order. However, unlike typical mitigated repair sequences, Cynthia provides no opportunity for Linda to self-repair. Rather, Cynthia highlights the trouble source (thereby inferring that she knows the correct form and thus positioning herself above Linda in terms of her knowledge of English) but uses the opportunity to tease rather than correct Linda.
Transcript 6-5: Mall (3/A/445).

1  Hanna  <laughing, approaches Linda and slaps her on the back>
2  Cynthia <laughs>
3  Linda  OH MY GOD.
4  Hanna  <laughing> Stop. Stop.
5  Linda  STOP IT IT'S HURT. <'it hurts', sounds like 'it's [hat]>'
6  Cynthia [It's hot? I know it's hot. I know it's going to be
7       winter but it's still hot=I know that.]
8  Hanna  <laughing>

In the final example below students are drawing flags to represent the country of
origin of the students in the class. I ask who in the class comes from Guatemala. At line 7
Corina initiates a repair sequence and corrects my pronunciation of the word
'Guatemala'. Like most student-initiated repair sequences, Corina chooses an aggravated
form; she states baldly that an error has been committed and supplies the correction
herself.²

Transcript 6-6: Classroom (10/A/310).

1  Warren  El Salvador (2.5) Brasil. Guatemala? Who comes from
2       Guatemala?
3  Miranda <laughs> Guatemala.
4  Warren  Who comes from Guatemala?
5  Miranda Who? Guatemala?
6  Warren  Yeah. Nobody here comes from Guatemala.
7  Corina  Guatemala no Guatemala.
8  Warren  Guatemala.

To summarize, student-initiated repair sequences are typically aggravated in
form. As forms of aggravated correction, these sequences are one means by which
hierarchical relationships among students (and between students and 'teachers') are
established interactionally. Since teachers typically have the authority to act as judges of
students' knowledge (and especially in this case as judges of their knowledge of
English), student-initiated repair sequences signal an attempt to claim this power
interactionally, and thus for students to 'act' like teachers. In the ESL classroom, the
traditional dichotomy between teachers and students is called into question in a variety of ways through the use of student-initiated repair sequences. First, students demonstrate that they possess knowledge of English that other students lack. This mirrors the differential levels of knowledge that typically separate teacher from student, except in this case it is students that are differentiating themselves from other students. Second, students sometimes initiate repair sequences with others who would be expected to have more knowledge of English than themselves. For example, in transcript 6-4, Susan corrects my use of the term ‘paper’ to refer to a ‘newspaper’. Here, the typical relationship between the teacher who possesses knowledge of English and the students who does not is temporarily reversed. Finally, students also initiate repair sequences in situations where they possess superior knowledge of languages other than English. For example, in transcript 6-6, Corina corrects my pronunciation of ‘Guatemala’. In such situations, students can invoke the authority that typically accrues to those who possess knowledge that others lack. Below, I examine several interactions where students issue meta-pragmatic directives to other students. Like student-initiated repair sequences, students use relatively aggravated forms of meta-pragmatic directives.

**ESL students’ use of meta-pragmatic directives.**

Meta-pragmatic directives can be understood as directives that attend to the way interactants are speaking (e.g. volume, tone, what language they are speaking) in addition to whether or not interactants should be speaking at all. ESL students routinely use two kinds of meta-pragmatic directives: ones that focus on which code is being spoken (i.e. directives to switch codes), and ones that focus on other students’ rights to speak (i.e. directives to ‘shut up’ or ‘be quiet’, etc.). Like repair sequences, the form that meta-
pragmatic directives take can vary from mitigated to aggravated. An example of a mitigated meta-pragmatic directive would be, 'I'm sorry, I'm having trouble hearing you', while 'Speak up!' would be categorized as a relatively aggravated form. Like student-initiated repair sequences, student-initiated meta-pragmatic directives tend to be aggravated in form. As such, these sequences mark another way in which hierarchical relationships are established interactionally among students. One type of meta-pragmatic directives occurs when students tell other students to be quiet, as is visible in the following two examples. In the first example, two students are seated at a table in back of the ESL classroom. One student tells the other to 'shh' when he is talking about his nose.

Transcript 6-7: Classroom (12/B/228).

1 Eduardo  <sniffs> Ow my my nose hurts (4) <sniffs> Ouch see. (.).
2          Don't you think it hurts a lot?
3 student   Shh.

In the second example, shown below, Corina and Gloria are working together on an assignment. Corina begins to explain how a particular bit of work is to be completed. Gloria responds excitedly in Spanish, stating that she knows how to answer the question. At line 5 another student interjects and tells Gloria to be quiet. Although Gloria begins to speak again after several seconds have passed, she does so in a quiet, whispered voice.

Transcript 6-8: Classroom (28/A/25).

1 Corina   [Ahora tengo que ver que ahí debe de encerrarla. (trans.)
           Now this one must be circled.

           []

2          Don't hold me. <parallel interaction>

3 student   Este yo lo puedo hacer este yo lo puedo hacer.
4 Gloria   (trans.) I can do this one I can do this one I can do this one.
5          ShHH.
6          (2.5)
7          Este yo lo puedo hacer este yo lo puedo hacer yo.
8          (trans.) I can do this one this one I can do.
9          Corina Pero cual es la palabra? (trans.)
10         But what is the word?
In addition to issuing directives to other students to be quiet, students can also use directives in an attempt to change the speech of students in other ways. This is evident in the following example where Linda comments on Marguerita’s habit of mumbling. In this example, Marguerita attempts to ask me if I know of a place called Brazilia. Somewhat insecure about speaking English, she speaks very softly and, like other ESL students, has a habit of covering her mouth when she talks. Linda is seated nearby and when she overhears Marguerita she interjects (line 12) and issues a directive to Marguerita to stop mumbling when she talks (‘No talking like this’; ‘Don’t do like that’). As in the previous examples, Linda chooses to use a relatively aggravated form, although she eventually qualifies the directive with an explanation that she cannot understand Marguerita when she mumbles. Unlike the previous examples, however, Linda does not sanction the talk of Marguerita by telling her to be quiet or to stop talking. Instead, she uses the directive in order to correct what she believes to be a deficiency in Marguerita’s speech. Hence, it somewhat resembles the student-initiated repair sequences discussed above but focuses on the style in which another student’s talk is delivered rather than the ‘correctness’ of another student’s grammar or pronunciation.

Transcript 6-9: Classroom (2/A/257).

1 Marguerita Mister do you know um um place pla-
2 Warren X
3 Marguerita Place Brazilia?
4 Warren Do I know
5 Marguerita Do you know
6 Warren Do I know what.
7 Marguerita Uh place Brazilia?
8 Warren Th- oh Brazilia?
9 Marguerita Yeah
10 Warren Yeah
11 Marguerita Uh: the name is ves Brazilia.
12 Linda No no talking like this okay? Just open your mouth X
13 don’t do it eveyeveyeveyeyey <imitates a person
14 mumbling> Don’t don’t do like that. You know what?
15 Sometimes she talking right I don’t understand because
16 like um she not open her mouth she just do like that
17 and talk right I can’t understand X
18 Marguerita X X X understand
19 Warren X She says she can’t understand you (.) cause you don’t
20 open your mouth enough.
21 Marguerita [uh?]
22 Linda Yeah you got to talk you got to open your mouth.

Students can also issue directives in an attempt to get students to switch codes or to cease
talking in a language other than English. In the following example, Peter is seated at a
table at the back of the classroom with Miranda, Gloria, and Corina. Miranda and Gloria
are speaking Spanish together, commenting on an exercise that Gloria is working on.
Peter cannot speak Spanish although he often imitates Spanish utterances when they are
spoken. At line 14 Peter issues an aggravated directive to Miranda and Gloria telling
them to stop speaking Spanish. However, it is Corina, rather than Miranda or Gloria, who
responds to Peter’s directive. Although Corina had not been participating in the
interaction for which Peter had issued a meta-pragmatic directive, her right to speak
Spanish in the classroom has been called into question as well. Her response is to make
fun of Peter’s directive and then quickly change the subject, directing Peter’s attention to
some bit of work she has in front of her. Although she does not explicitly address Peter’s
directive, Corina’s response effectively minimizes the impact of Peter’s utterance by
making Peter the object of humor.

Transcript 6-10: Classroom (14/A/435).
1 Miranda <laughs>
2 Peter Yeah.
3 Gloria Quitate que me voy a X X
   (trans.) Move over cause I’m going to X X
4. Miranda Gloria vos X X
   (trans.) Gloria you X X
5 Peter <imitating Miranda’s utterance> Gloria vos?
   (trans.) Gloria you?
6 Gloria Ah yo lo (estoy pintando como yo pueda.
   (trans.) Ah I’m drawing it the way I can do it.
   [
Leave me alone.
Okay okay [okay.

Okay okay [okay.

Como yo puedo pintar.
The way I can draw.

Yo puedo pintar [laughs]
I can draw.

[laughs]

Leave me alone.

Stop speaking (.).

Stop speaking [Spanish.

Stop speaking [Spanish.

You like it, man?

I'm finish.

Don't care.

Mister you like X [X X you like it?

Do not care.

Finally, in the example shown below, Linda overhears Shanaza and Salima speaking Urdu in the library. She asks Shanaza and Salima that if they know how to speak English, why do they choose to speak Urdu. Although this example is not aggravated in form, in it Linda effectively calls into question the appropriateness of speaking languages other than English in the school and implies that students should always speak English when able. Rather than deflecting the force of the directive, as was done in the previous example (transcript 6-10) when Corina makes fun of Peter’s utterance, Shanaza responds to Linda by stating that the reason she speaks Urdu rather than English is that she is ‘crazy’. Thus, her response seems to implicitly accept Linda’s premise that she should be speaking English, and Shanaza claims responsibility for her linguistic behavior.
Like student-initiated repair sequences, the examples of student-initiated meta-pragmatic directives above tend to be aggravated in form. As such, they effectively establish a hierarchy between the issuer and the recipient of the directives. Students attempt to claim a teacher’s institutional power and authority when they issue meta-pragmatic directives to other students.

In this chapter I have shown two ways in which ESL students at Barton School attempt to claim a teacher’s institutional power in interactions with other students, adopting a ‘teacher-like’ identity through by correcting the language of other students and by issuing meta-pragmatic directives. It could further be suggested that by correcting other students’ production of English forms (the correct form being that modeled by target language speakers) and by directing other students to speak in English (or inferring that they should be speaking English) ESL students who initiate repair sequences and issue meta-pragmatic directives to other students are effectively reproducing the hierarchical ordering of English versus minority languages and their speakers that exists in the larger society within the microcosm of the ESL classroom and ESL student friendship groups. On the surface this does seem to be the case. However, there are at least two complicating factors. First, students do not solely focus on the ‘correctness’ of English forms; they also correct students when they speak languages other than English. Second, it is not necessarily the more advanced speakers of English who engage in these speech activities;
novice learners do so as well. The picture which emerges from all this is that of a fluid and dynamic notion of power. In the following chapter I examine two interactions in fine detail in order to show the micro dynamics of power struggles within ESL friendship groups and the role that student-initiated repair sequences and meta-pragmatic directives play in these struggles. I also ask why students regulate code choice in friendship group activities and to what extent this is practiced by certain students and not others.

---

1 Only one of the three assistants who regularly worked in the ESL class (though not all at the same time) spoke a language that was spoken by some of the students (Cantonese). The other two assistants could speak French and Italian respectively. Another assistant spoke Portuguese, but was only present in the ESL classroom for a short while.

2 Interestingly, Corina's repair sequence comes after an extended repair sequence which I initiated at line 1 and which ends at line 6, when I state unequivocally that an error has been committed (previously, at lines 1 and 4 I only questioned whether an error had been committed). It is only after this point that Corina responds by initiating her own repair sequence. Hence, her repair sequence can be seen as a response to the one initiated by me and perhaps as an attempt to redress the imbalance that was created through my identification of a trouble source in her own work.
Chapter 7:
Codeswitching, code regulation, and institutional power: A micro-analysis of ESL student interactions.¹

In the previous chapter we saw how ESL students establish hierarchical relations by adopting a 'teacher-like' identity in interactions with other ESL students. This identity is invoked through student-initiated repair sequences and meta-pragmatic directives, particularly when they take aggravated forms. In the present chapter more closely inspect the strategies ESL students use to regulate code choice in friendship groups, focusing in particular on two extended interactions.

In teacher-student interactions in the ESL classroom English is the preferred code. Students, to the best of their abilities, always speak English when interacting with the ESL teacher. In this chapter I examine other kinds of interactional situations where ESL students can, in theory, choose to speak or not to speak English. Here, my analysis is focused on the ways in which opportunities to speak English are created by students who work to maintain the use of English in interactions, or who attempt to switch interactions into English when another language is being spoken. For this analysis I focus specifically on interactions where students issue directives to switch codes, and compare such cases to other, more indirect, ways in which students attempt to influence what language is spoken in interactions with other ESL students. Of particular interest is how ESL students attempt to claim institutional power as a resource in order to create a participatory space for themselves in interactions with other ESL students. It is through this kind of code-switching and code regulation that students simultaneously claim participatory status in interactions and, by creating a space where they can practice English, they also attempt to

165
reinforce their status in the larger institutional setting where English is the dominant language.

In the first part of this chapter I provide an in-depth analysis of two interactions that take place among one ESL friendship group at Barton school, beginning first with a sketch of the characteristics of this friendship group. I then proceed to present and offer an interpretation of the first interaction in which one student tries to tell other students how to speak. In order to further explain the significance of this interaction, I briefly return to a discussion of how students in the ESL classroom can claim institutional power by adopting a 'teacher-like' identity, which was discussed in detail in chapter six. Following this I present a semiotic analysis of school space as a socially-meaningful system in order to show how different spaces constrain students' ability to invoke this 'teacher-like' identity. I then present and analyze the second main interaction and show how and why it differs from the interaction presented at the outset of this chapter. I end this chapter by looking at the extent to which code regulation is practiced more by some ESL students than others, and why this may be the case.

CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE REGULATION IN THE 'FIRE ESCAPE GROUP'.

As was mentioned above, this chapter centers on a detailed analysis of two interactions that take place among one ESL student friendship group. This group, represented as Figure 7-1 below (see Figure 2-2 for a key), is chiefly composed of South Asian girls originally from Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka. I named them the 'fire escape group' because, during lunch hour, these students typically sit on the fire escape on the west wall of the school that overlooks the playing field. The two interactions involving the 'fire
escape group' contain examples of codeswitching between English and Urdu as well as attempts by one participant, Nireka, to maintain the use of English in the interactions. In each case, speakers not only have to negotiate access to the floor, but also the issue of what code is to be used, since code choice plays a role in facilitating or constraining individuals' ability to participate in group interactions.

Figure 7-1: Sociometric representation of the 'fire escape group'.

Four out of the five 'core' members of the group represented in Figure 7-1 are native speakers of Urdu and recently immigrated from Pakistan. The fifth member, Nireka, came from southern India and is a native speaker of Tamil. However, Nireka clearly prefers to speak English and only rarely speaks Tamil at school with Susheela, a peripheral member of the group originally from Sri Lanka. There are at least two reasons for this: First, Nireka told me about negative experiences that she had at another school in the same city. She said that she hated speaking Tamil because the Sri Lankan Tamil students there made fun of her 'Indian' accent. The second (and perhaps related) reason is that Nireka is considered to be a better English speaker than her friends and most other students in the ESL class. The speed at which she was able to acquire an almost 'accentless' English was often remarked upon by the ESL teacher, who described Nireka
as one of his best students. Thus, I would argue that, for Nireka, it is important to maintain the use of English in group interactions for two reasons: first, it gives her status as a participant in these interactions; and second, because the ability to speak (and therefore practice) English is an important part of what reinforces Nireka’s status in the classroom. Using Pierce’s (1993, 1995) terminology, one might argue that Nireka has a relatively high degree of ‘investment’ in learning and speaking English.

In the first interaction (transcript 7-1) four participants (Nireka, Salima, Shanaza, and Fatima) are seated around a table in the school library. They have been sent there by the ESL teacher to work on a class assignment researching different kinds of musical instruments. The teacher is not present, but the librarian is in the room. Shanaza begins by asking about a picture of a musical instrument in the book she is perusing. Here, I wish to orient the reader to the way in which code choices are used to create and challenge alliances among participants as well as to constrain other speakers’ ability to participate in the interaction.

Transcript 7-1: Library (19/B/1).

1 Shanaza What is this stupid [thing?]
   [X X X X X X X X X X <Urdu>]
2 Salima <squeals>
3 Fatima
4 Nireka Shut up Salima thank you.
5 Salima What?
6 Nireka Shut up I said cause you’re disturbing me.
7 Shanaza Yeah me too.
8 Salima No I’m not.
9 Nireka Ye[s you are.
   []
10 Shanaza Yes you are don’t lie ss-
   (1)
11 Nireka Stupid.
12 Shanaza Stu- <laughs>
13 Nireka Is that what you were gonna say?
14 Shanaza No I was gonna say stupid.
15 Nireka <laughs>
16 Nireka
17 Salima Thoh pihr meh alag jawab dewngi.
   (trans.) Well I can call you something too.
Shanaza Deo.
(trans.) Go ahead.
19 Salima Shukr karō bowla neh.
(trans.) Be thankful I didn't say it.
20 Shanaza [BOWL-THOH.
(trans.) SAY IT.

I
21 Nireka Would you guys shut up. If you wanna talk talk in
22 English (.) or you just shut up and then be quiet.
23 Shanaza And then be quiet tak a tak a tak [a tak.
(trans.) blah blah blah blah.

[ Look it's X.
24 Fatima Look at her brass how it looks X.
25 Nireka I’m gonna do it biggler.
26 Shanaza Okay let me draw brass.
27 Nireka Bigger not biggler.
28 Shanaza <laughs> In my language it’s biggler.
29 Nireka

At line 2 Salima says something to Fatima in Urdu. Nireka tells Salima to shut up and, as an explanation, claims that Salima’s talk is disturbing her ability to complete her work. At line 7, Shanaza says that she too is being disturbed. Her use of English here reinforces the alliance that she has explicitly made with Nireka against Salima (‘Yeah, me too’). This alliance is further reflected in, and strengthened by, the parallel and simultaneous speech at lines 9 and 10 and in the co-constructed dialogue immediately following where Nireka and Shanaza appear to collaborate to call Salima ‘stupid’. This feature of co-construction resembles what Sacks (1995: 57) refers to as a ‘joint production technique’, the production of a syntactically coherent utterance across different turns at talk by different participants. Sacks claims that the joint production of discourse is a powerful way of displaying alignment among conversational participants and I argue that it does the same in this interaction.

In response to the explicit insult, as well as to the alliance that has been developed over successive turns at talk between Shanaza and Nireka, Salima initiates a code switch (line 17) and addresses Shanaza in Urdu, saying that she could call her names too if she wanted. Shanaza maintains the code switch by replying to Salima in Urdu, challenging
Salima to tell her what she was going to say. Salima's code switch could be interpreted as a strategy to end Nireka's alliance with Shanaza by weakening their ability to gang up on Salima, as Nireka would be unable to participate further if the interaction were to continue in Urdu. The switch could also perhaps signal an attempt on the part of Salima to solicit the collaboration of Shanaza in order to reconstitute the alliance along the lines of who can speak Urdu and who cannot. Shanaza's response at line 18 and the subsequent turns in Urdu could be interpreted as 'uptake' by Nireka and thus as further evidence of shifting alliances in the group. This interpretation seems to fit as during the exchange between Shanaza and Salima, at line 21, Nireka overlaps Shanaza, switches the interaction into English, and tells both of them to shut up or speak English.

Significantly, the two points in the interaction where Nireka tells others to shut up (line 4 and 21) occur precisely when she risks being sidelined by a code switch into a language she cannot speak. Hence, while framed as directives to 'keep quiet' both instances also signal a bid to switch the language of interaction back into English so that Nireka can continue as a participant. To understand this kind of interactional move, particularly the directive to 'talk in English', we need to look at two things: first, we need to know whether, and under what conditions, friends can legitimately tell other friends how to speak; and, second, how this is linked to the particular contexts where these interactions occur. These issues are discussed below.

I argue that in this interaction Nireka draws on the institutional power and authority vested in this teacher-like identity to compel the other students to practice specific kinds of linguistic behavior (to 'talk in English' rather than in Urdu) and, further, to judge the other speakers' competence in speaking English. As in the examples above,
Nireka uses a relatively aggravated form of meta-pragmatic directive, telling them first to 'shut up' and then to 'talk in English'. Note that at line 21-22 Nireka directs her speech at both Shanaza and Salima through the use of the term 'you guys'. This seems more like an attempt to position herself apart from the two other speakers rather than a bid to re-establish the alliance with Shanaza that was potentially being challenged by Salima's switch to Urdu.

We must also note how Nireka's directive to 'talk in English' makes an implicit claim about the other girls' competence in speaking English (i.e. if you spoke English better you wouldn't need to speak Urdu). Hence, the meta-pragmatic directive further functions to establish a hierarchy, with Nireka positioning herself above Shanaza and Salima with respect to their English speaking abilities. Shanaza seems to understand this implication and works to challenge Nireka's claim to higher status. Although her initial response at line 23 is to ridicule Nireka's directive (which she does in Urdu), later, at line 28, she initiates an aggravated repair sequence and corrects Nireka's pronunciation of the English word 'bigger'. Thus, Shanaza's correction of Nireka's utterance signals to Nireka that she is not as competent a speaker of English as she implies through her previously issued directive to 'talk in English.' Hence, Shanaza's utterance functions as an attempt to challenge Nireka's bid for higher status at the same time as it reaffirms her own competence as a speaker of English.

The 'school' versus the 'yard'.

Nireka's ability to tell others to 'shut up' or 'talk in English' also rests on her knowledge of the geography of the school as a set of meaningful spaces on which are attached different social constraints on linguistic practices. Although most of the
interactions I recorded took place on school property there is an obvious distinction between those that occurred inside the school and those that took place outside in the yard. For students, the distinction between ‘school’ and ‘yard’ is associated with orientations toward institutional versus non-institutional identities (i.e. ‘student’/‘teacher’ versus ‘friend’, ‘enemy’, etc.), and institutionally-ratified versus non-ratified practices (‘doing work’ versus ‘socializing’, ‘hanging out’, ‘doing nothing’, etc.). Although the yard is considered to be part of school property, the absence of teachers from the schoolyard at Barton helps to differentiate the social meanings ascribable to this space from those attached to spaces inside the school. Given the distinct lack of institutional policing, one gets the sense that there is less concern with how students conduct themselves in the yard as opposed to inside the school (although there are obvious limits to what students can do in the schoolyard), which suggests that this distinction is meaningful to both teachers and students. Linguistic behavior is also affected by this social-spatial distinction. Teachers draw on this difference in their attempts to call for quiet in the classroom. For example, the ESL teacher invokes this distinction when he utters the following to a student who has just entered the classroom from outside and is talking to other students:

Transcript 7-2: Classroom (16/A/291).

1 teacher Uh X you’ve come in X settle down.

This brief utterance foregrounds the spatial distinction between the schoolyard and the classroom. The schoolyard is a place where one can legitimately socialize and talk openly about things not related to one’s schoolwork, while these things are not allowed in the classroom. For this reason, the student is told to ‘settle down’ once he or she has ‘come in’, having crossed the spatial threshold between the yard and the school. Furthermore,
the teacher legitimately controls student talk in the classroom, while students are not under any direct supervision in the yard. A movement from inside the school to the yard at lunchtime or after the end-of-school bell seems to signal a relaxation of the rigid one-speaker-at-a-time turn-taking system that is promoted in the classroom setting and controlled by the teacher as well as the relative volume of student talk that is being produced. Finally, ESL students are also aware that this spatial distinction corresponds to the relative importance of speaking different codes. All the students I interviewed told me that they speak more English inside the school than outside during lunch, which supports my own observations in both settings. The features of this social-spatial distinction are summarized in Table 7-1 below. I argue that the orientation toward the different social identities that map onto these different spaces constrain participants’ ability to use different code-switching and code-regulating strategies in interactions.

Table 7-1: The ‘school’ vs. the ‘yard’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant identity orientation</th>
<th>Predominant activity orientation</th>
<th>Constraints on discourse</th>
<th>Predominant turn-taking pattern</th>
<th>Constraints on code choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ‘School’</td>
<td>The ‘Yard’</td>
<td>The ‘School’</td>
<td>The ‘Yard’</td>
<td>The ‘School’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant identity</td>
<td>Predominant activity</td>
<td>Constraints on discourse</td>
<td>Predominant turn-taking</td>
<td>Constraints on code choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orientation</td>
<td>orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>pattern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institutional identity:</td>
<td>institutional identity:</td>
<td>teacher controls</td>
<td>pre-allocation of turns at talk</td>
<td>English required for most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘student’, ‘teacher’</td>
<td>‘non-institutional identity:</td>
<td>classroom talk</td>
<td>single-speaker-at-a-time</td>
<td>interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘friend’</td>
<td></td>
<td>local management of turns at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>talk multiple speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant activity</td>
<td>Predominant activity</td>
<td>socializing, playing,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orientation</td>
<td>orientation</td>
<td>talking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school work</td>
<td>school work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints on discourse</td>
<td>Constraints on discourse</td>
<td>control of discourse</td>
<td></td>
<td>English optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘School’</td>
<td>The ‘Yard’</td>
<td>flexible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Returning to the first interaction, we can see that in her bid to switch the interaction from Urdu back into English Nireka draws on the specific context of the library, an institutionalized ‘school’ space, and on the particular task at hand (working on a class assignment) as foregrounding an institutional orientation for which English is the preferred code. Thus, she is able to effectively tell the other participants how they should talk. The meanings ascribed to the ‘school’ as a social space allow for people to openly
criticize and direct the behavior of others. The reader will note, for example, that most of the student-initiated repair sequences discussed in the previous chapter also take place inside the school. But while Nireka can legitimately draw on forms of institutional power in the school, she cannot equally do so in interactions which occur in the yard, even when among the same group of people. In order to maintain the use of English so that she can continue to participate, Nireka is forced to adopt less direct strategies when interacting with members of her group in the yard. This is evident in the second interaction which was recorded in the schoolyard during the students' lunch hour. The four participants are sitting and standing where they normally do at this time, on a fire escape overlooking the playing field. As in the first interaction, I offer a brief interpretation below.

Transcript 7-3: Yard (12/A/520).

1 Nireka Know Salima? When you do a ponytail like this right?
2 Y'know yer- yer thing? That one gets bigger y'know? when
3 you do like this right? gets bigger (1) goes all over and
4 then you [get a big thing
[ 5 Fatima and you do like this tight and (.) your
6 forehead is bigger [and when you do like this it is
7 smaller.
[ 8 Nireka Yeah (1) it gets bigger. (1.5) Yeah
9 (.).
10 Salima Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.
11 Nireka Thank you.
12 Nireka And then when you close it up like that your ponytail
13 will be star- starting right there and these all going
14 <Fatima laughs> to your forehead.
15 Fatima <laughs>
16 Amina <laughs>
17 Nireka That would be nice. Let’s imagine how it’s gon be.
18 <laughter> (3) Eww you look nasty.
19 Amina <laughs>
20 Nireka <laughs>
21 Salima Are you saying to me?
22 Nireka I was imagining <laughs> how you must look (1) how you
23 would look when you have a ponytail right there (2) her
24 forehead would be starting right here and then her brain
25 would be right the:re <laughter> her eyes would be right the:re her
26 mouth would [be right there.
[ 27 Amina It just can’t be at the wedding she will
Nireka begins this interaction by introducing the topic of Salima’s appearance.

Although Salima is the stated addressee of Nireka’s utterance, her use of rising intonation on several occasions in the first three lines seems to function as an invitation for others to participate in the topic she has chosen. Fatima joins in, and her alliance with Nireka is marked by the joint production of discourse at lines 4-9 (see discussion above). After Salima responds ‘Thank you’, the interaction becomes more interpretable as an instance of teasing, which is further signaled by the laughter of the other participants at Nireka’s characterization of Salima’s appearance. At line 20, Salima asks for clarification that it is she who Nireka is talking about. Nireka continues by describing her appearance which elicits laughter from Amina and Fatima. What is significant in this description (lines 21-26) is Nireka’s shift from using 2nd-person ‘you’, as she and Fatima had previously done, to 3rd-person ‘she’ to refer to Salima in her continuing characterization of her appearance.

That Salima is no longer being talked to but is explicitly being talked about is interpretable as further evidence that she is the target of Nireka’s teasing. At line 29,
Nireka continues and says 'Right? Right?'. One possible interpretation is that this utterance simply functions as a request for support of her characterization of Salima’s appearance. However, a more subtle interpretation is that Nireka’s utterance is an attempt to solicit the collaboration of Amina and Fatima in her attempt to tease Salima. As such, Nireka is soliciting a display of alignment from Amina and Fatima against Salima.

(Maynard 1986: 267). At this point, much as we saw in the first example, Salima code switches into Urdu and says ‘I’m going to sing...’, in other words, ‘I’m not listening to what you’re saying.’ While implying that she is not going to participate in the interaction, Salima’s switch to Urdu could be interpreted by Nireka as an attempt to weaken the alliance that she is working to establish with Fatima and Amina by weakening Nireka’s ability to participate further in the interaction. This seems to be the case as Nireka attempts to switch the interaction into English by directing Amina and Fatima’s attention back to her characterization of Salima’s appearance, which she does by talking loudly.

While this does elicit some laughter from Amina, Fatima continues to speak to Salima in Urdu and the interaction continues in Urdu between Amina, Fatima and Salima. At this point, Nireka tries to direct the interaction back at her by interrupting Salima, attempting to get her attention by loudly addressing her by name (line 37). Fatima continues to speak in Urdu. Finally, Nireka abandons her teasing of Salima and introduces a new topic which ultimately succeeds in directing attention back at her.

In this interaction, then, Salima’s initial code switch into Urdu has the potential to disrupt the alliance Nireka creates with Fatima and Amina and is met with various attempts by Nireka to switch the interaction back into English. Of importance, however, is that, unlike the strategy used in the first interaction in the library, Nireka does not issue
a meta-pragmatic directive; she does not attempt to tell the others to speak English even though it would obviously be advantageous for her to do so. Instead, she uses less direct methods (talking loud, interrupting) in an attempt to regain control of the interaction and the language used therein. When these strategies appear to have no effect, Nireka quickly introduces a new topic. I argue that in this interaction Nireka is constrained from using a meta-pragmatic directive as an overt, code-regulating strategy. Because the interaction takes place in the yard as opposed to inside the school, Nireka’s orientation toward the other participants foregrounds her identity as a ‘friend’ rather than the institutionally-derived identity of ‘student’ or ‘teacher’. Hence, this interaction is not situated in a context where one can legitimately draw on the institutional power that must stand behind a directive to speak one way or another. Indeed, while I recorded other examples where students tell other to ‘speak English’ all of these occurred inside the school, either in the classroom or in the library. In contrast, students never issued this kind of meta-pragmatic directive when talking outside in the yard or elsewhere, although as is visible from transcript 7-3, and in several other examples that emerged from my corpus, students may use more covert strategies to get others to speak English.

STUDENTS WHO TELL OTHER STUDENTS HOW TO TALK.

It is important to ask whether all ESL students engage in code regulating activities or if all students do so to the same extent. Two students, Nireka and Linda regularly engage in such activities. It was noted above that Nireka has a relatively high degree of investment in learning and speaking English. This is due to the fact that she does not have a particularly positive view of her native language, Tamil, as well as the fact that she does
not speak the predominant minority language of her friendship group, Urdu. Linda's situation is somewhat similar as is visible in Figure 7-2 below. Members of her regular friendship group (Hanna, Cynthia, and Susan) tend to speak Cantonese together and thus it is particularly important for Linda to maintain the use of English in their interactions if she is to be able to participate. At one point during the 1997-98 school year Linda stopped spending time with these girls outside of the classroom. She told me around the same time that she did not want to hang around with 'Chinese girls' anymore because they were always talking Chinese, which precluded her participation as well as her ability to practice speaking English, which helped bolster her relatively high status in the classroom (from the point of view of the teacher). She also told me on another occasion that the reason why Hanna, Cynthia, and Susan did not speak English very well was because they were always speaking Chinese. Linda subsequently began to spend more and more time with her friend Cindy, a Vietnamese speaker like herself, but with whom she claimed to speak more English than with her 'Chinese' friends. Linda also began to spend time with Marguerita, a Portuguese speaker with whom she would be forced to speak English.

Figure 7-2: Linda’s friendship relations.
Another ESL student, Peter, also engages in code-regulating activities on a routine basis. In Peter’s case, however, these activities are limited to the classroom. This is because Peter spends a great deal of time in class seated at the back table with Miranda, Corina, and Gloria who tend to speak Spanish when together. As he is unable to participate in Spanish interactions he routinely tells these girls to ‘speak English’. It should be noted that Peter considers himself, first and foremost, a speaker of English although he grew up speaking an English-lexified Creole. As such, he may have a built-in level of investment in English that other students may or may not develop depending on circumstances.

The common thread that passes through these three learners is the fact that in many situations they are interacting with other ESL students that are speaking languages that they do not themselves speak. As noted in Chapter 2, this is a common feature of ESL student friendship groups. However, this ‘odd person out’ theory does not fully explain the situation in all ESL student friendship groups. Susan, for example, came to the ESL classroom speaking only her native language, Shanghainese, and Mandarin. However, most of the friends that she has made in the ESL class speak Cantonese as a first language and Cantonese is the language spoken most often in interactions in this friendship group (see Figure 7-2 above). Susan’s response to this was to learn to speak Cantonese, which she picked up over the course of her first year in the ESL class (1996-97), rather than trying to get her friends to speak English. Marguerita also spends time in a friendship group where she is not a native speaker of the predominant minority language, Spanish, as is visible in Figure 7-3 below. However, on many occasions Marguerita tries to speak Spanish within this friendship group. Of course, it will be noted
that the leap from Mandarin to Cantonese and from Portuguese to Spanish is relatively small compared to, for example, the leap from Cantonese to Spanish. So Susan and Marguerita have language learning options that perhaps other ESL learners do not have. At the same time, this does not mean that students such as Susan and Marguerita have a relatively low investment in learning and speaking English. Marguerita also spends time with Linda and in such situations they both speak English. She also asked me why Corina, Miranda, and Gloria always speak Spanish even though they are capable of speaking English (at least Miranda and Corina). This suggests that she views learning English as more important than maintaining friendship ties with these girls.

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 7-3: Marguerita’s friendship relations with the Spanish-speaking students.**

This point is supported by interviews that I conducted with ESL students. In these interviews the majority of students responded that it was more important for them to learn English than to learn the language of their friends (if it was different from their own).

The ability to practice English in ESL friendship group interactions rests on the strategic negotiation of code choice. The strategies used in these negotiations include metapragmatic directives, where students overtly state that English (but never other languages) should be spoken, as well as less overt means of code regulation, where students subtly
attempt to shift codes in order to maximize opportunities to speak, and thus to practice speaking, English. In this chapter both kinds of strategies have been presented. I have shown how the use of these strategies depends on students’ ability to invoke a ‘teacher-like’ identity in friendship group interactions and how the ability to invoke this identity in turn depends on the particular context in which the interaction takes place. I have also discussed how and why certain students in the ESL classroom are more inclined to engage in such code-regulating behavior in general, arguing that it is those students who have a relatively high degree of investment in learning and speaking English that attempt to maintain the use of English in ESL student interactions. In the chapter which follows I briefly discuss how interactions among ESL students can contribute to scholarly understandings of the phenomenon of codeswitching.

1 The two main interactions analyzed in this chapter (transcripts 7-1 and 7-3) were the subject of a paper presented at the 97th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Philadelphia, December, 1998 under the title ‘Code choice, code switching and institutional power in ESL student interactions.’

2 Faculty attempts to control student behavior outside the school tended to be more abstract when compared to the micro-control that took place inside the classroom on a daily basis. For example, when the principal was informed that students were engaging in snowball fights in the yard he made an announcement reminding students that this was not allowed. However, no efforts were made to ensure that snowball throwing stopped. No teachers were ever sent out to supervise students in the yard, and this activity persisted throughout the winter season. I never witnessed teachers in the yard except when going to or from lunch at the mall or when they were supervising team practices.

3 The fact that Cynthia’s repair sequence discussed in the previous chapter (transcript 6-4) takes place in the mall rather than the school may explain why it does not take the aggravated form that is typical of most student-initiated repair sequences. My contention that it is less legitimate for students to claim the institutional power that typically stands behind judgments of other speakers linguistic competence when they are not in school would be supported by this reading. However, Susan’s correction of my use
of the term ‘paper’ discussed in the previous chapter (transcript 6-5) also took place at the mall and she employed an aggravated rather than mitigated form.

Although the laughter of Fatima and Amina could be interpreted as an offer of collaboration with Nireka, it status as evidence of alignment is questionable as their laughter could also be due to their discomfort with Nireka’s teasing of Salima. Hence, Nireka’s utterance at line 24 can be interpreted as an attempt to clarify who Fatima and Amina are aligned with in the interaction.

In this chapter I run the risk of creating a false separation of the identities ‘student’ and ‘friend’ especially in terms of how these identities map onto socially inscribed space. In fact, it is precisely the inseparability of these two identities and the inner conflict that they can generate that makes these interactions interesting. It also helps to explain why students continue to use covert code-regulating strategies in more ‘institutional’ settings (e.g. the library or the classroom) in addition to using aggravated meta-pragmatic directives.

It should also be noted that the ESL teacher never told students that they should ‘speak English’ in the class or anywhere else. This is not only because it was expected that students would speak to him in English. The teacher also recognized that it was important for some students to be able to retain use of their own language in the classroom.
Chapter 8: 
Codeswitching in ESL student friendship groups: 
Who is the ‘we’?

In this chapter I further examine the language practices of ESL students in the context of friendship group activities. Taking the concept of codeswitching as a starting point I argue that the nature of language practices in ESL friendship groups suggests the need to revise traditional meanings ascribed to codeswitching between minority and majority languages, in particular the ‘we’/‘they’ dichotomy as proposed by Gumperz (1982). I further argue that the concepts of ‘dialogism’ and ‘heteroglossia’ developed by Bakhtin (1992) may help to better understand the codeswitching behavior in ESL student friendship groups.

DEFINING CODESWITCHING.

Codeswitching is a phenomenon of language contact, usually observable in multilingual settings (Eastman 1995: 2). Gumperz (1982: 59) defines conversational codeswitching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems”. Most studies of codeswitching tend to center on either on the grammatical factors that constrain code alternation (e.g. Poplack 1988, Sankoff and Poplack 1981) or the pragmatics of code choice and code alternation. While grammatical studies tend to focus on codeswitching at the micro sentence or intrasentential level, pragmatic approaches can include micro-level interactional sociolinguistic, conversation- and discourse-analytic, or ethnographic approaches (e.g. Gumperz 1982, Auer 1995, Wei 1998) as well as macro-oriented pragmatic approaches.
which attempt to place codeswitching in the context of language ideologies and political-economic relations (e.g. Gal 1988, Heller 1995, Woolard 1985). Although I attempt in this dissertation to relate code choice and codeswitching to larger ideological and political-economic forces, I focus in this chapter on micro-level pragmatic approaches.

Codeswitching is currently understood to be motivated by macro-sociolinguistic patterns of language use or individual choice in the interest of negotiating social class or status changes, or choices inspired by poetic or performance motives, rather than being motivated by extralinguistic factors (cf. the notion of 'situational codeswitching' in Blom and Gumperz (1972)) (Eastman 1995: 6). In general, discourse- or conversation-analytic studies treat codeswitching as indexical of social relations. Gumperz employs the terms 'we-code' and 'they-code' in order to underline how code choices index social relationships among conversational participants. In this understanding the use of a we-code, usually a minority language, indexes in-group membership and solidarity, while the use of a they-code, usually the language of the wider society within which the we-code users form a minority group, indexes formality, inter-speaker distance, and differences in status or power (Gumperz 1982: 59).

The tendency is for the ethnically specific, minority language to be regarded as the 'we code' and become associated with in-group and informal activities, and for the majority language to serve as the 'they code' associated with the more formal, stiffer and less personal out-group relations (Gumperz 1982: 66).

Codeswitching is a routine occurrence among ESL students at Barton School. ESL students often alternate between English and their first language when interacting with other students who speak the same first language. Although this is tied to situation to some degree (most students both claimed and were observed to speak more in their first language when outside the school, during lunch, etc. than in the classroom)
codeswitching did occur in all contexts where I recorded ESL student interactions. Some ESL students also switch to speaking a language that is neither English nor their own first language when it is the predominant minority language spoken in the friendship group they are associating with at a particular time (e.g. Susan speaking Cantonese with Hanna, Cynthia, etc., or Marguerita speaking Spanish with Miranda, Corina, etc.). An additional type of codeswitching that bears mentioning here can be seen in cases where students have learned some words in another minority language that is spoken by other students in the class and use this knowledge of another language as a way to participate in interactions with speakers of that language. I say more on this later in this chapter.

In many cases, the codeswitching practices of ESL students at Barton School follow the basic we/they pattern proposed by Gumperz, but do so in a variety of different ways. First, speakers can use their knowledge of a minority language in order to signal their inclusion in a group where the language is commonly spoken. For example, Marguerita often codeswitches to Spanish when she interacts with the Spanish speaking girls from the ESL class, as can be seen in the first example below. On the other hand Marguerita never speaks Spanish with other students and only rarely speaks Portuguese when at school.

Transcript 8-1: Yard (7/B/571).

1 Marguerita GLORIA (1) A DONDE ESTA CORINA?
    (trans.) GLORIA (1) WHERE IS CORINA?
2 Gloria (8) <Gloria and Corina coming over to where Marguerita and Paolo are standing>
3 Gloria No era ese dinero de tu hermana?
    (trans.) Wasn't that your sister's money?
4 Corina No porque no comp- No nos importa X X X X X
    (trans.) No because we didn't buy- We don't care X X X X X

Codeswitching to a minority language can also be used to exclude certain people from participating, to invoke an exclusive 'we' group. This strategy is used in the
following example. In this interaction several ESL students are gathered near the fire escape outside the school. The group includes Salima, Nireka, Fatima, Amina, and Shanaza along with Linda and Miranda, two students who do not normally interact with this group during lunchtime. In the interaction, beginning at line 13, a dispute arises between Linda and Salima. At issue in this dispute is Salima’s and Linda’s claim to occupy a particular space—the fire escape stair (referred to in the interaction as a ‘chair’ by both Linda and Salima, a mistake that is noted by Shanaza at line 16). Linda seems to base her claim to the stair on the fact that she is seated on it at that particular time, and that Salima had left the stair and consequently relinquished claim to it (during the interaction Salima returns to the fire escape from somewhere else). In contrast, Salima appears to base her claim on the basis that she and her friends habitually congregate on the fire escape stairs during lunchtime. As a result, in her dispute with Linda, Salima denies Linda’s right to occupy the stair on the basis that Linda cannot claim membership in the group and thus cannot claim to legitimately occupy their habitual location. Thus, through her talk Salima attempts in several ways to invoke a ‘we’ that excludes Linda. At line 18 she says “I have to sit here with my friends”, where the use of the possessive singular “my” precludes the idea that Linda might share friends with Salima and, as a consequence, might have a claim to belong to the group. Also when Salima says “I’m just talking to her” at line 21 she quite literally excludes Linda from participating in talk with a member of this group. Finally Salima codeswitches to Urdu at line 24 effectively ending Linda’s ability to participate in what follows. Here, codeswitching to the minority language invokes an exclusive ‘we’ group to which Linda cannot claim membership.
Transcript 8-2: Yard (10/A/502).

1 students <several people complaining about the cold>
2 Linda You got to X X X X and do something. Jump dance or do
3 some running. Play.
4 Nireka Thanks for your idea but we don’t want to follow it.
5 Miranda SALIMA. [SALIMA.]
6 Salima Were they talk about me?
7 Linda [About you?]
8 Miranda Your brother’s right there.
9 Salima I know his friend’s stupid.
10 Warren You’re so vain.
11 student [laughs]
12 Miranda X X X
13 Salima I used to call my brother like that X don’t X. Excuse me
14 this is my chair.
15 Amina Ha Ha [Ha Ha.
16 Shanaza It’s not [chair. It’s not chair.
17 Linda Would you go away.
18 Salima WHY? I HAVE TO SIT HERE WITH MY FRIENDS.
19 Linda That is your chair right but you go away X X sit there
20 right when you come back you [X
21 Salima I’M JUST TALKING TO HER.
22 Shanaza So:
23 Linda Oh my God you joking. You X X friend really important.
24 Salima <codeswitches to urdu>

Another way in which codeswitching among ESL students invokes the we/they dichotomy is when speakers respond to an utterance in a minority language in English. I argue that this use functions to negate the ‘we’ invoked by the first speaker’s use of the shared minority language. This strategy can be seen in the example shown below. In this interaction, Miranda is trying to figure out what she is supposed to do for one of the exercises in her workbook. Peter and Corina are also working out of the same workbook. At the same time, Peter is having little success in getting the two girls to listen to what he has to say. Rather than listen to Peter, Miranda tries to direct his and Corina’s attention to what she is doing in her exercise. When she gets no response after line 8 she codeswitches to Spanish at line 9 and in doing so specifies Corina as her addressee.
During this utterance she calls Corina *bruja* ‘witch’ and tries to tell her what she has to do on the exercise. Corina responds to Miranda at line 12 in English rather than Spanish. Although she gives the appearance of agreement, the tone of her utterance seems to say ‘whatever’. Furthermore, switching to English functions to establish an interactional distance between her and Miranda, perhaps in response to being called a witch. The fact that she doesn’t agree with Miranda is revealed at line 18 when she calls Miranda ‘stupid’ for failing to understand the directions for the exercise.

Transcript 8-3: Classroom (11/B/605).

1  Miranda  Hey. [Hey you koochie koochie you koochie koochie.
2  Peter    Do you like to sing? Yes.
3  Miranda We do this already but I don’t remember.
4  Peter    By this is funny. [Watch watch listen this. Listen this.
5  Miranda Listen this do you- (2.5) Do you like [to run? Yes I like
to run. Listen listen Do you like to jump. Yes I like to
jump.
6  
7  Miranda  Yeah look. Color the big ball blue.
8  Miranda  lo tenes que- Mira ey vos bruja esto no lo tenes que
colorear. Esto es lo que tenes que colorear. (trans.)
9  Miranda  You know you don’t have to- Look hey you witch you don’t have to color this.
10 Miranda   This you have to color.
11 Corina   Oh yeah yeah [yeah good that one’s good.
12 Corina   [Yeah look. Color the big ball blue.
13  Miranda  sabes que esto no lo tenes que colorear. Esto es lo que tenes que colorear.
14  Peter    Listen this Corina. Listen this. [M-
15  Miranda  Hey. Look
16 Miranda   look look look. We have to color this right? We don’t
17 Miranda   have to color this right?
18 Corina   Oh my God. She’s s- so stupid.

Later in the same interaction (shown below) Miranda makes a joke in reference to what Peter is saying and uses Spanish to direct it to Corina. Again, Corina’s choice to respond in English serves to underline the interactional distance that she wishes to create between her and Miranda with the coldness of her reply, “Very good for you.”
Transcript 8-4: Classroom (11/B/605).

1 Peter Listen this. This is funny. Do you like to sing? [Yes I like to sing. Do you like to swim? No I do not like to swim. [Oh a dog can’t swim.

4 Miranda Es más bromista que yo. (trans.) He’s more of a joker than me.

5 Corina Very good for you.

The examples discussed above appear to confirm that speakers switch codes to invoke in-group and out-group membership in ways that would be predicted by Gumperz’s distinction between ‘we-code’ and ‘they-code’. However, further analysis of conversational interactions among ESL students suggests that this orientation does not always hold true.

TOWARDS A RE-ANALYSIS OF ‘WE’ VS. ‘THEY’.

Recently, scholars studying codeswitching phenomena have begun to question the theoretical validity of the we/they dichotomy, particularly its use as an a priori schema imposed on codeswitching data from outside, arguing that the indexical link from minority and majority languages to relations of power and solidarity is not entirely predictable. For example, Sebba and Wooton (1998) argue that ‘we-codes’ are not necessarily minority languages, noting that, in Hong Kong, Cantonese is the majority language but its status as the dominant language is being supplanted by English. Martin-Jones’ (1995) analysis of codeswitching among teachers shows how switching to a minority language shared between teacher and students does not necessarily signal a move to create a sense of inclusion or solidarity with students but can be used for other purposes. Also, Wei (1998) argues that code switching need not be about invoking a
sense of 'we' or 'they' at all, but can simply be a means to create focus in conversation. In other words codeswitching can be used as a conversational tool in the same way as other prosodic elements of speech without necessarily foregrounding the social relationships of participants. Thus, recent research into conversational codeswitching has called into question any direct, one-to-one mapping between code alternation and the social relationships among conversational participants and suggests that codeswitching can invoke alternate meanings.

Recent findings suggest the need to move from an understanding of codeswitching practices which presumes a one-to-one mapping between linguistic form and indexical meaning to one in which particular linguistic forms can index multiple meanings. In developing a theory of codeswitching which foregrounds the polyvalency of linguistic signs and linguistic practices, I draw primarily from the work of Bakhtin. Bakhtin coined the term ‘heteroglossia’ to refer to the centrifugal forces of dialogism and multivocality, ideological forces which work against the centripetal forces of semiotic unification and standardization.

A unitary language is not something given [dan] but is always in essence posited [zadan]—and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1992: 270).

In this understanding, linguistic signs do not have a fixed meaning. They cannot be reduced to the speaker’s intentions, nor to some abstract unified ‘standard’ or ‘correct’ meaning. Rather, Bakhtin argues that signs are dialogic in nature. They are ‘overpopulated’ with the voices of other speakers with which the speaker’s voice must struggle for coexistence (Bakhtin 1992: 294). “A word, discourse, language or cultures undergoes ‘dialogization’ when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing
definitions of the same thing.” (Bakhtin 1992: 427). The point I wish to make by
reference to the work of Bakhtin is how different meanings can be expressed through the
use of identical linguistic forms. In what remains of this chapter I discuss how close
analysis of codeswitching practices in ESL student friendship groups argues against a
reductive we/they dichotomy and promotes a view of conversational codeswitching as
dialogic.

In Chapter 7 two main interactions were presented and analyzed which contained
eamples of codeswitching between English and Urdu. These interactions differ from
typical studies of codeswitching that focus on interactions between two or more speakers
who share the same linguistic repertoire. This is because the ESL student friendship
group that is the subject of these interactions—like most ESL friendship groups at Barton
School—is comprised of several people who share the same linguistic background but
also one or two who do not. So, although most members of a group can speak the same
minority language, since this language is not shared among all group members its status
as a ‘we-code’ is problematic. In fact, I would argue that interactions within these
friendship groups are a constant struggle to establish and challenge who ‘we’ is. I believe
that the tendency to ascribe individuals to groups (as I have myself done in Chapter 2)
overshadows the constant process of ‘we’ formation and de-formation that can be
observed in ESL student interactions.

To illustrate this point I briefly return to one of the interactions discussed in the
last chapter. There are several instances in this interaction where an exclusive notion of
‘we’ is invoked through language choice. However, in this case the use of Urdu (a
minority language) and English both fulfill this function. Urdu is also used to challenge
previously invoked relations of solidarity. At line 7 Shanaza’s utterance signals her collaboration with Nireka. As well, the co-constructed dialogue at lines 9-10 and 10-13 invoke a ‘we’ (Nireka and Shanaza) versus ‘you’ (Salima). Note that it is the ‘dominant’ language, English, that is used to establish the ‘we’ in these cases. In contrast, Salima’s codeswitch to Urdu at line 17 can be interpreted as a strategy to challenge the ‘we’ established between Nireka and Shanaza. Here, the minority language functions to challenge, rather than establish, a ‘we’. Finally, the successive turns at talk in Urdu between line 17 and line 20 can be interpreted as an attempt by Salima to invoke a ‘we’ that excludes Nireka. Only in this case is the minority language doing what it is ‘supposed’ to be doing, although Nireka is not an out-group member like Linda or Miranda in an example discussed earlier in this chapter (transcript 8-1).

Transcript segment 8-5 (7-3): Library (19/B/1).

6 Nireka Shut up I said cause you’re disturbing me.
7 Shanaza Yeah me too.
8 Salima No I’m not.
9 Nireka Yes you are.
   [1
10 Shanaza Yes you are don’t lie ss-
11 (1)
12 Nireka Stupid.
13 Shanaza Stu- <laughs>
14 Nireka Is that what you were gonna say?
15 Shanaza No I was gonna say stupid.
16 Nireka <laughs>
17 Salima Thoh pihr meh alag jawab dewngi.
   (trans.) Well I can call you something too.
18 Shanaza Deo.
   (trans.) Go ahead.
19 Salima Shukr karo bowla neh.
   (trans.) Be thankful I didn’t say it.
20 Shanaza BOWL-THOH.
   (trans.) SAY IT.

Thus, the kinds of interactions that ESL students find themselves in have implications which bear on the notion of ‘we-code’ and ‘they-code’ and the meanings traditionally ascribed to these codes. In these interactions both the majority language and
the minority language can be used to establish and challenge alliances and relations of solidarity. It is through this understanding that we get a sense of how codeswitching between majority and minority languages cannot be reduced to a single set of meanings but must be viewed as dialogic. Otherwise, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to explain how switching to a particular code in a single sequential interaction can express essentially contradictory meanings.

In interactions such as the ones above neither the minority language nor the majority language bears the weight of defining the ‘we’ of the group. I argue that this is not only because the group is not linguistically homogeneous, but because who ‘we’ is is constantly shifting. There are several possible explanations for these findings. The first is linked to the nature of the ESL student experience at Barton School. Simply put, the ESL classroom is in constant flux as new students arrive and others are moved out. With the student population in flux the ability for students to define who ‘we’ is, both within individual friendship groups and within the class as a whole may be more complex than for student groups with a more stable pool from which such groups can be formed.

I would also argue that the idea of ‘group’ is itself problematic. In Chapter 2 I presented a sociometric diagram of ESL student friendship relations at Barton School (Figure 2-2). However, diagrams such as these can be misleading in that they imply a stability that is not necessarily there. One reason for this has already been discussed with respect to the ESL classroom: new students are always arriving who must eventually make sense of their position within or vis-à-vis one or more of these groups, while others may leave the class or the school altogether. Another reason is that there are alliances and conflicts within particular friendship groups and these relations of solidarity and
antagonism shift over time, often quite rapidly. On more than one occasion I would find an ESL student (or sometimes more than one) standing alone proclaiming “I hate those guys,” while a few days later the same student(s) may be back with the same group they detested only shortly before, or they may temporarily or permanently move to another group. This seems to argue for a more fluid and dynamic notion of group.

Additional evidence for a less rigid notion of group comes from the finding that many ESL students have a keen interest in learning the languages of their classmates. This is a widespread phenomenon among ESL students at Barton. All the students that I interviewed said they know some words in other languages and that they had learned them from other students in the class. This practice is akin to the phenomenon of ‘crossing’—the practice of interactionally invoking an ethnic identity to which the speaker cannot claim to authentically ‘belong’—discussed in Rampton (1995). One ESL student told me that learning many languages had more benefits than just focusing on learning English.

1) Warren:  
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS MORE IMPORTANT LEARNING ENGLISH OR LEARNING TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE THAT YOUR FRIENDS SPEAK? FOR EXAMPLE, CORINA SPEAKS SPANISH. WOULD IT BE MORE IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO LEARN ENGLISH OR TO LEARN SPANISH?

Kitty:  
I think Spanish.

Warren:  
SO FORGET LEARNING ENGLISH; YOU WANT TO LEARN SPANISH?

Kitty:  
Yeah.

Warren:  
WHY?

Kitty:  
Because they can speak Spanish. English, I know some, but I like Spanish. It’s not like—I would like to speak Spanish because it’s so fun. English, I can speak that.
Warren: \textit{SO YOU ALREADY KNOW ENOUGH ENGLISH?}

Kitty: \textit{Yeah.}

Warren: \textit{NOW YOU WANT TO LEARN SPANISH?}

Kitty: \textit{Yeah.}

Warren: \textit{SO YOU'D LEARN A LITTLE BIT OF SPANISH, TOO?}

Kitty: \textit{Yeah a little bit Spanish, a little bit English, a little bit Japanese, and Turkish, and Vietnamese.}

However, this was an exceptional opinion. Most ESL students agreed that learning English was more important. At the same time, the fact that so many ESL students wanted to learn their classmates' languages, and the fact that Kitty could even express such an opinion, suggests that ESL students may have a more fluid understanding of 'group' than is commonly held.

---

1 Sevilla (personal communication) suggests that \textit{bruja} 'witch' can be used in a friendly manner. However, Corina and Miranda were commonly at odds with one another despite belonging to the same friendship group and I believe that Miranda's use of the term is intended to be insulting.

2 This does not mean that codeswitching does not invoke shifting social relations among participants. My point is that analysts must be able to show that these relations are relevant for the participants themselves during the course of particular interactions.

3 A similar argument is made by Ochs (1993) in terms of the way in which language indexes gender. Ochs argues that in most cases particular linguistic forms do not directly index gender (with the exception of English pronouns such as 'he' or 'she') but rather that particular linguistic forms index various social meanings (acts, stances, activities, etc.) which, in turn, help to constitute gender meanings (Ochs 1993: 151). This complex notion of indexicality is predicated on the argument that the "range of meanings that a form potentially indexes is larger than those it actually indexes in any given instance of use" (McElhinny 1998: 169) and echoes the Bakhtinian notion of the polyvalency of linguistic signs.
Chapter 9:
Conclusion.

A typical question asked in studies of classroom interaction (e.g. those conducted by Mehan (1979) and McHoul (1978, 1985)) is "What do teachers and students need to know in order to participate effectively in the classroom?" (Lerner 1995: 111). This type of questioning highlights the notion of classroom learning as a shared, cooperative enterprise between teachers and students. In this understanding both teachers and students cooperate and contribute to the interactional construction of classroom lessons, and thus to the process of classroom learning. In this dissertation I have focused on ESL students at Barton School in order to determine what ability these students have to participate and learn English inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, I have asked a different set of questions: ‘What are the opportunities for ESL students to participate in the classroom setting?’ ‘To what extent are these opportunities controlled and/or distributed?’ ‘To what extent do ESL students resist or evade these controls?’ ‘To what extent do ESL students create opportunities to participate?’ ‘Are opportunities to participate structured differently outside the classroom among peers?’ In contrast to a view of learning as a cooperative enterprise, this line of questioning foregrounds the learning process as subject to relations of power, control, and resistance. In this dissertation I have presented evidence which suggests that opportunities for ESL students to verbally participate in the classroom, and thus to practice speaking English, are controlled and limited by the ESL teacher and his assistants in various ways. For example, periods of the day, such as ‘reading time,’ are designated by the teacher as ‘talk free’. During periods where students
are supposed to work independently or in groups forms of student talk such as ‘socializing’ are subject to sanction by the teacher and his assistants. Forms of student talk which run parallel to, and compete with, teacher- or assistant-led interactions are also sanctioned. In addition, the preference for choice and product elicitations in teacher-student and assistant-student interactions limits students’ ability to talk at the same time as these elicitation types facilitate the teacher’s or a particular assistant’s ability to control the interactional ‘floor’. Using Fairclough’s terminology, the various ways in which ESL students’ ability to speak is controlled and limited is evidence of the teacher’s exercise of ‘power through discourse’. The fact that these interactional asymmetries limit ESL students’ ability to practice, and thus learn, English shows how this exercise of power can control access to the dominant language of the school and the wider society.

This dissertation goes beyond simply documenting the ways in which control over student talk is exercised in the classroom and attempts to explain why control over student talk is considered necessary in the classroom setting. Denscombe (1984, 1985) argues that teachers work to minimize the amount and volume of student talk precisely because student talk sends a negative message about their competence as teachers. While this argument has merit it does not explain why classroom silence is equated with control in the first place. In Chapter 4 I argued that the motivation to control student talk in the classroom is rooted in a language ideology in which students’ talk is defined in opposition to their work. It is probable that this ideology developed from a traditionally Western ideology of teaching and learning that treated students as passive recipients of teachers’ knowledge rather than active contributors to the learning process. The finding that this ideology retains currency in contemporary classrooms would be interesting in
and of itself. However, in Chapter 5 I further showed that in the ESL classroom, a situation where the teacher and his assistants consider student talk to be beneficial to the process of learning rather than a liability, practices are organized in ways which seem to draw on and potentially reproduce this traditional, school-based language ideology. As Denscombe has pointed out, the maintenance of classroom silence (which I argue is motivated by this ideological distinction) is understood by teachers to be an integral component of their work in the classroom. More importantly, evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that this language ideology limits ESL students’ ability to practice speaking. To the extent that practice is an integral component of the process of language learning, limiting opportunities to practice potentially restricts ESL students’ ability to learn English in the most expedient manner possible. To the extent that mastery of English is a factor in educational success and social mobility, this language ideology plays a role in the reproduction of unequal social status relations between native speakers of English and those who learn English as a second language.

This dissertation has been chiefly concerned with studying and analyzing how relations of power operate through and behind language in the particular institutional setting of the school. Another equally important question asked in this vein is whether and to what extent ESL students, as a subordinate social group, contribute to the reproduction of the structures of domination which put them at a disadvantage. In this dissertation I presented evidence which suggests that ESL students draw on and reproduce the same hierarchical structures that contribute to their subordinate status as student learners of English. In Chapter 6 I showed how ESL students can invoke a ‘teacher-like’ identity in interactions with other students. In the relatively unmitigated
ways in which ESL students correct the speech of other students and otherwise comment
on the appropriateness of other students’ discourse through the use of meta-pragmatic
directives these students attempt to create relations of dominance and subordination with
those who would typically be considered their ‘peers’. Although this may occur in
mainstream classes to some extent, the use of these strategies is heightened in the ESL
context where students are routinely called upon to mediate between the teacher and
other students who cannot communicate directly with him. Such practices appear to
mirror the asymmetrical relations between student and teacher and between speakers of
English and speakers of various subordinate minority languages in the Canadian context.
Furthermore, in Chapter 7 I examined various ways in which some ESL students attempt
to get other students to ‘speak English,’ and looked at how the directness or indirectness
of these strategies was tied to the relative institutional character of the setting where the
interactions occurred. I discussed what kinds of students are likely to get other ESL
students to speak English and argued that this is related to the position that particular
students occupy within particular friendship groups and to the particular ‘investment’ that
these students have in learning English. By invoking the idea that the school is a place
where English ought to be spoken these students foreground the position of English as the
dominant language.

The above findings suggest that ESL students contribute to reproducing the
structures of their own domination. However, there is also evidence which seems to
counter this claim. In Chapter 5 I showed how opportunities for participation and practice
speaking English are controlled in the ESL classroom, but also noted that although many
ESL students recognize and articulate the dominant ideology with respect to their rights
to speak in the classroom, they do not passively accept these constraints. I showed that ESL students actively create opportunities for themselves to speak, and participate in interactions in ways that evade the teacher’s control. I characterized these practices as an evasion of classroom constraints on talk, rather than outright resistance, since they do not directly challenge the teacher’s right to control classroom talk.

A second piece of evidence which suggests that ESL students do not totally contribute to reproducing the structures of their own domination is the interest that many students have in learning words and expressions in the languages spoken by their friends and by other members of the class. Students thus place a certain value on learning languages other than English and engage in learning these other varieties in the ESL classroom. Again, this is not an outright resistance toward learning English. Most ESL students continue to claim that learning English is a far more important pursuit than learning to speak their friends’ language(s).

Finally, in Chapter 8 I examined the codeswitching and code regulating behavior exhibited during ESL student interactions. I argued that detailed analysis of ESL student interactions shows that there is no simple relation between the use of English or various minority languages and an attempt for speakers to evoke ‘they’ vs. ‘we’ relations. One particular implication of this finding is that in situations where ESL students codeswitch from a minority language to English they do not necessarily do so to invoke relations of power, authority, or status, nor do they necessarily wish to distance themselves from their interlocutor(s). Indeed, they may codeswitch to English to express solidarity with other participants. This finding suggests that ESL students do not necessarily invoke the traditional indexical meaning of English as the language of power and authority. I argued
that the reason for this is tied to the kinds of friendship relations that ESL students have with one another. Because these groups are not homogeneous with respect to ethnicity or first language spoken, the relationship between the dominant language, English, and the minority languages spoken by these students cannot be definitively characterized using the we/they dichotomy. This finding is related to the fact that ESL friendship groups are in a constant state of flux due in part to the infusion of new members as new students are added to the class. However, I argue that it is equally due to the fact that groups themselves are not stable and that alliances between and among members of ESL student friendship groups are shifting and temporary.

Overall, the findings presented in this dissertation suggest that the dominant language ideologies regarding the distinction between students' talk and work in the classroom, and the status of English as the dominant language, are not hegemonic. My analysis of ESL student practices indicates that while students recognize these dominant ideologies they appear to use this knowledge to their own ends, drawing on it to evade the power of the teacher as well as to increase their own power.

POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGING ESL CURRICULUM.

Judging from what ESL instructors and second language researchers say about the importance of allowing students to practice using the target language, having a classroom environment that works to minimize the amount of student talk would seem to be an undesirable situation. Clearly a more appropriate situation would be one where classroom activities were structured to promote rather than limit students' ability to participate as speakers. An equitable ESL curriculum would recognize the role played by talk in the
process of language development and would thus work to provide opportunities for students to talk in the classroom setting. In the ESL classroom at Barton School time was set aside on a daily basis for doing written work, for listening, and for reading, but no time was ever explicitly allocated for talking. Allocating class time for ‘practice talk’ might be one way to facilitate language learning. However, as I explain below, students’ needs would be best served if these practice sessions were informal, rather than formal.

Van Lier (1988: 105-6) argues that in classroom settings some form of turn allocation is often set up as a way of dealing with potential turn transition and distribution problems that can occur as a result of such a large group of potential speakers wishing to participate. As we have seen, in many classrooms rules of turn distribution are instituted such that the matter of who speaks when is largely predetermined (cf. McHoul 1978, 1985). Conversation analysts have shown that in so-called ‘ordinary conversation’ turn transitions are locally and interactionally managed by participants “by reference to possible completion places one possible completion place at a time” (Lerner 1995: 112). Thus, according to Sacks et al (1974: 727), “the turn-taking system of conversation builds an intrinsic motivation for listening to all utterances in a conversation, independent of other possible motivations, such as interest and politeness.” In contrast, when turns at talk are pre-allocated, as in most classrooms, this intrinsic motivation for listening is lost. In other words classroom-based ‘practice talk’ sessions would function best if they followed the turn-taking patterns of so-called ‘ordinary conversation’ rather than the predominant turn-taking patterns used in most ‘official’ classroom interactions. Indeed, the teacher must relinquish power for learning to take place.
I only briefly discuss how the findings reported in this dissertation might be translated into policy aimed at changing ESL curricula. My purpose in this dissertation has primarily been to investigate theoretical issues surrounding the interplay of structures and practices in a particular ethnographic context, rather than to focus on the implications of this study of ESL learning as a work of applied anthropological research. As a result I have written this dissertation with an audience of anthropologists rather than educators or policy makers in mind. Nonetheless, I sincerely hope that the findings reported in this study might encourage the development of more equitable curricula for ESL learners in the school system.

---

1 In this dissertation I have not considered the range of opportunities that ESL students have to practice speaking English outside the classroom in non-peer contexts, for example among family members, and the effect of this factor on students' ability to learn English. It would be fruitful to consider the role played by the learners' families in promoting or discouraging the use of English at home (and in other contexts) and in fostering attitudes toward school in general.

2 Heller (personal communication) has noted that this dissertation does not explicitly show the mechanisms by which the unequal social status relations between majority and minority language speakers are reproduced through the ESL classroom at Barton School. Such a connection might show, for example, that ESL students at Barton School are more likely to be placed in a low-track program in secondary school than a comparable group of 'mainstream' students who are fully competent speakers of English. I do not provide such evidence here, although researchers have shown that minority language students are disproportionately represented in low-track or vocational stream programs. ESL students are often placed there on the presumption that these programs are less linguistically demanding. Once placed in these programs, students find it difficult to move streams (cf. Harklau 1994).

3 Cummins (personal communication) suggests that it may be necessary to distinguish between different forms of talk (e.g. 'socializing' vs. 'talking in order to clarify the nature of a school assignment') in order to specify the relationship between 1) talk and language acquisition and 2) talk and the acquisition of forms of knowledge valued in the school setting (cf. Cummins 1994).
References.


Goldstein, Tara. 1994. “We are all sisters, so we don’t have to be polite”: Language choice and English language training in the multilingual workplace. *TESL Canada Journal* 11(2): 30-45.


Martin-Jones, Marilyn and Mukul Saxena. 1996. Turn-taking, power asymmetries, and the positioning of bilingual participants in classroom discourse. *Linguistics and Education* 8: 105-123.


Toronto Board of Education. 1996-97. *Student Demographic Profiles*. Department of Research and Assessment.


Williams, Raymond. 1976. Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. London: Fontana.


Appendix I:
ESL teacher/assistant interview schedule.

1) How many years have you taught ESL/worked with ESL students?

2) What other things have you done as a teacher/teaching assistant?

3) What initially drew you into becoming an ESL teacher?

4) What special training, if any, do you have to have in order to become an ESL teacher/to assist with ESL students?

5) How does working with ESL students differ from teaching other things? What kinds of challenges are posed by the ESL classroom? Are there teaching strategies that you use which you think might differ from teachers in other classes?

6) What particular things do you enjoy about being an ESL teacher and/or about working with ESL students? Is there anything you dislike? Why?

7) Have you noted any changes in ESL students since you began teaching ESL/work ing with ESL students?

8) There are two main types of ESL instruction in elementary schools: ‘self contained, like the one here at Barton School, and ‘withdrawl’, where students are in ‘normal’ classrooms for most of the day and get ESL instruction for part of the day. What do you think are the PROS and CONS of each approach to ESL instruction?

9) I’ve noticed that you sometimes use students as ‘liaisons’ between yourself and new students who have little or no English. What factors do you use when selecting students as liaisons? Who makes the best liaisons? Are there PROS and CONS to using students in this capacity?

10) What, if any, rules do you have in running your class? How diligent are you in enforcing them? How do you explain them to students?

11) Do you have any specific rules about talking in class? What are they and how do they work? How do you explain them to students?

12) What kinds of changes do you think would improve the ESL program at Barton School?
Appendix II: 
ESL student interview schedule.

PART 1: LIFE HISTORY QUESTIONS

student's name: gender: age:

1) What is your first language?
2) What other languages can you speak?
3) What country do you come from?
4) How long have you lived in Canada?
5a) Are you currently in the ESL class?
5b) If no, were you ever in [ESL teacher's] class?
5c) If yes, how long were you in his class? When did you leave his class?
6a) Do you have brothers or sisters?
6b) Do they attend this school?
6c) Are they enrolled in an ESL program at another school?
7a) What do your parents do for a living?
7b) What level of education has/have your parent(s) completed?
7c) Do you think your parents speak English better than you? Worse than you? Just as good as you?
8a) Who are your best friends?
8b) What language do your friends speak?
PART 2  OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

1) Tell me some of the things you like or dislike about being in the ESL class (or normal class if not ESL). Why?

2) Would you prefer being in the ESL class or in a regular class? Why?

3) Does your teacher ever get angry with you? Why?

4) Is there anything that you’d like to do in your class that you don’t do now?

5) Where do you think you spend the most time speaking English?
   ...in class
   ...at lunch/after school with friends
   ...at home with brothers and sisters
   ...with parents/uncles/aunts/grandparents

6) What things do you like best about your friend(s)? Is there anything that bugs you about your friends?

7) What kinds of things do you do with your friends?

8) When you are with your friends do you think you speak more English? More of your 1st language? Equal amounts of both?

9a) Do you ever get teased about the way you speak English?

9b) Do you ever get teased because you are speaking your first language?

9c) If yes to either a or b, who teases you?

10a) Do you ever teach other students or help them to learn English?

10b) If yes, who? Is it something you enjoy doing? Why?

10c) Do other students help you with your English?

10d) If yes, who? Do you like it when other students help you?

11a) Do you ever teach other students to speak your language?

11b) If yes, who?

11c) Do other students teach you their language?
11d) If yes, who?

11e) Do you like learning other languages? Why?

11f) Do you like teaching your language to other people? Why?

11g) Which do you think is more important, learning English or learning to speak your friends’ languages? Why?

notes:
Appendix III: Sample school research application form.

1) IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

2) TITLE OF STUDY

3) DESCRIPTION OF STUDY
   i) Problem to be Investigated
   ii) Theoretical Framework
   iii) Research Questions
   iv) Key Concepts Being Measured
   v) Relevance of Study to Education

4) STUDY DESIGN

Data Collection:
   i) Instruments (list all tests, questionnaires, key questions, and/or measures and relevant materials to be used and attach copies to all application forms.

   a) What do you intend to do?
   b) What kinds of procedures will you use?
   c) What have you done to pilot test procedures?
   ii) Proposed Data Analysis
   iii) Approximate beginning and ending dates of study
Sampling:

iv) Students Required
   Number of Schools Required
   Preferred Schools (if any)

v) Teachers Required
   Other Persons

vi) School Facilities Required:

vii) Procedure for Sample Selection:

5) PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

i) Personal Information Required from School Board Records

ii) Procedure to Ensure Confidentiality

iii) Method of Obtaining Informed Parental Consent

6) PROCEDURES FOR INFORMING PRINCIPALS AND PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE STUDY

i) Provision for Informing Principals

ii) Provisions for Preparing Subjects for Involvement in Study

7) PROCEDURES FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK

i) Procedures for Providing Feedback to Participating Schools

ii) Expected Date for Submission of Summary to the Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee
RESEARCH COMMITTEE POLICY GUIDELINES

1) The research proposal must have prior approval of the agency of institution.

2) The rights and well being of the subjects must be protected.

3) The research must ensure that the confidentiality of information about schools, teachers, and students is protected and that no school, teacher, or student is identified in any report.

4) Where personal information is requested, the researcher must complete the “Freedom of Information” agreement form.

5) Parental permission is required for any research with or about students under age 18. Children should have the option to withdraw even if parents agree. If the student is 18 or over, the permission of the student is required. Permission must be informed consent.

6) The committee considers all proposals from external researchers. Because of the large number of requests to do research, proposals from undergraduates are not accepted. Market research is only considered if there is educational application or relevance.

7) Researchers will not be allowed to gather data in schools in September, after May 1st, or in January in semestered schools, except in very unusual circumstances.

8) Principals in schools will make the final decision about their involvement in research projects.

9) It is the researcher’s responsibility to provide a summary of the study report to the Research Center.

10) The researcher must agree to arrange for feedback for the results to the participating schools.
Appendix IV:
Sample parental consent form (English version).

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Warren Olivo. I am at Barton School collecting data for my Doctoral Thesis. The purpose of my study is to observe friendship groups in the ESL classroom and to study the consequences that friendship patterns have for students learning English.

I plan to make tape recordings of students speaking with their friends. Recording sessions will be held over the entire fall term so that they will not interfere with other commitments that students may have. These sessions will be conducted at a time that is convenient to the students.

This study has been approved by the Toronto Board of Education and the Principal of Barton School, [name of Principal].

Please complete this form and indicate whether you DO or DO NOT want your son or daughter to take part in this study. Your son or daughter is free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I appreciate your co-operation. If you have any questions about this project, please telephone me at [number].

Warren Olivo
University of Toronto

---

I, _______________, being the parent/guardian of _______________ (name of parent/guardian)____________________________ (name of son/daughter)

DO _______ DO NOT _______

... consent to having my son/daughter participate in the study outlined above.

__________________________
(signature of parent/guardian)