DRAMA PEDAGOGIES, MULTILITERACIES AND EMBODIED LEARNING:
URBAN TEACHERS AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS MAKE MEANING

by

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Abstract

Drawing on theoretical work in literacy education, drama education and second language education, and taking account of poststructuralist, postcolonial, third world feminist, critical pedagogy, and intersectionality frameworks, this dissertation presents findings from an ethnography that critically examined the experiences of English language learners (ELLs) in three different drama classrooms, in three different high school contexts. More specifically, this multi-site study investigated two aspects of multiliteracies pedagogy: i) situated practice and ‘identity texts’ (Cummins et al., 2005; Cummins, 2006a) and ii) multimodality and embodied learning by overlaying, juxtaposing, or contrasting multiple voices (Britzman, 2000; Gallagher 2008; Lather 2000) of drama teachers and their students to provide a rich picture of the experiences of ELLs in drama classrooms. The diverse drama pedagogies observed in the three different drama contexts offer possibilities for a kind of cultural production proceeding from language learning through embodied meaning-making and self-expression. The situated practice of drama pedagogies provided a third space (Bhabha, 1990) for the examination of students’ own hybrid identities as well as the in-role examination of the identities of others, while moving between the fictional and the real in the drama work. The exploration of meaning-making and self-expression processes through drama, with attention to several aspects of embodied learning—from concrete, physical and kinesthetic aspects, to complex relational ones—was
found to be strategic and valuable for the language and literacy learning of the English language learners. The findings from this study highlight the role of embodied forms of communication, expression and meaning-making in drama pedagogy. This embodied pedagogy is a multimodal form of self-expression since it integrates the visual, audio, sensory, tactile, spatial, performative, and aesthetic, through physical movement, gesture, facial expression, attention to pronunciation, intonation, stress, projection of voice, attention to spatial navigation, proximity between speakers in space, the use of images and written texts, the use of other props (costumes, artefacts), music and dance. The dialogic, collective, imaginative, in-between space of drama allows students to access knowledge and enrich their language and literacy education through connections to the real and the fictional, to self/others, to past and present experiences, and to dreams about imagined selves and *imagined communities* (Kanno & Norton, 2003).
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

1.1 Why this Research?

Deniz: When Mme Boivin asks a question to somebody she only waits 3 seconds and then asks the question to somebody else.

Burcu: Maybe it’s a good thing that she doesn’t insist on an answer from one person and embarrass students.

Deniz: But Mme Lavoie did it differently. When she asked us a difficult question she told all of us not to raise our hands quickly but to first think for one minute. I liked it when she did that.

How do teachers learn how to teach?

Burcu: There are teachers who teach teachers how to teach.

Deniz: So then, do our teachers teach like their teachers?

Burcu: Sometimes. There are teachers who teach like their teachers – you are right. When your teachers were learning how to teach, their teachers told them you can teach this topic like this, like this or like that. Each teacher will choose how they want to teach.

Deniz: What Mme Boivin does differently is she wants us to put little boxes in front of each piece of homework so that parents can put a checkmark in that box when our homework is done that day. Mme Lavoie and Mme Patrice never did that.

Am I learning how to teach from my teachers?

Deniz later felt sleepy and started walking towards his bed. Then he turned back and asked, “But then what am I going to do when Mme Boivin does it again, when she asks a question and doesn’t wait for my answer. She will think I don’t know it. She will think I am stupid.”

Entry from my research journal, Sept. 16, 2010, my son’s first day in Grade 2 of a French Immersion program in Toronto (The teachers’ names are pseudonyms).

I began this dissertation with an excerpt from a memorable conversation I had with my son after his first day of Grade 2 in a French Immersion program in Toronto. Similar to my own experiences of learning three languages, Deniz was learning his third language, French. At the time of the conversation, I had completed most of the data collection for this research, which
explored different drama teachers’ pedagogies, taught in different high school settings. My seven-year-old son had noticed that teaching is subjective, pedagogies are multiple, different teachers teach in different ways. As a student who had been confident and successful in school, Deniz was trying to comprehend why he had been so thrown off when he first encountered his new teacher’s way of asking questions and receiving answers, because he felt, even though he knew the answer, this unfamiliar pedagogy prevented him from being able to respond. In the field of education, teachers and teaching have been found to be one of the most important factors in determining student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Evans, 2006; Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2000; Mortimore, 1999). Like Deniz, I was interested in how different teachers approached teaching differently, and how their pedagogies affected their students’ learning (especially the learning of students who considered themselves ELLs).

My own life experiences, my multiple subject positions and my historical and socio-cultural locations (Britzman, 2000; Fine, 1994; Smith, 1999/2005; Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody, 2000) as a language learner, second language teacher, researcher, and mother among other things led me to this research topic. English is the third language I have learned. Studying second language education with a focus on the personal and cultural experiences of learners is highly relevant to me: as an 11 year old, I experienced first-hand the difficulty of moving to another part of the world, and having to learn French as a second language. Later, my work as a research reporter at the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce in the External Relations Department in Turkey (from 1997 to 2000) afforded me the opportunity to travel to many countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and to Australia and learn about the complex relationships of politics, geographic locations, economy, history, cultures, languages and identities. This opportunity, together with my experience of living in three different countries, has shaped my
understanding of learner diversity and the culturally sensitive needs of multicultural communities. Because of my interest in how languages are learned and used and how language, culture and identities are interconnected, I worked as a teacher of ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Through my language teaching explorations, especially as a non-native English and French speaker, I discovered that drama was an especially important way to combine language, culture, imagination, and identity. I did not know exactly how it worked, but drama helped my students to express themselves, participate in discussions, share their ideas, and generally take more risks with language. I began my graduate work with the curiosity and passion to investigate drama teaching and learning with English language learners, especially in highly multicultural and multilingual contexts such as Toronto. Throughout my graduate journey, I have found some answers and even more questions about drama pedagogy, about language education, and about equity and diversity in education. This doctoral research study is an attempt to examine how drama and drama-ESL classrooms may shed light on our understanding of linguistically and culturally diverse students’ experiences, and might better equip us to help them succeed academically, linguistically and socially.
1.2 Introduction to the Study

Improving the education of English language learners (ELLs) in urban schools has been identified as critical by many researchers in Canada and other English-speaking Western industrialized countries (Cummins, Bismilla, Cohen, Giampapa, & Leoni, 2005; Duffy, 2004; Roessign, 1999; Toohey & Derwing, 2008). My doctoral research explored this question in the context of drama classrooms in two urban high schools, in three separate programs, in Ontario, and examined how linguistically diverse students’ language, social and academic performances interacted with drama and drama teaching.

Through my experiences of teaching ESL and EFL, I have found that drama provides different ways of meaning-making, self-expression and engagement with language learning. As I have argued elsewhere (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2011a) researchers in drama education have investigated the cognitive, emotional, social and aesthetic potential of drama and have explored important broader pedagogical questions such as equity, social justice and power relations in society (Boal, 1979/1982; Gallagher 2004, 2007; McCammon, 2007; Nicholson, 2005). Even though drama educators have explored important drama and literacy connections (Booth, 1994; Courtney, 1989, 1990; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998), studying the connections with respect to drama and second language learning (ESL) or foreign language learning (EFL) is an under-researched area.

My doctoral research builds on my Master’s study, which examined the impact of using drama on second language learners’ language skills in an ESL/humanities first-year university course. The texts that needed to be covered included articles from the fields of social sciences and humanities, and legal documents such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This thesis investigated the role of drama in
negotiating language, culture and identity within a multicultural Canadian context. The findings of my Master’s research suggest that introducing drama in a university-level second language course engaged ELLs in significant ways by integrating all language skills (academic reading, writing, listening and speaking) that are traditionally taught in a segregated way. The student data also showed that the active, interactive, collaborative and imaginative learning through drama created opportunities for deeper learning and retention of the dual content (humanities and language) of this course (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2006). My Master’s study was a collaborative action-research project, where, together with the classroom instructor (who was unfamiliar with the use of drama in education) I created and taught drama activities that were designed to explore the course content that he set out.

In the field of drama in second/foreign language education, most studies use action research methodology, focusing on the researcher’s own teaching practice, and mostly this research takes place in university settings in language classrooms that are designed for English language learners in EFL or ESL contexts (To, Chan, Lam, & Tsang, 2011; Haught, 2005; Liu, 2000; Miccoli, 2003; Piazzoli, 2011; Stern, 1981). Even though studies using action research methodology provide very important empirical work, I became highly aware of the need for other methodological approaches where the researcher himself or herself is not doing the teaching that is being studied. For this doctoral work, I conducted a critical ethnographic study that focused on drama teachers’ practices and pedagogy in three different high school programs. Because of the specific focus of the three programs, this research provided an opportunity to look at a continuum of ELLs’ experiences, right through from adolescence to adulthood, from drama courses that are open to all students to a drama course particularly designed for ELLs. For this study, I drew on the three distinct fields of drama education, second language education, and
literacy education (with a particular focus on multiliteracies pedagogy), taking account of poststructuralist, postcolonial, third world feminist, critical pedagogy and intersectionality frameworks, to critically examine drama teaching in active practice, with a focus on urban high schools with a high population of linguistically diverse students.

Focusing on drama teachers’ pedagogy is important since the teacher’s pedagogy is one of the most important factors in determining student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Joyce et al., 2000; Mortimore, 1999). Hill and Schrum (2002) argue that theories on teaching and “instructional theories” are difficult to find (p. 22), although a growing number of studies that do exist confirm the importance of teaching on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Evans, 2006; Joyce et al., 2000; Mortimore, 1999).

I believe that examining a range of practices and perspectives of drama teachers will expand our knowledge of the pedagogical uses of drama for the reading, writing, speaking and listening, and critical thinking for ELLs, in addition to situating literacies as multiple, social and ideological (Cummins, 2001; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003a, 2003b; Luke & Freebody, 1997; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1993) and exploring the multiple modes of meaning-making and self-expression in the drama classrooms (Cope & Kalantzis & 2000; Kress, 2000; New London Group, 1999). Many educational researchers have pointed to the disconnect between curriculum theorizing and educational practice (Asher & Haj-Broussard, 2004; Freire, 1970/2006; Sears, 2004; Wright, 2000). Since teachers in this study reflect on their drama pedagogies in relation to ELLs, the study opens up a necessary dialogue between critical education, curriculum theories and actual classroom practices. In this way, the study contributes to theory and practice related to second language, drama, and literacy education, as well as curriculum studies and teacher development.
Chapter 2: Literature Review – Gaps in Research

2.1 The Teaching of Linguistically Diverse Students

Only by respecting the language, culture and knowledge of the learner can we together build literate, schooled and educated societies, where lifelong learning is the norm. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization—UNESCO, 2008).

Globalization, urbanization and migration are reshaping the necessities, aims and practices in urban schools. Multiculturalism and multilingualism are increasing in the world as immigration rates grow each year (Jonkers, 2011; UNESCO, 2003). In the U.S.A. between 1979 and 2006, the number of school-aged children (ages 5 to 17) who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 3.8 to 10.8 million (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000a). In the 2001 Census, one in five Canadians identified their first language as a language other than English or French. More than 50 percent of the school population in urban centres like Toronto and Vancouver has a first language other than English and many of these individuals are literate in their first language.

Linguistically diverse students often face serious challenges in achieving high literacy levels in English. Although it might take about two years of exposure to develop conversational fluency, at least five to seven years is required for students to catch up to grade-level academic language proficiency (August & Hakuta, 1998; Collier, 1992, 1995 a, b; Cummins, 2000). Cummins introduced this distinction as “Basic Interpersonal Conversational Skill (BICS)” versus “Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)” (Cummins, 1979, 1981, 1999). ELLs receive most of their instruction in regular classrooms (not in separate ESL classrooms) without having the necessary academic language proficiency. Second language researchers have pointed
out that failure on the part of educators to take into account this distinction has often resulted in discriminatory and erroneous assessments of ELLs (Haladyna, 2002) and premature exit from language support programs (Cummins, 1984). Therefore, ELLs are often seen as “underachieving” (Cummins, 2001; Roessingh, 1999). Language skills are important not only in literacy classes but in all subject areas. This has been especially true since 1997, when the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced a new curriculum that emphasized the centrality of literacy across the curriculum. ESL students now face many challenges in all subject areas.

As mentioned in the introduction, 50 percent of ELL students failed recent Ontario Grade 10 Literacy Test (OSSLT). The stakes are higher for students who arrive in the country during their high school years. They do not have the necessary time to acquire academic language proficiency because in order to receive a high school diploma they need to graduate before they are twenty-one. Significant numbers of immigrant students leave school without a diploma (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000b). For all these reasons, finding relevant and effective pedagogies to improve the education of ELL students in linguistically and culturally diverse urban schools has been identified as critical by educational scholars in general, and by second language education scholars in particular (Cummins, 2001; Cummins et al., 2005; Duffy, 2004; Roessingh, 1999).

A lot has changed in the theoretical world of education theories and curriculum studies since Ralph Tyler introduced his influential book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* in 1949. The ‘transmission form’ of education has been criticized by “reconceptualists” (Pinar, 1975) because of its banking approach to education, one-size-fits-all learning objectives and its lack of attention to diversity and the language and culture of the individual learner (Apple, 1979; Cummins, 2001, 2005a; Giroux, 1981; Nieto, 2000, 2004). Contemporary curriculum theories are
increasingly being shaped by post discourses (e.g., postcolonial, poststructural, postmodern) and a focus on social and cultural differences. In the 1970s, reconceptualists began to examine social and political forces enacted on curriculum. Educational researchers brought forward issues of race, gender, culture, and identity, and they raised awareness about how the process of schooling may function to legitimate systems of domination and reproduce “coercive relations of power”, structural inequalities and systemic disempowerment of minority student populations (Apple, 1979, 2001; Bourdieu 1993; Cummins, 2001; Dei, Mazzuca, Mc Isaac, & Zine, 1997; Fischman & McLaren, 2000; Giroux, 1981; hooks, 1994; Pinar, 2008; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995).

Today, although many of these curriculum theories that brought issues of language, race, class, gender, culture, identity and power to the centre of concerns in education are embraced by the academic world, and although the demographics and other social, economic, cultural, and ecological aspects of urban cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal have changed enormously compared to a hundred years ago, curricula in most educational settings still embody a Tylerian rationale. The education system fails to meet the needs of a significant portion of its linguistically and culturally diverse students (Cummins, 2001; Gandara & Rumberger, 2009; Nieto, 2000, 2004; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Pennington, 2004).

The importance of linguistic and cultural diversity is not new to teachers, but often this knowledge does not translate into practice (Roberst, 1998). Awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity can lead to better teaching, communication, and learning for students and teachers (Gambhir, 2003; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). In a recent Inner City conference (April, 2007), Elementary Teachers of Toronto shared the results of their survey, “ESL and the Inner City School”. Ninety-four per cent of teachers reported that there were ESL students in their schools, but 33% of these teachers said that there was no ESL program in their school. Duffy
(2004) reported: “The number of elementary schools with ESL programs has declined by 33% since 1997-98 despite the fact that the number of immigrants in Ontario has increased annually by an average of 13.5% during the same period” (p. 2). In 2006, the Elementary Teachers of Toronto asked ESL teachers and other classroom teachers what they considered they needed to better support ELL students. While most ESL teachers responded to this question with “Resources”, others said that they needed more ESL teachers in their school. In light of these studies (Cummins et al., 2005; Duffy, 2004; Elementary Teachers of Toronto, 2007) it is clear that ELL students receive most of their instruction in regular classrooms from mainstream classroom teachers, and therefore the assumption that only ESL teachers are responsible for ELLs is problematic. In a keynote address for the launch of ACDE’s Accord on Research in Education, Cummins (2011a) explained that not only mainstream teachers but also “school principals should have some knowledge of scaffolding strategies if they are to evaluate teachers’ instruction and provide instructional leadership within their schools”. He added that “unfortunately, few if any Principals’ Courses incorporate any focus on ESL issues and most new teachers graduate from Faculties of Education with minimal understanding of typical ELL academic trajectories or basic scaffolding strategies” (p.13). Cummins explained that through these practices in schools and faculties of education, the implicit assumption is that teaching ELLs is the job of the ESL teacher and that “we do not expect our school leaders or classroom teachers to have any specific knowledge about ELL students’ academic trajectories or how to provide appropriate instruction for ELL students” (Cummins, 2011a, slide 25).

It is also problematic to assume that ESL teachers are sensitive to cultural, socio-economic and political issues affecting linguistically and culturally diverse students. Kubota (2004) argues that second language teachers are usually affected by Eurocentric discourses that
perpetuate racial and linguistic hierarchies. I agree with Kubota (2004) that many second
language educators have not adequately recognized the extent to which power operates to
reinforce inequalities in both classrooms and society in general (pp. 30-48). Even in the context
of TESL training, the term ‘culture’ becomes a concept that is used to categorize. For example,
in my TESL certification training, the closest we got to talking about ethnic, racial or linguistic
diversity was in group presentations that chunked many countries from similar geographical/
linguistic/ ethnic backgrounds under the same label. Each group looked at one huge category
such as Asians, Arabs, or Eastern Europeans and researched the demographics of immigration
from those countries to Canada. Then the groups talked about how many people from this
specific category immigrated to Canada recently; named the countries under each category; gave
a superficial definition of who those people are; and brought food that represented the so-called
‘culture’ or ‘identity’. We had four groups in total that were supposed to portray all the
diversities in the Canadian population. I knew from experience that these presentations
constituted a limited representation, in fact most of the time a misrepresentation, of people from
different geographical/ linguistic/ ethnic backgrounds. I was shaken by how deeply problematic
the term “culture” or “identity” is when interpreted from a modernist/ functionalist/ constructivist
view that assumes a static, bounded entity, a set of stable and knowable attributes. In addition,
this experience made me question the taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature and
practices of multiculturalism or diversity. Guillermo Verdecchia, the artistic director of Cahoots
Theatre Projects (a company with a mandate to produce Canadian plays that reflect Canada’s
cultural diversity) writes: “multiculturalism remains, after thirty years, misunderstood as the
promotion and celebration of folkloric, frozen-in-time, cultures of origin. Multiculturalism,
therefore, becomes something that applies to everyone else. Multiculturalism becomes a
convenient ghetto” (2003, p.135). Gaztambide-Fernández (2007) stresses the limitations of the word multiculturalism. He explains that the term is “inherently colonialist … because the prefix ‘multi’ implies discreet but clear and lasting boundaries between ‘this’ and ‘that’ culture or the other” and therefore the term multiculturalism “fails to describe the dynamics of cultural change” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2007, p.12). In their book Beyond Heroes and Holidays, Lee, Menkart and Okazawa-Rey (1998) state that we need to examine “the Euro-centric cultural values, norms and expectations that form the dominant perspectives through which many of us theorize about education and develop curriculum.” They add that “Eurocentric perspectives and methods are inherently in contradiction” (p.10).

Viewing cultural and linguistic diversity though the lens of postcolonial theory and critical pedagogy has helped to move the discussion of language, race, culture, and identity beyond multiculturalism, and has provided a more complex understanding that rejects stability of difference, that shifts borders, and is open to fluidity, overlaps and change. It also opposes difference-blind pedagogical practices of liberal multiculturalism that emphasize common humanity and natural equality across racial, cultural, and gender differences (Gallagher & Rivière, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Liberal multiculturalists put an emphasis on commonality among people, and embrace the philosophy of meritocracy and egalitarianism that assumes all individuals regardless of their background can socially and economically succeed as long as they work hard. By this logic, racial and other types of differences often get conveniently erased. “Difference-blind” comments from educators such as “You have to treat all kids the same, white, black, red, purple: you can’t have different rules for different kids” (Larson & Ovando, as cited in Kubota, 2004, p.32) fail to recognize the social and economic inequalities that exist in schools and in society. The question of how to enable these
ELLs to achieve linguistically, socially and academically has become central in urban schools (Cummins et al., 2005). The New London Group (1996) stressed the necessity for educational researchers to “rethink the fundamental premises of literacy pedagogy” in light of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity and rapidly shifting communications media. In my research, I approach the question of how to enable these students to achieve linguistically, socially and academically through a study that explores ELLs’ experiences in drama classrooms through the theoretical framework of Multiliteracies pedagogy with a focus on multimodality and situated practice. I examine particularly the pedagogies of drama as creative, critical, relational, embodied and collective forms of literacy practice.

2.2 Examining the Pedagogical Practices

An increasing number of research studies confirms my experience that teachers and their pedagogical choices play a significant role in student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Evans, 2006; Joyce et al., 2000; Mortimore, 1999): “What teachers know and do is one of the most important influences on what students learn” (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p.9). Giroux and McLaren (1996) view teachers as transformative intellectuals. I agree with Giroux (1988) that teachers should not be reduced to high-level technicians carrying out dictates and objectives decided by experts far removed from the everyday realities of classroom life (p. 122). Sonia Nieto, cited in Cummins’ Negotiating Identities, talks about the potential impact of individual teachers (2001, p. 21). Nieto explains that, “teachers’ attitudes and behaviors can make an astonishing difference in student learning” (p. 21). Teaching to the test often leaves little room for creativity, originality and reflection on the part of the teachers as well as the students (Anderson & Grinsenberg, 1998; McNeil, 2000; Pennington, 2004). Teachers are often given
prepackaged curricula that tell them what they should teach word by word. Critical pedagogues argue that the ability of teachers to become transformative intellectuals resides in their resistance to being ‘technicists’ who are simply transmitters of knowledge (Giroux, 1988; Giroux & McLaren, 1996).

Based on Simon (1987), I see “pedagogy” as a more complex and extensive term than “teaching”, which is defined by Simon as the language of technique that provides do-able suggestions that can be tried out in the classroom (p. 370). I am interested in the broader construct of pedagogy that encourages critical approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom. Pedagogy, according to Simon, encompasses not only curricular content, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation methods, but also the ways that teachers work within the institution; what knowledge has greatest cultural capital within particular institutional or societal contexts; and details of how students and teachers construct representations of themselves and others, as well as their physical and social environment.

2.3 Examining Drama/Theatre Pedagogies from a Critical Perspective

Although the terms applied drama/theatre and performance are differently inflected, it is widely understood to refer to theatre practices that are applied to educational, institutional and community contexts. (Nicholson, 2011a, p. 241)

The use of drama/theatre in education for Nicholson signals the idea that “theatre has the potential to address something beyond itself” and therefore is “primarily concerned with developing new possibilities for everyday living rather than segregating theatre going from other aspects of life” (Nicholson, 2005, p.4). In their book, How Theatre Educates, Booth and Gallagher (2003) explain that they both view “education and theatre as co-existing, life-long experiences” (2003, p. xii). In the introduction to this book, drawing from O’Neil (1995), Booth
argues the imagined worlds of drama work in schools “develop an internal coherence and are appreciated for the same insights and purposes that are valued in any piece of theatre. Participants in both contexts are engaging in a dramatic world, an imagined elsewhere, with its own characters, locations and concern, developing accordance with its own logic, manifesting tension and complexity” (O’Neil, 1995, xi, as cited in Booth, 2003, p. 19). Similarly, Gallagher writes that “we might begin to observe differences differently, asking each time what we make of the story, where we sit in the audience, and how we might open up for discussion alternative aesthetic representations of ‘self’ and ‘other’. It might be said, as well, that this kind of pedagogical imperative shares a great deal with the rather ephemeral event of live theatre itself” (2003a, p. 12).

Nicholson explains that the term applied drama/theatre/performance “does not announce a specific set of dramatic methodologies nor a particular political pedagogy” (2011a, p. 242). However drama can be an especially important pedagogical tool for those teachers concerned with questions of “difference, pluralism, equity, and improving the material realities of students’ lives and the social health of schools” writes Gallagher (2004, p.6). There has been an emphasis in drama education literature on how the teaching of drama often incorporates questions about the politics of context, identities, cultures, communities and belonging. Many researchers in education (Boal, 1979/1982; Gallagher 2004, 2007; McAmmon, 2007; Neelans, 1992; Nicholson, 2005, 2011a, 2011b) have written about the power of drama to effect social and personal change by addressing existing coercive relations of power in society, raising consciousness and building a community. Neelands (1992) in his book Learning through Imagined Experience suggests that “encouraging students to work through dramatic situations, in fictitious roles, enables them to view their own behavior, and other people’s, from unfamiliar
perspectives” (p. 5). Influenced by Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Boal, in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979/1982), calls for breaking the boundary between actor and spectator. He suggests that spectators become ‘spect-actors’ who can intervene in the performance by either suggesting alternative viewpoints (verbally) for the actors to perform (first degree of spectatorship), or by the spectator intervening with the actors by physically sculpting the actors’ bodies to make a statement (second degree of spectatorship), or through “forum theatre” (third degree of spectatorship) where participants get onto the stage themselves and “intervene decisively in the dramatic action and change it” (p. 126). Gallagher (2003) notes that in theatre pedagogy, we not only endow experience with meaning, but we are – as players – invited to make manifest our own subjectivities in the world evoked through character and play, a world laden with metaphor and nuance, a world where relationships to other and self-spectatorship are in dynamic and unrelenting interaction.

Fischman and McLaren (2000) suggest that pedagogy that is democratic “should be underwritten by the imperatives of social justice and equality across race, class and gender divisions” (p. 168). In the hands of a skilled and thoughtful drama teacher, who is conscious of the existing power relations in society, I see drama pedagogy as having great potential for democratic education. For example, the decision making processes in ‘process drama’ tasks can represent democratic processes since students decide in groups, in pairs, or as a class what they would like to portray, how they would like to portray it, how they would like to problem-solve and what narrative path to take. However, I am well aware that assuming all drama teaching will automatically embody democratic pedagogy practices is dangerous and inaccurate. Therefore, I would like to stress here that my examination of drama pedagogy is not merely a celebratory documentation of drama practices. Drama educators often try to identify how drama classrooms
differ from other subject classrooms. One major difference is that there can be more meaningful, interactive dialogue than in other classes (Lester, 1976). Nicholson (2005) further supports this assertion:

Drama is particularly well placed to contribute to approaches to learning which counter this authoritarianism [banking approach to education], not only because it offers the opportunity for dialogue between teacher and learner (as advocated by Freire), but also because drama relies on interaction and exchange between the participants themselves. (p. 55)

The interactive dialogue in drama classrooms is not simply a casual conversation. It encourages students to think, listen and speak critically. Democratic education seeks a negotiated dialogue across differences. Giroux and McLaren (1986) state that dialogue between teachers and students does not place them on the same footing professionally, but it marks the democratic position between them. “This democratic positioning is best exemplified by teachers who treat students as critical agents, who utilize dialogue and make knowledge meaningful, critical and ultimately emancipatory for students” (p. 215). This method of teaching encourages inquiry, creativity, and critical thinking, leading to consciousness in both the teacher and the learner (Freire, 1970/2006).

Gallagher (2005) suggests that drama is well suited to renegotiating both identity and social relations. In intercultural work in democratic education, students and teachers are asked to “decenter” in order to question what is often taken for granted in one’s own culture. In drama, the concept of “decentering” is central because role-playing facilitates an experience of being centered in the other (Fleming, 2006, p. 59). Although it is naïve to make the assumption that this role-playing can allow for the complete understanding of the experiences of others, it is still important to try to enter into fresh perspectives. “The make-believe framing or the ‘unreal’ give a
liberating context for asking questions and reflecting on custom and practice” (Fleming, 2006, pp. 60-61).

Democratic dialogue does not simply mean talking but also necessitates listening and respecting the pedagogical merits of silence. In Democratic Dialogue in Education edited by Boler, Huey Li Li (2005) notes that “the socially committed classroom is often too chatty, too preoccupied with verbal dialogue to listen to its silences” (p. xviii). Drama pedagogy makes use of not only the verbal but also the non-verbal and the expressive possibilities of silences.

Drama is a dialogic art form, but certain conditions need to be in place to enable democratic dialogue. The teacher facilitates transformative dialogue by creating an atmosphere of trust, respect and safety (Bacon, Yuen, & Korza, 1999, p. 4). Helen Nicholson suggests that trust needs to be negotiated (2002). Similarly, Gallagher cautions us that:

“putting students into groups and calling it co-operative can have devastatingly negative effects on student learning. In drama especially, trust is required, but the idea of trust must be understood by teachers as a performative act. Trust is negotiated moment by moment; trust is not a state that can be achieved for all time.” (2005, p.77)

According to critical pedagogy, teachers must treat students not as objects but as knowledgeable participants in the construction of meaningful learning experiences. In drama, there is great potential for multiple interpretations of meaning. This is because individuals respond to a text based on their own unique experiences and sociocultural backgrounds (Hertzberg, 2004). It activates the use of prior knowledge (what Richards (1983) refers to as “real world knowledge”). By activating prior knowledge, the schema helps learners to understand the meaning of a message (Mendelsohn, 1994, 1995; Richards, 1983). Cummins (2001) describes The Pajero Valley Family Literacy Project and explains that this became a successful learning experience for the students because it validated students’ prior knowledge and their culture, community, language and identity. Cognitive psychologists, constructivists and
critical pedagogues have all argued for the importance of building on students’ prior knowledge and their personal and cultural background for real learning and deep understanding to occur (Cummins, 2001; Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978). Drama also has this potential to incorporate learners’ identities and their own stories, their past and present realities, and their hopes for the future (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2006). Since drama activities are learner-centred, and learners are invited to bring personal life experiences to the drama work, they feel more affectively and more intellectually invested and motivated to learn (Hertzberg, 2004; Kao & O’Neill, 1998; Liu, 2000; Miccoli, 2003; Stern, 1981).

The last point I would like to raise is that drama teachers are usually advocates of alternative assessment. A critical pedagogy of assessment involves an entirely new orientation. In *Literacy, Technology, and Diversity: Teaching for Success in Changing Times*, Cummins, Brown and Sayers (2007) discuss why standardized testing is highly problematic. Among other issues, they state that “standardized tests typically assess only a limited range of content standards, specifically those that can be assessed easily and relatively inexpensively” and “high stakes testing narrows the curriculum such that teachers will teach only content that will be tested” (pp. 101-102). Standardized literacy tests and traditional tests are usually composed of long lists of impersonal comprehension questions. If we would like students to become critical readers and writers who are able to respond personally to what they read, engage in critical and democratic dialogues with others and read between the lines of societal discourses, we need to look at alternative forms of assessment. Instead of only focusing on the abilities of students to recall and reproduce, more creative forms of assessment examine the process as well as the product, allowing teachers to document individual student growth over time.
Morris (2001) in his article, “Drama and authentic assessment in a social studies classroom”, explains that “drama and authentic assessment are a natural combination” (p. 2) because they allow students not only to explore the curriculum but also to demonstrate their creativity. This way, students meet the expectations of the curriculum and of their teachers through rigorous assessments while they are expanding their interest, involvement, and knowledge through active participation. For example, teachers can require that students create performance-based role-play assignments that allow for authentic dialogue, or write reflections in-role describing, explaining, summarizing, re-telling, or paraphrasing stories, events, and historical or fictional characters. Dramatic assessment can elicit content knowledge not only by requiring students to speak and write but also by allowing them to use non-verbal language and to integrate visual outputs such as drawings, graphs, and charts. Although these alternative assessment approaches may be more time-consuming and challenging for the teachers to prepare, the benefits for students and teachers are great. Dramatic assessment provides creative, meaningful and effective assessment experiences for ELLs by taking into consideration students’ learning styles, creativity, language proficiencies and personal and cultural backgrounds.
2.4 Drama Pedagogy and Second Language Education

As I have noted elsewhere (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2007), even though drama and L1 (home language/ first language) literacy connections have been explored by many drama education scholars, the area of drama and second/foreign/additional language learning is under researched. Despite the fact that the use of drama pedagogy has long been advocated by teachers/educators in this field, the relationship between drama and ESL/EFL has, to date, mostly been approached from a practice-based point of view and written for practitioners (Burke & O’Sullivan, 2002; Dennis, Griffin, & Wills, 1981; Di Pietro, 1982, 1987; Holden, 1981; Maley & Duff, 1982, 2005; Robbie, Ruggirello & Warren, 2001; Via, 1976; Wessels, 1987). I was in fact thrilled when Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance (RiDE), the primary international research-focused academic journal in drama education, for the first time published a special issue on exploring the connections between drama education and second language education in November, 2011 and happy to contribute an article sharing some of my findings from one of my research sites, the drama-ESL course at Braeburn.

As outlined by Stinson and Winston (2011) in their editorial introduction to this issue, in the area of drama and second/foreign/additional language education, some practitioners and researchers were impacted by “Behaviourist approaches (cf. Bloomfield and the American Army Method) [that] rely on imitation and habit formation, with drilling, modelling and reinforcement by a native-language speaker central to the teaching-learning process” (p. 480), and they focused on the benefits of particular theater techniques, and on improving articulation, pronunciation, intonation, and stress patterns. Other practitioners and researchers were influenced by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches that focused on improving the communicative ability of the second language learner, by placing a greater emphasis on
meaningful communicative activities in second/foreign/additional language education, as I discussed elsewhere (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2007, pp.7-10):

A greater emphasis is placed on meaningful communicative activities in second/foreign language learning, replacing mechanical drills. Krashen (1982) states that we acquire language in only one way: when we understand messages in that language, also known as “comprehensible input”. The more a teacher can create a meaningful context, the more language will be acquired (Griffe, 1986). This idea is stressed by Brown (1980) when he says, “What is important is meaningfulness. Contextualized, appropriate, meaningful communication in the second language seems to be best possible practice the learner could engage in.” (p.81). Drama and language instruction combined provide a meaningful basis for understanding and acquiring new language structures and patterns. Dodson (2002), in her article “The Educational Potential of Drama for ESL” states, “Via and many other teachers, researchers, and students have found that the value of drama in language education stems from the opportunities it provides for students to express themselves in English for a meaningful purpose, going beyond vocabulary and grammar drills” (p.161). Hymes (1972) mentions that speakers of a language need to have more than grammatical competence in order to be able to communicate effectively. Communicative competence includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence. That is to say, second language learners also need to know how language is used by members of a speech community to accomplish their purposes. Ladousse (1987) emphasizes this point by saying that being accurate does not just mean using structures and vocabulary correctly, but also saying the right thing, in the right place, at the right time and using appropriate gestures or movements. Learners need to know about the social rules of language. They need to know the appropriate attitude and register or style. They also need to be aware of verbal and non-verbal strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication (Canale & Swain, 1980).

This has led to a greater interest in dramatic approaches that focused on meaningful communication and communicative competence. Researchers in the field of drama and second language discussed how drama or acting techniques can help students with their communicative competence, by exploring psycholinguistic elements (Stern, 1983) and pragmatics (Babayants, 2011), supra-segmentals and para-language (Davies, 1990) and other elements of communicative practice such as exploring variations of register and style, and communication strategies such as turn-taking, topic changing, and lead-taking (Dodson, 2002).
Many researchers in this field have focused on the use of drama for improving oral language proficiency (Heldenbrand, 2003; Miccoli, 2003; Stern, 1981, 1983; Stinson & Freebody, 2006). Stern, working with students in ESL university classes in California, found that drama activities helped students to gain self-confidence in speaking and to improve their intonation and spontaneity when speaking English. Miccoli worked with EFL university students in Brazil, giving them six playscripts to perform. Over a fifteen week period, the students worked with dramatic activities, rehearsed their plays, and then performed them. Miccoli’s study found that these students learned vocabulary, improved their pronunciation, and used appropriate body language, all resulting in the capture of characters’ feelings and motivations.

Stinson and Freebody (2006) conducted a quantitative study with four classes of EFL students in Singapore. Their intervention group received 10 hours of drama pedagogy to improve their oral language skills, while their comparison group carried on with their usual English classes. The results showed better overall scores for the intervention group on all features of oral language that they tested at the end of the study: clarity, vocabulary, relevance to the topic, interaction with the examiner, and the need for prompting.

Kao and O’Neill (1998) stressed the importance of process drama in second language education in their book Words into Worlds: Learning a Second Language Through Process Drama, and pointed to the need for more drama-oriented classroom research in this field:

Various drama techniques have long been popular among language teachers in teaching a second language. However, conducting valid and reliable research about what is happening in drama-oriented language classrooms has been neglected by language teachers and researchers (1998, p. 35).

Shin-Mei Kao, together with Gary Carkin and Liang-Fong Hsu (2011), conducted a quantitative study of the impact of drama on language learning, working in a three-week
intensive summer course for EFL students at the Tainan University of Technology in Taiwan. They found that, because of the types of questions that teachers ask in drama, on their post-intervention oral tests, students produced significantly more words and communication units, and the mean length of communication unit was also significantly longer. Similarly, To et al., (2011), from their study with English teachers in Hong Kong, reported that process drama enhanced second language acquisition by “shifting the didactic discourse in the classroom to one that is more attentive and less threatening, and which encourages increased amounts of student talk” (p. 517). Studies by To et al. (2011) and Piazzoli (2011) both reported on the significance of process drama on lowering the anxiety levels in students through the provision of affective space. Piazzoli also worked with university students who were learning an additional language in a foreign language context: learning Italian at a university in Brisbane, Australia. As the teacher of this course, she designed and facilitated six workshops and her findings revealed that:

process drama enabled the participants to speak more spontaneously through: (1) the medium of role, which enabled participants to feel more confident; (2) authentic contexts, which provided a more stimulating environment to communicate; and (3) dramatic tension, which enhanced motivation to communicate in the target language. (p. 571)

Haught (2005) wrote about the meditational affordances of a drama based approach to second language learning from the perspective of socio-cultural theory through a focus on the Vygotskyian framework of Activity Theory (AT) and socially mediated cognition and learning. He provided drama workshops for a group of seven international university students interested in international tourism and working in the hotel industry. Haught reported that the participants were unanimous in their appreciation of instructional conversation because, they explained, in the university setting they had very little opportunity to speak English with Americans.

Both Rothwell’s (2011) and Cheng and Winston’s (2011) studies draw from Bakhtin’s socio-cultural model of language interaction and dialogicality. Rothwell’s study was an action
research project conducted in her own beginner level German language classroom of middle-
engaged in a process drama, in role as Australian families with German surnames who were
being forced to leave Australia, and who were seeking residence in Germany, and therefore had
to prove that they could speak the German language. Rothwell reported that the use of process
drama “has begun to open students’ imaginations to the complexity of communication in a socio-
cultural context” (p. 592) and the use of the kinesthetic mode afforded an opportunity for
students to participate in the language production despite their “very limited proficiency” (p. 591), and despite the unpopularity of learning a foreign language like German in Australia (p. 575).

Cheng and Winston’s study was conducted in a Taiwanese high school within an English
language classroom. The course was designed and taught by Cheng herself and focused on three
Shakespeare plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. Cheng and Winston reported on
the central importance of the play element in language learning (citing Cook, 2000) and wrote
that the playful learning process recognized “students as resourceful language users and
acknowledge[d] their creativity in approaching new knowledge” (p. 552).

As seen from the studies above, most research in the use of drama in second/foreign
language education uses the approach of action research methodology, where the researcher
examines her or his own teaching practice. Mostly of the research in ESL settings takes place in
university language classrooms that are designed for English language learners. Even though
examining one’s own teaching is a highly valuable and significant contribution to scholarship in
this field, the need for other methodological frameworks and conducting research in varied
educational contexts (school settings other than those in universities) is important for expanding scholarship in this field.

In responding to the gaps in the existing research on drama with ELLs, I incorporated the following features into my research:

1) ethnography that pays attention to day to day pedagogical details and participants’ experiences

2) instead of studying my own teaching, my study examined the pedagogies of three teachers in three different high school settings

3) instead of only examining language classrooms, I examined the experiences of ELLs in both a drama course specifically designed for ELLs, a regular drama course offered in a multicultural, multilingual high school, and a drama course offered within an ‘at-risk’ program in a high school.

4) I drew on theoretical work in literacy education, drama education and second language education, and analysed my data from a poststructuralist, postcolonial, third world feminist, critical pedagogy and intersectionality frameworks, which was not the theoretical approach of the studies reviewed above.
Chapter 3: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Multimodality as *Uber* Conceptual Framework

3.1.1 Introduction

The concept of, and theoretical understanding around, multimodality, in addition to informing my theoretical framework, has helped me to imagine the kind of study that I would conduct in pragmatic terms (multimodal data collection- multimodal research methods), as well as informing my analytical practices (multimodal analysis) by steering me towards looking at data with different eyes, and in different ways. I see multimodality, therefore, as operating on various levels in my work. With this study, I describe how multimodality informed the choices I made in terms of research methods/data collection as well as how I analysed my data. Multimodality impacted how I saw experiences and texts as representing lives in the classrooms that I observed. I tried to keep alive what different kinds of conversations were that happened through multiple modes, be it in an interview, or in a creative activity, through capturing it multimodally (print data, still images, audio data, video data, other multimodal artefacts). I tried to keep the conversation among and between those multiple modes in the foreground. For example, by resisting the traditional drive to analysis that often asks us to convert audio or video data by transferring it to written transcripts, I tried to pay attention to the ways in which the synaesthesia of different modes made me see, feel and think differently through a multimodal lens.
3.1.2 Multimodality and Multiliteracies Pedagogy

We attempt to broaden this understanding of literacy and literacy teaching and learning [restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language] to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses. We seek to highlight two principal aspects of this multiplicity. First, we want to extend the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies, for the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate. Second, we argue that literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This includes understanding and competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment, such as visual images and their relationship to the written word – for instance, visual design in desktop publishing or the interface of visual and linguistic meaning in multimedia. (New London Group, 1996)

The excerpt above comes from the introduction of the seminal article of the New London Group (1996) who developed what they called a ‘Multiliteracies’ pedagogical framework. As described in this article, this group of ten scholars include: Courtney Cazden, who focuses on language learning in a multilingual context; Bill Cope, who addresses cultural diversity in schools and literacy education; Norman Fairclough, a social linguist who examines relationships between the language and the social; James Gee, who situates literacy as social and ideological and examines Discourse/discourse; Mary Kalantzis, who is interested in citizenship education and literacy education; Gunther Kress, who focuses on semiotics, visual literacy and multimodal literacies, Allan Luke, who focuses on critical literacy; Carmen Luke, who writes on feminist pedagogy; Sarah Michaels, who focuses on urban classrooms; and Martin Nakata, who focuses on literacy in indigenous communities.

Their thoughts above illustrate the New London Group’s argument that current conditions in increasingly global, multicultural, multilingual Western centres require changes in our understanding of what constitutes literacy. The two aspects of Multiliteracies pedagogy are: i) an attention to linguistic and cultural diversity in literacy education, ii) the necessity for the inclusion of a range of modalities that are used in real life. More specifically, through its focus
on multimodality, Multiliteracies pedagogy acknowledges that “all of our everyday representational experience is intrinsically multimodal” and it stresses the need for language and literacy education to take these multimodal representations of meaning into account (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 21). Multiliteracies pedagogy scholars categorize these modalities as: *written language* (representing meaning to oneself and others through reading and writing); *oral language* (through speaking and listening); *visual representation*; *audio representation*; *tactile representation*; *gestural representation* and *spatial representation* (19-20). Stein (2004) explains that the focus on multimodal learning is a paradigm shift in language pedagogy:

> The focus on modes as the means through which representation occurs distinguishes this theory from mainstream language and literacy theories, which mark the linguistic as the central means through which representation occurs. The theory of multimodal communication marks a paradigm shift in language pedagogy from language, to mode, to exploring what modes are and how they can be used to maximize learning and assessment in ways that are equitable and beneficial to learners (p. 105).

Multimodality is an area that has recently received considerable attention in the field of literacy education. Researchers in education have explored the use of digital technologies as multimodal texts (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Jewitt, 2008; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Kress, 2003, 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Walsh, 2010), picture books as multimodal texts (Early & Yeung, 2009; Evans, 2011; Unsworth, 2007); the use of video and films in the classroom as multimodal texts (Ajayi, 2012); artifacts as multimodal texts (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010 a, b; Rowsell, 2011). As seen from this list, the majority of the work on multimodality in language and literacy education focuses on digital technologies, illustrating that “digital technologies create the movement of images and ideas across geographical and social spaces in ways that affect how young people learn and interact” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 242). Also seen from the list is a focus on the visual aspects of multimodal text creation in language and literacy education. The works mentioned above explore picture books, video, film, computer screens, blogs, computer
games, internet and social media. These works have made significant contributions to the field of language and literacy education in showing that different modes have different affordances.

Kress (2003) writes about the current dominance of image and the visual as follows:

> It is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast area of social, technological and economic factors. Two distinct yet related factors deserve to be particularly highlighted. These are, on the one hand, the broad move from the now centuries long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image and, on the other hand, the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen. These two together are producing a revolution in the uses and effects of literacy and of associated means for representing and communicating at every level and in every domain. (p. 1)

The significance of the image has been explored in the field of visual culture. In contrast, in her book, *Body Knowledge and Curriculum*, Stephanie Springgay (2008) points to the “pervasiveness of visual culture in education [that] has continued to privilege the visual over other sensory experiences and has not included an inquiry into how visual culture impacts, mediates, and creates body knowledge.” She further argues that the visual culture “fails to account for bodied encounters in the production of meaning making” (p. 4). I argue, through my study, that embodied learning through drama is rarely investigated in multimodal scholarship in the language and literacy field. Although some scholars, when they talk about multimodality, include drama or elements of drama in their lists of modes (such as visual, movement, body posture, audio, print, music, arts), an explicit focus that closely examines aspects of multimodality in drama is rarely offered. An article that does contribute to the literature on drama and multimodality focused on French as a second language and multimodality. In this study, Margaret Early and Cindy Yeung (2009) worked with core French course students. The teacher-researcher, Cindy, and the university researcher, Margaret, asked Cindy’s Grade 9 class to write an original children’s story in French, intended for an audience aged five to eight years. The students were then put in groups and selected one member’s story to be adapted to a script
for presentation. Cindy invited a Grade 2/3 French immersion class from a nearby school to be the audience. Early and Yeung reported that first focusing on the multi-modal picture book creation and then performing the stories dramatically was a process that provided increased metalinguistic knowledge of pronunciation, punctuation, vocabulary, syntax and discourse patterns. They also stated that students were engaged and invested in this process because of the multimodal work.

My research focused specifically on drama but, as opposed to seeing drama as one of the modes of multimodality, as most research does, I consider drama pedagogy itself to be multimodal. Multimodality, therefore, not only informed my theoretical framework, but also informed the research methods I employed, the ways in which I observed embodied drama activities, and my analysis of the multimodal data. Rachel Hurdley and Bella Dicks (2011) write about the connections between multimodality and ethnography as follows:

It is no coincidence that just as semioticians working on multimodality are moving away from a focus on language and stable systems of meaning, so ethnographers, too, are increasingly recognizing the important role of non-linguistic multisensory phenomena in helping to coordinate and give meaning to social interaction. Here there is a new ethnographic attention to visual, auditory and tactile dimensions of experience. (p. 283)

Pahl and Rowsell (2010a), too, use ethnography as a lens for multimodal meaning making. They explain that language is only one mode for representing meaning. Caroline Fusco (2008) also writes about the importance of not just having the language mode of transcription, but of the importance of bodily and visual data collection and analysis. Rowsell (2011) researched artifacts as multimodal texts, through the methodology of multimodal ethnography. She explained that her goal was to capture the embodiedness and the sensorial properties of the artifacts. She wrote, “Artifacts and the stories that they sustain hold promise as a research tool to access information that might not be possible through observation, document analysis, and even
interviews” (p. 332). In my methodology section, I describe in greater detail how multimodality not only informed my theoretical understandings, but also my methodology, the research methods that I used, and my analysis (please see section 4.4.6). I continue to examine theories of multimodality as I analyse my data in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Theory is like the little red pill that Morpheus offers Neo in the popular film Matrix. If Neo takes the red pill, he gets to see ‘how far the rabbit hole goes’. “All I’m offering is the truth,” Morpheus says. When Neo realizes that he cannot go back, Morpheus asks, “But if you could, would you really want to go?” (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999). My answer, like Neo’s is ‘No’. Theory is not a set of paths one follows; it is more like a key that opens a prison door. What I do now is my own construction. I make my own path. (Asher & Haj-Broussard, 2004, p.103).

This theoretical framework section engages with two fields of study, ‘Situated Practice’ and ‘Embodied Learning as Multimodal’, because these are the two areas to which my findings contribute most substantively. This introduction to theoretical work is picked up and further developed in my analyses in Chapters 5 and 6. Merging theories into the analysis chapters situates them in the everyday pedagogical practices of classroom lives. Using theories in this way helps me not only to look at my data through these lenses, but also to challenge them and make different theories respond to and challenge one another. Instead of splitting theory and classroom data from one another, I believe in the importance of praxis, which considers theory and practice as intertwined. The situated dialogue between theory and practice is vital for this study because it examines the intricate details and experiences of students, teachers and pedagogies. In the article that the excerpt above was taken from, Nina Asher and Michelle Haj-Brousard (2004) stress the vitality of theories in teaching, and vice versa, and the importance of praxis, the dialogue between theory and classroom practice. They use the metaphor of
Anzaldúa’s notion of mestiza consciousness, “being on both shores at once” (1999, p. 78) to refer to the co-existence of theory and practice in their lives.

In the mapping out of the two broad themes, I discuss the primary theories I most heavily draw upon, as well as a range of scholars, researchers, and thinkers who are relevant to my analytic practices, even those whose work might not necessarily lie within the primary philosophical and theoretical frameworks I have discussed (critical pedagogy, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, third world feminism), but nevertheless powerfully inform this study.

3.2.1 A focus on situated practice, identities and identity texts

Multiliteracies theory articulates five factors as key to multiliteracies pedagogical models (New London Group, 1996). The first factor they articulate is that we begin from the students and their experiences, which they call situated practice. Situated Practice is described as the first step in multiliteracies pedagogy. The other factors described are Overt Instruction (explicit teaching of design processes), Critical Framing (connecting meanings to their socio-political contexts), and Transformed Practice (the necessity for students to recreate and recontextualize meaning across contexts). Two members of the New London Group, Kalantzis and Cope (2008), in a subsequent publication, re-named these terms Experiencing, Conceptualising, Analysing, and Applying. It is important to mention that the order of these pedagogical factors does not necessarily have to have a linear progression. Drawing from Luke et al. (2003), they write, “we have come to characterize the process of moving backward and forward across and between these different pedagogical moves as ‘weaving’” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 28).

I suggest that situated practice is not a discrete step, but lies at the heart of this pedagogy, simultaneously informing all of the pedagogical factors outlined by the New London Group (1996) and Kalantzis and Cope (2008). Experiencing/Situated Practice involves students
reflecting on their own experiences, interests, perspectives, familiar forms of expression and ways of representing the world in their own understanding. *Conceptualising/Overt Instruction* recognizes knowledge as not merely transmitted, but as co-created by the students and the teacher. *Analysing/Critical Framing* involves learners in extending their own understandings of specific knowledge or text by situating it in relation to the larger social, historical, political, and ideological context. *Applying Creatively/Transformed Practice* “involves making an intervention in the world which is truly innovative and creative and which brings to bear the learner’s interests, experiences and aspirations” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 30).

In addition to the theory of Multiliteracies, the underlying broader theoretical/philosophical lenses that informed my analysis of the data in relation to *situated practice* were social theories of schooling drawn from critical pedagogy, postcolonial, poststructural and third world feminist theories. Even though this term of *situated practice* itself is not specifically used in these broader social theories and philosophies, I was interested in how these broader theoretical/philosophical lenses informed the pedagogy of *situated practice*. What I value here, and what has propelled me to do this, is to try to make some of the broader conceptual ideas in critical, poststructural, postcolonial and third world feminist theories have real pragmatic application. What these theoretical frameworks offer are not easy answers to the difficult issues related to the relationships between identities, coercive power relations, and the role of education in these social enterprises. Teaching in general and teaching language or literacy and drama more specifically is a complex matter. Pinar writes “Curriculum is not comprised of subjects, but of Subjects, of subjectivity. The running of the course is the building of self, the lived experience of subjectivity” (p. 220). The need for a *situated practice* that focuses of the students’ multiple identities and social positionings, their past experiences, real-life
realities and future imaginings, is seen as vital to these social theories of schooling. These critical thinkers argue that schools are institutions with great socializing power. Schools can create, reinforce, shape or shatter the social identities of students.

In order to understand the postmodern and the poststructural, we need to first examine the concept of the modern. Modernity presumes that reason and rationality are the essence of our humanity and that ‘Science’ helps us search for an ultimate ‘Truth’. In the 1950s, in the context of the Cold War, nations began to fund science to a much greater extent. The scientist would become the hero of the Cold War. Machines and robots began replacing the worker. Postmodernism is a critique ‘from within', that is to say, postmodernism does not assume that modernism is over, just as poststructuralism does not assume that structuralism is over. In The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1984), Lyotard, who is concerned with the ‘production of knowledge’, introduced the notion of postmodernism and questioned the scientific ‘Truth’ (capital ‘T’) raising two important questions: “Who says what is science and what is scientific?” “Who legitimizes what is true or not?” With these questions he troubles ‘Master narratives’. This critique has informed our current expanded understandings of what counts as knowledge and what counts as research. Challenging positivist thinking and ‘objective’ knowledge alters the traditional teacher-directed classroom discourse, which operates within the banking notion of education (Freire, 1970/2006) that considers the teacher to be the transmitter of knowledge and the students to be passive recipients. This shift is an important contribution of postmodern and poststructural theories, vital in the emergence of situated practice in schools that considers knowledge to be co-created, and suggests that there is not one legitimate ‘Truth’. It draws attention to the constructed nature of truth and the co-existence of multiple truths (Foucault, 1980a).
In line with postmodernism, poststructuralist theories trouble the idea of the ‘self’ as a whole, stable, knowable entity and underline the fluid nature of identity; they describe self as hybrid, fragmented, multiple and always shifting, dependent on the power relations informing a specific context. Butler (1993) introduces the notion of performativity, arguing that each manifestation of what we perceive as ‘self’ is constructed in response to the demands of a context, in other words, a specific performance. The notions of ‘decentring’ and ‘deconstructing’ have been fundamental to poststructural and postmodernist theory. Deconstruction refuses the modern principles of organizing knowledge and the production of knowledge, and is especially useful when applied to unsettle binary oppositions of knowledge such as ‘black vs. white’, ‘female vs. male’, ‘rational vs. emotional’. Foucault (1980a) de-centers power and writes “power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power” (p.102). However, it is important to also understand the critiques of this decentring and deconstruction that are introduced by poststructuralism. As Elizabeth St. Pierre and Wanda Pillow, poststructural feminists, write: “other feminists [referring to race theorists and Latina and Black feminists, Anzaldúa, 1987; Astin, 1992; Asante, 1998; Collins, 1990, 1998] have questioned the popularity of poststructural theory in Western academia, pointing out that they prefer to not to be decentred and, therefore, silenced once again” (2000, p. 7). Similarly, Spivak, in her seminal work “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1998) criticizes the notions of both decentring and deconstructing and Foucault’s portrayal of power as diffused, because marginality, for her and other Black feminists or third world feminists, is not only a social, cultural and political position that informs the knowledge and experiences of their marginality, but is also an oppositional consciousness that forges resistance. Spivak explains that by decentring, and
erasing both the centre and the margin, poststructuralism displaces the positions of the centre and the margin. The marginalized and the oppressed can no longer claim marginality because there is no centre, and therefore do not have an epistemological place from which to speak. That is why, for Spivak and other scholars informed by theories of postcolonialism, third world feminism, Black feminism, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and indigenous theories, it is important to assert a structuralist thought and foster oppositional consciousness (Sandoval, 2000) in relation to a centre, because having this kind of structure forges active resistance. Locating a centre is important for these theoretical frameworks. For example, Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) laid out his theory, examining how an ‘inferior East’ has been constructed and objectified by the West throughout history, by exploring the links between Orientalism and imperialism. Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2005) explained how locating an oppositional consciousness is important for constantly “reworking of our understandings of the impact of imperialism and colonialism” for indigenous theories because “imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly. Indigenous peoples as an international group have had to challenge, understand and have a shared language for talking about the history, the sociology, the psychology and the politics of imperialism and colonialism” (p. 19). Postcolonial thinkers such as Said and Smith argue that colonialism and/or imperialism should be understood not simply as something of the past, or an economic expansion or the imposition of one nation upon another, but also as a current “discursive field of knowledge” (Smith, 1999/2005, p. 21).

This understanding of the necessity of developing oppositional consciousness and paying attention to the local and the personal narratives informed by multiple subject positions of marginal populations, including those who are linguistic minorities, is important in classrooms
with situated practice for language and literacy education, and the pedagogies of critical literacy, critical pedagogy, Multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies.

Like Sandoval, other Black and third world feminists such as Chandra Mohanty (2003) in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* address the urgent political necessity of forming strategic coalitions/a *coalitional consciousness* across race, gender and national borders. Audre Lorde (1984/2008) in “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” argues that *coalitional consciousness* is necessary in creating new ideas because just ‘deconstructing’ the “Master’s House” does not provide the oppressed/minority/marginal populations new tools to construct a new house, ‘new knowledge’. Deconstruction is good at dismantling, but not good at offering new theories that forge resistance. Coalitional and relational thinking fosters intellectual communities and forges the production of new knowledge. hooks also argues for “overall education for critical consciousness of collective political resistance” (1989, p. 32). However, the solidarity/coalitional *consciousness* that these critical and feminist thinkers are calling for is not one that simply relies on the notion of ‘empathy’ or the assumption that we completely understand each others’ pain, but a consciousness that understands the “impossibility of reconciliation” and the importance of “learning that we live with and beside each other and yet we are not as one” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 39):

Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground. (Ahmed, 2004, p. 189)

The impossibility of ‘fellow feeling’ is itself the confirmation of injury. The call of such pain, is a pain that cannot be shared through empathy, is a call not just for an attentive hearing, but for a different kind of inhabitance. It is a call for action, and a demand for collective politics, as a politics based not on the possibility that we might be reconciled,
but on learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation, or learning that we live with and beside each other and yet we are not as one. (Ahmed, 2004, p. 39)

These postcolonial, poststructural, third world feminist, and Black feminist thinkers have significantly informed my work, as I attempted to wade through the mostly liberal, multicultural discourses that operate in diverse classrooms. In my analysis chapters, for example, I located and examined the third spaces (Bhabha, 1994; Moje et al., 2004; Soja, 1996) that were created in the drama courses, and explored whether or not this kind of in-between hybrid space forges new ways of thinking, knowing and co-existing. The notion of the third space was introduced by Bhabha (1990). As he wrote, “all forms of culture are continually in the process of hybridity...hybridity is the third space which enables other positions to emerge...sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, a new area of negotiation of meaning, and representation (p. 207). Drawing from postcolonial and third world feminist theories, in the pages to come I argue that the drama space created a hybrid, in-between third space (Bhabha, 1994; Moje et al., 2004; Soja, 1996) which nurtured productive and at times challenging negotiations between “creative practice and critical thought” (Nicholson, 2011b, p. 7), “the aesthetic and the social” (Gallagher, 2007, p. 6), “the out-of-school and the in-school” (Moje, 2004), the real and the imagined (Soja, 1996). ELLs in this study constantly discussed their experiences in drama, going back and forth between these in-between spaces, which made it possible for them to explore their current identities and social realities/communities and imagined/ideal L2 identities (Dornyei, 2010) and imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003) where discourses and identities are challenged, deconstructed and re-created. Looking at the multiple, negotiated, in-between spaces in drama from this perspective of the third space draws attention to its inquiry-based nature, which prioritizes/centres students’ own lived experiences, social realities and imagined identities.
Students then, far from becoming ‘passive receivers of knowledge’, ‘jointly construct the curriculum’ (Delpit, 1988) becoming experts/agents who research their own lives, needs, social realities and create and re-create alternative and future imaginings. In her book *The Theatre of Urban*, Gallagher describes the drama space as “a construction site designed for desire, bodies, and voices to speak” (2007, p.xi). Gallagher (2007) suggests that “drama is well suited to renegotiating both identity and social relations” (p.160). Nicholson similarly writes that “the idea that drama can take people beyond themselves and into the world of others is deeply rooted in the values of applied drama, and this chimes particularly well with the vision of social citizenship as a collective and communitarian undertaking” (2005, p. 24).

Although the scholars discussed in this section do not themselves necessarily write about the concept of *situated practice*, their work makes important contributions to this concept. I examine how the idea of a *situated practice* is understood in the fields of drama education, second language education, and literacy education by looking at the work of these scholars, themselves coming from very different fields and working across a political spectrum.

In her book, *Drama Education in the Lives of Girls*, Gallagher (2000) draws on critical and feminist theoretical writing and scholars in the field of sociology, such as Dorothy Smith, and writes that “Smith is certainly not the first in education to propose a way of working that begins from the self” (p.33). Gallagher further explains that “in drama, we can begin nowhere else but from ‘ourselves’ where the personal and the cultural have a place” (p.37). She argues that adolescents are “drawn to situations that ask them to explore identity and individuality”, to examine social issues such as questions of ‘freedom’, ‘oppression’ and ‘relationships’ and that they are “often grappling with representations of authority and with conflicts that address the

Gallagher illustrates in her book that the exploration of ‘self and other’ is more than the understanding of empathy. She explains that when students are engaged in drama work, they move beyond “empathy for a point of view/an appreciation of the ‘other’ ”, and to an understanding of “how we are all players with vested interests, inventing our personalities and constructing our social worlds” (p.50). One of her student participants, Rosa, expresses this idea as follows:

I learned that in every situation everyone views their own story as the truth, builds up their own truth. And through acting out different points of view we understood why everyone wanted their story to be the truth. (p.50)

Gallagher suggests that what the students developed was a deeper understanding that they were, themselves, ‘constructing’ truths; she reported that several students defined truth as “‘many-sided’ or changeable” (p. 50). I believe this is in line with poststructuralism and Foucault’s arguments about the constructed nature of discourses of ‘truth’, which he refers to as “effects of truth” in *Truth and Power* (1980a). Foucault explains that “effects of truth” are neither true nor false as he writes about “seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false” (p. 118). Again, from the field of drama education, Nicholson (2005) argues that drama provides opportunities to ask questions “about whose stories have been customarily told, whose have been accepted as truth, and to redress the balance by telling alternative stories or stories from different perspectives” adding that “it is this understanding that narratives can be changed that lies at the heart of practice in applied drama” (p. 63). David Booth also refers to this understanding of multiple narratives when he writes “as they enter into problems and conflicts, they imagine themselves as other people,
thinking their thoughts, and feeling their responses. They begin to view situations from outside of themselves and see the consequences of actions from a new perspective” (1998, p. 31). Therefore in drama, students are not only invited to include a part of who they are, their own narratives and how they see the world, but they are also invited “to take up points of intersection and confrontation, so that…dramatic explorations do not simply calcify cultural and ethnic boundaries and limit… [the teachers’ or their students’] abilities to affiliate with multiple cultural identities, productively manoeuvre across borders, and develop capacities for functioning in diverse situations” (Gallagher, 2003a, pp. 11-12). Nicholson, in her book Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre, suggests that the creative space in drama provides opportunities to disrupt and challenge “fixed and unequitable oppositions between the local and the global, self and other, fiction and reality, identity and difference” (2005, p.167). The gift of applied drama, she writes, “is that it offers an opportunity for an ethical praxis that disrupts horizons, in which new insights are generated and where the familiar might be seen, embodied and represented from alternative perspectives and different viewpoints” (p.167). Nicholson also refers to critical literacy and drama connections. She writes that “According to Freire, literacy develops a capacity for ‘critical knowing’ in which education is a creative process of ‘constant problematising’ (Freire, 1972, pp.35-37). It is this relationship between creative participation and critical reflection which has become central to pedagogies in applied drama” (2005, p. 52).

It is important to restate here that the specific scholars’ works that I describe in this section, while not always using the term situated practice, do explore what I consider to be central facets of this concept. It is also important to note that it is not always the case that the specific scholars’ works that I discuss in this section are connected to the broader theoretical and philosophical frameworks of critical pedagogy, poststructuralism, postcolonialism and third
world feminism in obvious ways. However, what has inspired me in these writers’ works is the kind of attention and examination they offer to empirical accounts and real classroom experiences of students and teachers. There are times when broader post theories are used as a coat of armour without empirical grounding. Such scholars may use them to advance theoretical ideas but do not apply them to empirical accounts. I am inspired to make theory work more deeply than simply as a backdrop to what I am thinking.

David Booth, who is a leading scholar of both drama education and literacy education (in L1 contexts), makes strong connections between drama and literacy, exploring the specifics of reading, writing, listening and speaking and also expanding this connection to multiple modes of meaning-making (Booth, 2005b, 2008, 2011). Booth (2011) writes about the dynamic interaction among students in drama classrooms. He explains that “collaboration among learners takes advantage of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, where learners are challenged to achieve challenges slightly above their current level of development” (p. 10). He argues that “learning needs to become an active process, where students make discoveries, developing their skills at prediction and intuitive thinking; where they can select tasks that are challenging, initiate activities, exert intense concentration, and expend great effort” (p. 10). For Booth, situated practice is necessary in both literacy and drama education because “when students feel the liberation that comes from having a say in what they read and write, and what they interpret and construct, they have a stake in creating and maintaining a classroom that stimulates and supports deep learning” (p. 11). Booth (2008) stresses that what constitutes literacy today has changed with the shift from literacy to literacies that “created possibilities and reconsiderations of pedagogies that look at literacy in multiple ways” (p. 12). He explains that “literacy practices, which are multiple, shift based on the context, speaker, text, and function of the literacy event”
Drawing from Cummins, Booth notes that schools often do not reflect this change in literacy and the social nature of literacy:

In urban contexts across North America and Europe, the student population is multilingual, and students are exposed to and engage in many different literacy practices outside the school. Within schools, however, the teaching of literacy is narrowly focused on the literacy in the dominant language and typically fails to acknowledge or build on the multilingual literacies or the technologically mediated literacies that form a significant part of students’ cultural and linguistic capital. (Cummins, 2006 as cited in Booth, 2008, p. 12)

In the field of second language education, Firth and Wagner (1997) made a call for a reconceptualization of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), resisting the mainstream view of SLA as solely a cognitive and individual process. They stressed the importance of taking a social perspective of learners and language learning and the significance of individuals’ identities and the situated nature of their language learning. Norton and Toohey (2004) also explain that “advocates of critical approaches to second language teaching are interested in relationships between language learning and social change” (p.1). They add that when language is viewed from this critical perspective “[it] is not simply a means of expression or communication; rather, it is a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future” (p. 1).

the micro level of the everyday social encounters between people with differential access to symbolic and material resources” (p.7) and she introduces the notion of “identity investment” as an important factor in language acquisition. Identity investment challenges the notion of motivation in second language education (drawn from the field of social psychology), which assumes “a unitary, fixed, ahistorical language learner” who either is motivated or is not motivated to learn the target language (p.10). Instead, the notion of investment “conceives the language learner as having a social history and multiple desires” (p. 10) and illustrates that when language learners speak, “they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they are related to the social world” (p.10-11). Norton concludes, “investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own identity which is constantly changing across time and space” (p.11).

Drawing on critical pedagogy, Cummins in his book Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society (2001) argues that integrating students’ lived experiences and prior knowledge into teaching as intellectual resources is vital for developing relevant and effective pedagogies for linguistically and culturally diverse minority students. He states that although this knowledge is not new in scholarship, it is rarely reflected in school contexts:

Although recently there are more and more studies about the importance of prior knowledge of these students such as… incorporation of their personal experiences and their identities into the class to support their learning, or the importance of increasing all students’ awareness on the benefits of diversity, these concepts are rarely incorporated in the classroom. (Cummins & Schecter, 2003)

As Gaztambide-Fernández, Harding and Sordé-Martí (2004) explain, “schools are not only a public sphere where youth spend a great deal of time, but are also an important site for the development of social identities and forms of cultural resistance to pervasive social conditions”
hooks (1990) suggests that marginalized groups may lack the inclination to engage in certain ways of thinking and writing because such work may not get the recognition or value it deserves. In the light of these concerns regarding the impact of coercive power relations on learners, Cummins (2001) offers that “when educators encourage culturally diverse students to develop the language and culture they bring from home and build on their prior [and existing] experiences, they, together with their students, challenge the perception in the broader society that these attributes are inferior or worthless” (p. 3).

Drawing on Norton’s notion of identity investment, Cummins (2001, 2011b) proposes that learners invest themselves in language learning when classroom practices are tied to students’ personal interests, lived experiences, prior knowledge and past, present or projected identities. In his Literacy Engagement Framework, he stresses the value of affirming students’ identities and activating their prior or current knowledge:

- Literacy engagement will be enhanced if (a) students’ ability to understand and use academic language is scaffolded through specific instructional strategies, (b) their prior knowledge and current knowledge are activated, (c) their identities are affirmed, and (d) their knowledge of and control over language is extended across curriculum. (2011b, p.10)

Cummins (Cummins et al., 2006; Cummins, 2011b) underlines the significance of the creation of identity texts. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts (which can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form) that “holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light” (p. 6). Cummins argues that “if teachers are not learning much from their students, it is probable that their students are not learning much from them” (2001, p. 4).

In the field of literacy education, both New Literacy Studies and Multiliteracies frameworks view literacy as a social practice (Gee, 1996, 1999; Heath, 1983; New London...
Group, 1996; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005/2011; Simon, 2005; Street, 2003) instead of just a set of skills. This is a key understanding in current scholarship in literacy education. These scholars, particularly with Street’s work in New Literacy Studies and critical literacy, challenged us “not to see literacy as a neutral skill but as a socially situated practice” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005/2011, p. 14). Gee (2008/2012), in reference to the term New Literacy Studies, argues that:

A new field of study has emerged around the notion of literacy, a field I called “the New Literacy Studies.” It is a problem to call any enterprise “new”, because, of course, it soon becomes “old” and the New Literacy Studies is now old. Were it not so cumbersome, it would be better to call the field something like “integrated-social-cultural-political-historical literacy studies,” which names the viewpoint it takes on literacy. (p. 145)

Gee (1990) explored the important interconnections between literacy and, drawing on Foucault (1980a), what he called, “Big D discourse” and “little d discourse,” informing both the social linguistics and literacy fields. (Little ‘d’ discourse refers to the pragmatics of language use. Big ‘D’ discourse, he writes, “is always more than just language. It refers to ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes”, p. 142). Exploring the relationship between literacy and power, Gee (2012) describes Discourse as ideological and as a product of history (Foucault, 1980a). Scholars in Critical Race Theory have explored the social and ideological nature of education in general, and literacy education in particular, and asked questions such as whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted (Yosso, 2005). Challenging Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital and the deficit thinking around minority students that focuses on what they lack, Critical Race Theory scholars have invited educators to think about situated pedagogies that consider students’ existing cultural, personal, and community-based knowledges as funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 1995) that can be integrated into school practices (Yosso, 2005).
Looking at literacy through these critical and social theories of schooling opens up our frame of reference about literacy. It makes us aware of our learners in relation to their identities. Pahl and Rowsell (2005/2011) write “identity breathes life into literacy” (p. 99) and explain the connections between literacy and identity as follows:

Literacy practices are infused with identity. Literacy is a culturally mediated and practice-infused activity that constantly pulls on the personality of the speaker, the writer or the reader. Our ways of being, speaking, writing, and reading are intimately tied to our different discourse communities, which in turn shape our identities further. (p. 98)

Multiliteracies pedagogy (Kalatzis & Cope, 2008; New London Group, 1996) also argues for the necessity to take learners’ subjectivities and identities into account by suggesting a situated practice where students can reflect on their own “experiences, interests, perspectives, familiar forms of expression and ways of representing the world in one’s own understanding.” They suggest that, “in this regard, learners bring their own, invariably diverse knowledge, experiences, interests and life-texts to the learning situation” (Kalatzis & Cope, 2008, p. 28).

In addition to the social, political, ideological, historical understanding of literacy, Multiliteracies pedagogy also explicitly takes account of the multilingual student population with explicit sensitivity to the needs of ELLs in increasingly multicultural and multilingual communities. For this reason, I have primarily chosen to use the framework of Multiliteracies pedagogy and its notion of situated practice, even though some of these important ideas are also articulated by New Literacy Studies scholars. Another important reason why I was drawn to the framework of Multiliteracies as opposed to New Literacy Studies is that scholars working within this framework pay particular attention to pedagogies, day-to-day classroom contexts, and students’ and teachers’ experiences in schools.

As outlined in this section, through the work of scholars in the fields of second language education, drama education and literacy education, situated practice is seen as key to student
engagement and school success. The broader theoretical frameworks of critical pedagogy, poststructuralism, postcolonialism and third world feminism provided me with more than a cursory understanding of the social and political dynamics of pedagogies of situated practice. These theories interacted with one another, in the course of analyzing my empirical findings; sometimes the theories explained the data, sometimes they challenged the data, and sometimes the data challenged and expanded the theories. I trust that this dialogue between theory and practice, praxis, is explicit throughout the dissertation. I do not solely align myself with any single philosophical or theoretical approach, but argue that poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, third world feminism, critical pedagogy, and at times structuralism and social-constructivist theory each inform my research and my writing differently, and have helped me to examine the findings of this study.

Black feminist Heidi Safia Mirza (2009) writes “Hope, as Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educational visionary, says, is at the centre of the matrix between hope, indignation, anger and love – this matrix is the dialectic of change (Freire, 2004). Like him, I too argue for an understanding of the energy and commitment and love of education through teaching and learning as the mechanism for social change” (p. 153). Similarly, Chela Sandoval ends her book Methodology of the Oppressed (in which she lays out “U.S. third world feminist theory” as a model for oppositional consciousness and political activity) with a chapter called “Love in the Postmodern World: Differential Consciousness” and writes that “love is reinvented as a political technology, as a body of knowledges, arts, practices and procedures for re-forming the self and the world” (2000, p. 4). These thinkers are calling for creative forms of coalitional consciousness. This idea resonates strongly with what I consider situated practice to be in its fullness: situated practice is not just using students’ own narratives and life experiences in
classroom pedagogies, it is rather the opportunity to create spaces, a *third space*, where students can explore their *differential/oppositional consciousnesses*, their present and past realities, as well as their future imaginings and collective creations that may inspire them to ‘wonder’. I would like to end this section with a quote from Sara Ahmed (2004), who explains the importance of this “wonder”:

The critical wonder that feminism involves is about the troubling affect of certain questions: questions like ‘How has the world taken the shape that it has?’, but also ‘Why is it that power relations are so difficult to transform?’, ‘What does it mean to be invested in the conditions of subordination as well as dominance?’ … It is this critical wonder about the forms of political struggle that makes Black feminism such an important intervention, by showing that categories of knowledge (such as patriarchy, or ‘women’) have political effects, which can exclude others from the collective (Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1989). Black feminism demonstrates the intimacy between the emotional response of wonder, critical thinking and forms of activism that try and break with old ways of doing and inhabiting the world…. the very orientation of wonder, with its open faces and open bodies, involves a reorientation of one’s relation to the world. Wonder keeps bodies and spaces open to the surprise of others. But we don’t know with such bodies, what we can do. (p. 182-183)

### 3.2.2 Embodied learning as multimodal

In a very ordinary, material sense, our bodily sensations are holistically integrated, even if our focus of meaning-making attentions in any particular moment might be one particular mode. Gestures may come with sound; images and text sit side by side on pages; architectural spaces are labeled with written signs. Much of our everyday representational experience is intrinsically multimodal. Indeed, some modes are naturally close to others, so close in fact that the one easily melds into the others in the multimodal actualities of everyday meaning. Written language is closely connected to visual in its use of spacing, layout and topography. Spoken language is closely associated with the audio mode in the use of intonation, pitch, tempo and pause. Gesture may need to be planned or rehearsed, either in inner speech (talking to oneself), or by visualisation. Children have natural synaesthetic capacities, and rather than build upon and extend these, school literacy attempts over a period of time to separate them off, to the extent even of creating different subjects and disciplines, literacy in one cell of the class timetable and art in another (Gee, 2004 a; Kress, 1997). (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p.21)
In this section, I focus on embodied learning in drama, which is multimodal. Drama scholar Chris Osmond argues that the body is a medium of aesthetic expression and that “in drama… [the] substance of flesh is molded through gesture, voice, motion, and pace in the ‘doing’ of what is ‘known’” (p.1115). Because of this aesthetic dimension, Osmond argues that drama engages all senses. Stein (2004), a language and literacy researcher who focuses on the significance of multimodality, writes that, “Anthropologists researching the senses in everyday life have demonstrated the relationship among memory, the senses, and material culture. The senses are living, active things, repositories of history and memory” (p.103). Multiple modes of meaning making take place and interact with one another in real life, in the form of synaesthesia. Drama is real life-like, and therefore captures the synaesthetic and multimodal forms of expression and meaning-making that occur in real life. Kalantzis and Cope define synaesthesia as “the process of shifting between one mode and another” (2008, pp. 20-22). They strongly stress that traditional literacy and language education do not question the monomodal formalities of written language that they make use of. Similarly, Pahl and Rowsell suggest that a multimodality framework, combined with critical literacies, acknowledges “the lived complexities of communities” (2005/2011, p. 130). This is especially important, since different modes have different organizing logics, and as such different affordances for meaning-making (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Kress, 2003).

I extend Kalantzis and Cope’s (2008) notion of synaesthesia so that it refers not only to the shift from one mode to another, but also to the more dynamic interplay and circular relationship of multimodal and embodied meaning-making that takes place in drama. Springgay (2008) offers an explanation of synaesthesia that comes from visual culture. She writes that “synaesthesia refers to the blurring of boundaries between the senses so that, in certain
circumstances, one might be able to say I can taste a painted image” (p. 21). Springgay adds that a further understanding of synaesthesia has been discussed by corporeal phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty (1968) and feminist scholars like Ahmed and Stacey (2001) and Grosz (1994), who argue that “knowledge is produced through bodied encounters” (p. 21).

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, in the chapter titled “The Synthesis of One’s Own Body”, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes about synaesthesia in the following way: “the connecting link between the parts of our body and that between our visual and tactile experience are not forged gradually and cumulatively. I do not translate the ‘data of touch into the language of seeing’ or *vice versa* – I do not bring together one by one the parts of my body; this translation and this unification are performed once and for all within me: they are my body itself” (p. 149-150). This description of synaesthesia that we experience through our body is an important element of the embodied learning that happens through drama. Similar to what Merleau-Ponty explains, when we experience drama, our bodies need to be compared “not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art” (p. 150). Embodied knowing, therefore, does not happen through discrete modes in a linear fashion, but happens multimodally and simultaneously. This is powerfully described by Merleau-Ponty, who says that, in our own bodies,

> the visual data make their appearance only through the sense of touch, tactile data through sight, each localized movement against a background of some inclusive position, each bodily event, whatever the ‘analyser’, which reveals it, against a background of significance in which its remotest repercussions are at least foreshadowed and the possibility of an intersensory parity immediately furnished. (p. 150)

Merleau-Ponty’s other big contribution to understanding embodied knowing is his powerful challenge to the Cartesian separation of the body and mind. In *The Primacy of Perception*, he refers to the body itself as “not that possible body which we may legitimately think of as an information machine, but that actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing quietly
at the command of my words and acts” (p. 161). Grosz (1994) also argues that "experience can only be understood between mind and body (or across them) in their lived conjunction not in their logical disjunction” (p.95).

Although Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy has greatly contributed to our understandings of what constitutes embodied knowledge, it is also important to note that his philosophy of perception and his focus on the lived experience, as he theorized the body, have been challenged and critiqued by poststructuralist and feminist scholars (Foucault, 1980b; Grosz, 1994; Irigaray, 1984/1993; Mirza, 2009; Young, 1990). For example, Foucault challenged Merleau-Ponty’s understanding about the body because Merleau-Ponty disregarded how power operates on bodies. Foucault writes, “the phenomenon of the social body is the effect of not a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals” (1980b, p. 55). Elizabeth Grosz (1994) writes, “even those feminists strongly influenced by him [Merleau-Ponty] remain, if not openly critical, then at least suspicious of his avoidance of the question of sexual difference and specificity, wary of his apparent generalizations regarding subjectivity which in fact tend to take men’s experiences for human ones” (p. 103). Iris Young (1990) discusses this kind of discomfort with Merleau-Ponty’s work and its incapability to adequately account for female corporeality. Mirza (2009) explains that Merleau-Ponty’s focus on the ‘lived experience’ is a problematic epistemological concept, because it leaves “the processes that structure dominance intact” (p. 3).

Poststructural, postcolonial, corporeal feminism and third world feminist theories examine how bodies are inscribed. Grosz (1994) asserts, “feminists have exhibited a wide range of attitudes and reactions to conceptions of the body, and attempts to position it at the centre of political action and political production” (p. 14). For example, Butler discusses how gender roles
are inscribed on the body as she writes “What is important is to cease legislating for all lives what is livable only for some, and similarly, to refrain from proscribing for all lives what is unlivable for some” (Butler, 2004, p.8). Another example of how bodies are inscribed is Ahmed’s examination of the construction of the bogus asylum seeker as a figure of hate. Ahmed (2004) argues that these asylum seeker bodies are often read as possible bogus bodies because “it is always possible that we may not be able to tell, and that the bogus may pass their way into our community”. She further explains that:

Such a possibility commands us (our right, our will) to keep looking, and justifies our intrusion into the bodies of others… The ‘bogey man’ could be anywhere and anyone; a ghost-like figure in the present, who gives us nightmares about the future, as an anticipation of a future injury…Such a discourse of ‘waiting for the bogus’ is what justifies the repetition of violence against the bodies of others in the name of protecting the nation. (p. 47)

A couple of the ELL students that I talked to referred to this kind of Othering and hate because their bodies were inscribed with the refugee label. A Korean student said once she accidently revealed her refugee status to another Korean student who was sitting next to her as she was filling out the form for an ESL class she was registering in. She said the other Korean students never talked to her after this experience and she felt she needed to quit that class and therefore decided to register in another language class in another location.

The body as inscribed has been the subject of examination in drama/theatre. Rao writes, “drama with its capacity to enable students to engage in social and political issues with their bodies and minds presents a powerful way to enter into civic dialogue” (2009, p.557). Drama can enable students to rely on imaginative and creative processes, promote open-ended, non-linear thinking, and encourage understanding and feeling mediated through the senses (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2007). Chantal Mouffe argues in favor of “an embodied citizenship in which individuals act as citizens within a wider framework of personal, political and ethical
associations” (as cited in Nicholson, 2005, p. 23). Through the incorporation of both verbal and nonverbal language, drama has the potential to pay attention to the speaking bodies as well as the silenced bodies. This embodied form of learning is one of drama’s unique strengths. Stein (2004) raises the questions “Who has the right to speak? Who has the right to silence? And she explains:

Multimodal pedagogies recognize participants’ right to silence. In language and literacy classrooms where talk and words are the focus of study and the means through which communication is achieved, a problematic relation exists between talk and authentic communication. (2004, p. 108)

Power relations can be negotiated in the embodied drama work when students, as well as the teacher, take on roles that reverse the differential implicit in the student-teacher relationship. Jonathan Neelands (1991) suggests: “It gives a chance for students and teacher to lay aside their actual roles and take on role relationships which have a variety of status and power variables” (p. 32). In drama, the ability to play with role can give a certain temporary freedom from the fixed social roles (whether it is gender, class or race) that are dictated in the outside world. This is certainly something that came up in frequently in the student data and is further theorized in Chapter 6 in relation to embodied learning.

Julie Sandler (1997), however, challenges this constant focus on inscribed bodies through poststructural, postcolonial, feminist theories. She writes, “for all that many poststructuralists call for a re-insertion of the body into texts, they seem to forget about this body here with eyes burning from staring at the computer screen and back aching from hunching over the keyboard (p. 221). O’Loughlin reminds us that “bringing bodies back into the picture has been crucial for education” (1995, p.1). She adds:

As teachers, educational theorists and the like, we need to direct our attention to the realities of the bodies in discursively constituted settings. Western philosophy can be seen as the history of successive periods of Western humanity’s cultivation of its own “mind”. Bodies became discursively submerged as the philosophical tradition developed. Further, as feminists have shown, the “maleness” of that “mind” masked a domination of
the feminine – of women’s (and others) embodied subjectivity. … Feminist and postmodern critiques have begun to provide an understanding of the constructed and performative nature of subjectivities and (following Foucault) of the notion of the direct somatic discipline, of the inscription of the body, and of the embodied learning which occurs in daily life. (1998, p. 1)

Thus far, I have discussed how embodied meaning-making/body knowledge is multimodal. In addition, I have also argued that bodies are not only informed through the senses and multiple modes of understandings, but also situated in social, economic, political and cultural contexts and inscribed by multiple forms of power. As Stein (2004) writes “bodies hold history, memory, thought, feeling, and desires. Bodies hold language and silence. Our bodies are repositories of knowledge, but these knowledges are not always knowable in and through language – they can be felt, imagined, or dreamed” (p. 99).

The last aspect of embodied learning I would like to discuss here is the relational aspect of the embodied learning in drama. In her book, Body Knowledge and Curriculum, Springgay argues, “a reconceptualization of body knowledge must consider the possibilities of interactions between bodies – knowledge as inter-embodiment” (2008, p. 24). She explains that when we pay attention to the interactions between bodies, “the body shifts from being something that experience happens to (i.e., experience is external to the body) towards an understanding of experience as bodied; experience and knowledge as entangled and interconnected” (p. 24). Many drama scholars have written about relationality in drama work (Gallagher, 2000, 2007; O’Neill, 1995; Nicholsohn, 2005). Like Ellsworth (2005), and Cummins (2001), I consider embodied relationality to be at the heart of the learning experience. Cummins (2001) writes that “human relationships are at the heart of schooling. The interactions that take place between students and teachers and among students are more central to student success than any other method for teaching literacy, or science or math” (p.1). Khattar’s question, “pedagogically, what
kinds of educational understandings and practices might emerge if we think of ourselves as embodied relational subjects rather than primarily as rational ones?” (2009, p. 12) is an important one. What Ellsworth explains below is, for me, an important way of exploring this relationality in connection to transitional space:

An environment of interaction that holds the potential to become transitional space when it provides opportunities for us to both act in the world and to be acted upon by it – while at the same time offering us the flexible stability we need to risk allowing ourselves to be changed by that interaction. (2005, p.32)

This transitional space that Ellsworth describes is in line with the concept of an in-between third space that I described in the previous section on situated practice where ideas, power relations, identities are tested, constructed, de-constructed and where new knowledge and future imaginings are made possible. I end this section with Gallagher’s powerful description of the collective space of drama, a necessarily relational space, with its affordances and challenges as follows: “In schools and beyond, drama is a collective experience; any notions of the introverted, solitary, creative genius are quickly dispensed with. Drama, then, invites different ideas about creativity – its pleasures, its uses, its dangers, its fundamental sense of the collective” (2007, p.78).
Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

4.1 Introduction

I would like to begin this chapter with one lengthy fieldnote about an experience that had a major impact in forming my thoughts about methodology, and on my practices in the field throughout this research.

I had a wonderful conversation with the drama/ESL teacher at Middleview yesterday. I was introduced to this teacher the previous semester by one of the teachers who works in the same ESL program. After I gave details about my research, she expressed how happy and excited she was to hear that somebody is researching the use of drama in an ESL context. Since the new semester was just beginning, we talked about her teaching, what she had done previously with these students, what her plans were for this semester. She showed me some artefacts of her previous students’ work. She also told me that she is a teacher familiar with research. She said that unfortunately her previous experience was not a pleasant one because she felt like she was betrayed by the researcher and she could not get out of the project despite her discomfort, because of power relations between this teacher and the person who convinced her to take part in the research. At the end of this previous research she felt like she was taken advantage of. I could see how she was affected by that experience in her face and in her shaky hands. I felt very sorry that she had gone through this very unprofessional and oppressive research process. I clarified that my research project was very different. I explained to her the details of my ethnographic research and that my goal is to constantly be in an open dialogue about my observations, analysis and writing. I also showed her my consent forms and explained that, as a participant, she could withdraw from my research any time during the process. She looked comforted after these explanations. Then the conversation started to have the same cheerful and exciting tone that it had at the beginning. We talked about the details of the research. We scheduled the best days for me to come and observe. Since her students are all beginner level students (half of them are under 18), we planned that when we send the consent forms to parents, it would be a good idea to translate them into their own language. We decided that it would be a good idea for me to come every day that week. We parted, agreeing that I would come the next day (today).

When I came back today, the teacher said that she needed to talk to me. She explained that she could not sleep all night because just the idea of being involved in another research project brought back all the memories of the previous research that she tried hard to put behind her many years ago. The research project she was involved with was extremely bad for her mental and physical health. She explained that when she shared the news about participating in another research project with her family members, they strongly opposed the idea, because they feared that it would be very bad for her health.
She explained that she is terrified of starting more research, even though she thinks that my study is valuable and she believes that it is very different from the previous one. I was of course disappointed that I wasn’t going to be able to work with this wonderful teacher and her students, but at the same time I completely understood and respected her decision. I felt deeply sorry that the kind of research that hurts participants is still conducted, despite all the improvement in scholarship on research methodologies and all the changes in ethics procedures.

When I left the school that day, I found myself thinking and reading about research and ‘the researcher-participant’ relationships all day. I found the writings of Tom Newkirk and Gesa E. Kirsh especially helpful. In his article titled “Seductions and Betrayal in Qualitative Research” in the edited book Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy, Newkirk (1996) writes that researchers can put participants in vulnerable positions despite their best intentions. He provides examples from different studies where researchers first gained trust – which he calls “seduced”—but then the same researchers were critical of participants’ attitudes, assumptions and teaching practices in their final report in print. Newkirk explains that researchers usually don’t share their criticisms until they complete the writing of their research. For example, when researchers observe teaching practices that seem ineffective, instead of trying to avoid the negative – which he calls the “bad news” (p.12) – and screening it from the research report, like many researchers do, and which ends up making the research dishonest and “research as advocacy” – the researchers have an ethical responsibility to communicate and bring up these issues or questions with the teachers (their participants) and “should grant the teacher (and when relevant her students) the opportunity to respond to interpretations of problematical situations. When those being studied have access to the researcher’s emerging questions and interpretations, there is an opportunity to offer counter-interpretations or provide mitigating information.” He continues to write that “ideally those exchanges should be part of the data gathering and not be postponed for the time when a full manuscript has been prepared. My experience is that, at that point, research ‘subjects’ may be reluctant to amend a report that seems final.” (p.13)

(Researcher’s fieldnote, Middleview, 10 October 2008)

As researchers we are constantly developing our relationship with our participants. Even after we gain official permission and have our participants sign the consent form, they have the option to refuse to take part and can decide to stop participating any time. I think we have to negotiate with our participants and develop a trusting relationship. I believe this is especially important for longitudinal qualitative research for which the participant(s)’s commitment is needed for an extended amount of time. Since as researchers we are asking participants to share a
part of their life with us, it is important to be able to establish a good relationship that involves trust and on-going communication and negotiation. As researchers, I believe we have to be trustworthy and accommodating.

My study is a school-based, multi-sited ethnographic research. Genzuk (2003) writes about the ethnographic research process as inductive, discovery-based and unstructured,

in the sense that it does not involve following through a detailed plan up at the beginning; nor are the categories used for interpreting what people say and do pre-given or fixed. This does not mean that the research is unsystematic; simply that initially the data are collected in as raw a form, and on as wide a front, as feasible. (p. 4)

Here, he is speaking of the day to day-ness of ethnographic research. At the heart of fieldwork lies human relationships and “deep hanging out” (as termed by Geertz) which refers to visiting the sites often and on a regular basis, and hanging out with the teachers and students (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995; Geertz, 1973).

It wasn’t possible to go into the drama-ESL classroom in this high-school, although this had been my plan at the outset, when I designed the study. However, because of the day to day-ness of ethnographic research and the complexities of different people’s lives and sites, and the teacher’s previous experiences with research, what resulted was not what I had initially hoped for, because I was not given access to the Middleview drama ESL classroom for beginner learners (ESL A-level). I knew that this was the only drama-ESL class offered at Middleview. But through conversations with teachers in the other site (Braeburn), I was informed about another drama-ESL course—not one for regular high school students, as I had planned to visit originally, but a drama-ESL course designed for adult high school students at Braeburn within the program of daytime Canadian high schools for adults (students over 21), which grant Ontario secondary school diplomas. This change to another drama classroom created its own logic in my study, because now I had the possibility of looking across very different sites, which educated
linguistically and culturally diverse students who had a much wider range of ages. This allowed me to look at a continuum of high school experiences, right from adolescence to adulthood.

4.2 School-Based Ethnographic Research

Given what is increasingly being revealed about the crucial importance of relationships in learning, ethnographic approaches are uniquely positioned to examine the nature of connections and social relationships both within and across school-community contexts. (Smyth, 2006, p.34)

Educational researchers have argued for the potential of ethnographic research to examine the educative relationships among young people, their teachers and school cultures (Fine, 1994; Gallagher, 2007; Sloan, 2007; Smyth, 2006). Ethnographic research aims to intensively describe the rich complexities of the everyday lives of a social group. Gallagher (2007) writes: “As ethnographers, we have the privilege, unlike most teachers, of entering the classroom and freely admitting that we have no particular plan or expectation of how it will all turn out” (p.175). Gallagher argues for a “problem-posing ethnography” (p.175), a “porous methodology” (2008, p.72) often driven by the needs and necessities in the field. My roles in this class were formed in response to the needs in the classroom. My relationship to the classroom, field and teacher was multi-faceted. I have worked as both an ESL and drama educator, like the teacher in this class. I was a participant observer, sometimes assisting the teacher, and sometimes joining the students in group work. Since English is the third language that I have learned, my own experiences as both an English language educator and English language learner provided opportunities for the students to discuss their language learning with me. The formal and informal conversations I had inside and outside the classroom and during focus groups and individual interviews provided a context in which students sometimes regarded me as a peer,
sometimes as a teacher, and sometimes as a researcher. (Please see further details in the Participant-Observation section – section 4.4.1)

Brown (2003) asserts that ethnography, “instead of discovering the limits of the human, can study the processes by which the human is defined in local practice, how belonging and identity is constructed, how alterity and exclusion are produced, and how these shift in on-going practice” (p.74). Contemporary ethnographic research seeks an ‘emic’ / insider’s perspective that provides “thick descriptions”, conveying the subjective reality of the interior world of participants (Geertz, 1973). Through my ethnographic research, I focused on drama teachers’ pedagogy in three “discrete locations” (three different programs in two different multiethnic/multilanguage urban high school settings). My goals were to present a comprehensive, contextualized and “thick” description of the drama classroom culture(s) in these schools (Geertz, 1973; Pole & Morrison, 2003) and to examine how teaching practices in classrooms where drama pedagogy is used affect the linguistic and social performances of ELL students. This research project looked at drama pedagogies in active practice to explore the following questions:

i) What different drama pedagogies are used in three urban high school programs with a high population of linguistically diverse students?

ii) How do the drama teachers view the potential impact of their teaching on the linguistic, social and academic performance of ELLs?

iii) How do linguistically diverse students experience drama pedagogy in urban classrooms?
I looked at the relationship of drama pedagogy to both the linguistic and social performances of ELLs, since I see language, culture(s), identity(ies) and other social positionings such as race, class and gender as interconnected. Norton and Toohey (2004) state that “language is not just a means of expression or communication; rather, it is a practice that constructs and is constructed by the way language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, their possibilities for the future” (p.1). Following Brown (2003), I believe “culture is not a set of rules for behavior, is not a catalog of meaningful symbols” (p.72).

My study is not traditional, positivist ethnographic research; rather, it has a critical theoretical approach. Ethnographic research that has a critical theoretical approach treats culture as heterogeneous, fluid, negotiated and interpretive. I appreciate Clifford Geertz’s semiotic approach to culture and his notion of “thick culture” with thick descriptions “to gain access to the conceptual world in which ...[individuals] live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them” (1973, p.24). Therefore it is likely to be a process which is “contradictory, dialectical, dialogic, texted, textured, both practical and imaginary and in-filled with desire” (Stewart, 1996, as cited in Brown, 2003, p.72).

Ethnography refers to the methodology beyond tools used for data collection, encompassing “theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the research” (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 5). My theoretical framework for this research is informed by critical theories that look at the power and empowerment issues in school settings, reflective of the same issues in society at large (Banks, 1991; Britzman, 2000; Cummins, 2001; Ellsworth, 1997; Fine, 1994; Freire, 1970/2006; Giroux 1992; hooks, 1994; Mirza, 2009). Ethnographic research forces researchers to situate data in their sociocultural, historical, and political contexts. While trying to answer my research questions, I made concerted efforts to address how social and cultural capital factor into
relationships between the teachers and ELLs. Here I draw on Dance’s (2002) definitions. Dance defines social capital as “resources that result from social relationships among individuals, families, communal groups, social networks, and the like” and social capital as “the linguistic and cultural competencies of the dominant group in society”. Many researchers (Banks, 1991; Gallagher & Riviere, 2004) raise questions about the term “multiculturalism” and its use in current educational practices. Gallagher (2004) states: “conceptions of multicultural classroom communities desperately need to push beyond the narrow confines of identity politics. Most ‘democratic’ classroom spaces hide behind an illusion of neutrality and fairness” (p.6). Critical researchers in education have often written about how (intentionally or unintentionally) educational policies, schools and teachers reproduce relations of power and inequality that exist in the society (Cummins, 2001). Giroux (2002) suggests that we need to address the question of “how power works through discourses and social relations, particularly as they affect youth who are marginalized economically, racially, [linguistically (my insertion)] and politically” (p.43).

4.3 Multi-site Research: Description of the Sites and Participants

Multisite ethnographic research is valuable for many reasons. One of the criticisms directed towards traditional ethnographic research by feminist and postmodern scholars derives from issues of perspective and power. These scholars have criticized conventional ethnographers for depicting a romanticized version of a group of people. Eisenhart (2001) writes, “in a multisited design, the ‘specialness’ of one site is lost; what is gained is the ability to make connections among distinctive discourses and practices from site to site” (p.221).

Multi-site research in education is usually done in the field of comparative studies. Bray, Adamson and Mason (2007) report that most of these studies have been dominated by international comparisons and have given little attention to multi-site research that focuses on the
local (p. 8). One of the hazards caused by this focus on multi-site international research is the neglect of diversity within one geographic location (Manzon, 2007, p.180). Attention to the diversity in the local through multi-site research is necessary to present a complex, thick description of the experiences of ELLs in drama classrooms within diverse urban high school programs.

My research was part of a larger international research project that runs from 2008 to 2013, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This project, USP (Urban School Performances), examines how the relationships among culture, identity, multicultural/equity policies, and student engagement have an impact on the lives of youth in schools and communities traditionally labeled ‘disadvantaged’ in the cities of Toronto (Canada), Taipei (Taiwan), Lucknow (India), and Boston (USA). This Canadian-led project examines student engagement, pedagogical practices, and success at school from a local-global perspective and illustrates how such a multi-site ethnography is changed by arts-based, participatory, digital and performative research methods. My own research describes the experiences of linguistically and culturally diverse ELLs and their drama teachers in Toronto, in the context of this larger study and uses some common data. However, in addition to this SSHRC/USP data, the bulk of my data at my three research sites came from individual interviews and focus groups that I conducted with teachers (drama teachers, ESL teachers, a teacher of English language and literature, a guidance teacher), and both ELLs and non-ELLs in the classrooms of these teachers, to better understand the drama pedagogies and their impact on the students. As described in more detail in the data collection section below, the interview data was supplemented with video and audio recordings of classroom activities, photographs, student journals and other multimodal artefacts collected from the students and the teachers.
My study took place in three different programs in two different urban and multicultural high schools in Toronto. These three programs were: Braeburn High School ‘At-Risk’ Program; Braeburn High School drama-ESL Course for ELLs, within the Braeburn adult daytime high school program; Middleview Technical High School regular high school program. My primary participants were the three drama classroom teachers and their students. Middleview is a semestered school, where I regularly observed one drama classroom (Ms. S.’s), interviewed and visited the classrooms of two other teachers (one drama teacher, Ms. B. one ESL teacher, Ms. L.) and interviewed one guidance teacher (Ms. V.). Braeburn programs, called ‘quads’, are nine weeks long, therefore I was able to be there for three quads; the formal data collection, however, took place in the second and third quads. This gave me a chance to carefully observe two different groups of students in the Braeburn adult day-time high school (Ms. J.’s drama-ESL course) and two different groups of students in the ‘At-Risk’ program (Ms. C.’s drama class). At Braeburn, in addition to the two teachers I worked closely with (Ms. S. and Ms. C.), I also had a chance to interview five other drama teachers (three full-time teachers – Ms. D., Ms. N., and Mr. R.) and two teacher candidates doing their placements in Ms. S.’s class – Ms. K. and Mr. A.). So, in total, aside from my three main teacher participants, I collected data from interactions with 8 other teachers at Middleview and Braeburn. A total of 106 students submitted their consent forms agreeing to participate in my study. Across these sites, 77 students were more involved in the process because they participated in one-on-one interviews, focus interviews, filled out questionnaires and/or shared their written reflections with me. The involvement of the rest of the students (29 students) in this study was limited to my classroom observations and in some cases their video-taped performances. This limited involvement was due to factors such as absenteeism, not being able to find a mutual time to set up an interview, or not being able to
attend school on the day of the interview (some of these students who couldn’t make it reported that they were sick and feared that they had swine flu).

### 4.3.1 Introducing Braeburn High School

In my initial field-notes about Braeburn, I wrote about its racially and ethnically diverse student population. It is located in downtown Toronto, but draws students from the entire city. There are two very different programs offered at Braeburn. Although logistically I had two high school sites, I felt I was observing three separate sites because the two programs at Braeburn (‘At-Risk’ Program and Adult High School Program) were drastically different in terms of their funding, their student profiles and admission policies, their teacher salaries and their attendance policies. Two common features at Braeburn are: both programs are designed to grant Ontario High School Diplomas and both programs offer courses for a period of 9 weeks, which makes one “quad”. The courses are offered every day for two hours a day.

One of these programs is a special one that is offered to ‘at-risk’ high school students who have failed in the regular school system. There are approximately 500 students in this program. On their website it says that in order to apply to this program you have to be “18-20 years old, out of school for at least one semester and have earned 5-16 high school credits to date”. I observed the classes (a mix of Grade 10s and 11s) of one of the drama teachers more closely. I observed the drama classroom every week, for at least two hours. As I explained earlier, I also connected with five other drama teachers in this program and interviewed them. In addition, I had a chance to visit the drama classrooms of three of these teachers once.

The other program in this school is the daytime Canadian high school for adults, mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The students attending this daytime high school are supposed to be over 21. The students in the drama-ESL class I observed were mostly in their
late 20s or early 30s. This class is mandatory for all students admitted to the lowest level of a newcomer program. Even this lowest level requires some proficiency in English, measured by an entrance test. Students come from a variety of backgrounds. Some lack sufficient language proficiency to complete regular high school; others have secondary and post secondary diplomas from other countries, which are not recognized in Canada; still others are from war-torn countries and have very little education or sporadic education.

Here is how the drama-ESL teacher at Braeburn described the two different programs in this school:

Originally it was just the adult high school. And ten years ago, before I started, about ten years, when that Mike Harris funding formula Bill 160 was passed, there was just an adult day school, with ESL. It was just a regular high school, except they were adults, and it was in the daytime. And then, after the funding formula, it was still an adult high school. Then a few years later they brought in this program for at-risk students, youth, who have to be between the ages of 18 and 20 or 21. They have to have a certain number of credits, and they can only be in the program for a year. Those are the stipulations. So that’s a separate program, and those students are fully funded by the government, so they receive two-thirds more money than the other. And it’s the same program. It’s still nine weeks long, it’s still the Ontario high school curriculum. Same as the other part, the adult high school – the Ontario high school curriculum. It’s nine weeks, they both have to do exams, they both have mid-term marks. And everything else is the same. There is a difference about attendance. They’re at-risk, so they have their own way of dealing with students being absent or late. They have their own way of doing it. Whereas we have a rule that if a student misses five consecutive days they are taken out, unless we hear from them, there is some major sickness or something. So they are both at Ontario high school curriculum, both nine weeks, both have exams, but are funded differently. So those classes are smaller. That’s why those at-risk program classes – I know they have trouble with retention rate, and – those classes could start off probably as a small number, whereas our classes are not supposed to start below 35, and generally they stack them to 50, and occasionally there are over 50. And in the past at the beginning, the rate they would stack the students in would be over 50, like 55 at one time, and 60 - terrible. (Ms. S., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May 2009)
4.3.2 Introducing Middleview Technical High School

Middleview is a big technological public high school, also located in downtown Toronto. The school website provides some information about the demographics of the student population. The school has a total of 1797 students - 62% male and 38% female. Fifty-six percent of students have a primary language other than English.

Through my initial conversations with the ESL teacher, who initiated the drama-ESL classes in 2003, I learned that in the school year 2008-2009 there were 250 newcomer students who were considered ESL. These students were assessed by one of the reception centers in Toronto regarding their English language skills and they were placed in one of the five different levels of ESL classrooms (i.e., beginner level, high-beginner level, low-intermediate level, high-intermediate level and senior level). Each level is one semester long. All beginner level students are offered the package ‘ESL A’ which requires them to take 2 ESL classes (one class focusing on grammar and academic reading and writing, the other class focusing on more practical English language skills that make use of everyday English, which the teacher described as “hands-on English”); one comprehensive arts class (six weeks drama/ESL + six weeks dance/ESL + six weeks piano/ESL) and one elective class. There are 3 groups of ‘ESL A’ and they each rotate and complete the 6 weeks drama/ESL + 6 weeks dance/ESL + 6 weeks piano/ESL. As I explained at the beginning of this chapter, I was planning to work with the drama/ESL teacher, but those plans changed. However, I was able to interview two students who had taken the drama/ESL class previously.
4.4 Multimodal Data Collection, Coding and Analysis

Many researchers (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002; Sloan, 2007) have written about the power of using multiple data collection methods. Ethnographic research provides rich data collection opportunities. Sloan (2007) explains how interviewing and participant observation complement each other and how it is essential to have the firsthand experience of observing, together with the secondhand account of the interviewing. He writes:

My own ethnographic research clearly demonstrates the importance of such research in terms of understanding the varied ways that high-stakes accountability influences the work of individual teachers. Without observational data to challenge these teachers’ self-reported claims, I may have come to starkly different conclusions about the ways accountability affected the overall quality and equity of their classroom practices…. Over time and through prolonged engagements with these teachers in their respective classrooms, I am able to more clearly see the ways their self-reported data concealed important issues concerning educational quality and equity…. (p.34) It is my hope that educators and policy-makers will turn to the work of ethnographers to help them make clearer sense of the complexities involved in better serving minority youth. (p.38)

Based on these important arguments, for this research I used a variety of qualitative techniques which are consistent with ethnography. I used multimodal research methods which acknowledge that data collected and analysed using different modes and media provide different lenses for the researcher. Connecting ethnography with multimodal research methods (Gallagher & Kim, 2008; Royce, 2007; Street, Pahl, & Rowsell 2009), the data for this study comes from individual student interviews, student focus groups, teacher interviews, observation field notes, video recordings, photographs and drama artefacts. I used Final Cut Pro for video editing (Apple Inc., 2011). I coded and analysed these data using ATLAS.ti software (ATLAS.ti, 2011), which provided me the opportunity to hyperlink the textual data with the audio data, the video data or photographs. Although I used more traditional forms of analysis such as coding transcriptions, I found that I had used multimodal analysis to get myself into the presence of the students’
embodied experiences (please see the subsection on Multimodal Analysis and Embodied Intersectionality Analysis below, p. 82, for further information on analysis).

I examined drama teachers’ practices, their pedagogical choices, and teaching philosophies through semi-structured interviews with individual teachers, participant observations in each teacher’s classroom and teacher reflections. I examined these teachers’ perceptions of the impact of drama on students in general, and linguistically diverse students in particular. I also paid attention to some of the concerns, questions, and debates about the theory and practice of drama pedagogy. In addition, arts-informed artefacts (i.e., student writings, drawings and photographs of dramatic performances), discourse analysis and focus group interviews with the students equipped me to further analyze teachers’ practices of, and students’ needs, perceptions, and engagement with, the drama methods deployed in the classrooms. The research, therefore, provided comprehensive, socio-culturally contextualized and “thick” descriptions.

4.4.1 Participant observation

I devoted the first school semester to preliminary classroom visits and pre-observation time to familiarize myself with the two school sites and to build a profile of each site. In the second school semester, I spent a minimum of two hours each week, for four months, in each teacher’s classroom. Ms. S.’s drama course at Middleview and Ms. C.’s drama course at Braeburn took place during period 2. Period 2 runs from 10:20am to 11:35am at Middleview and from 10:30am to 12:30pm at Braeburn. The Drama-ESL class in Braeburn took place from 8.25am to 10.25am. I selected the time span of at least two hours weekly in each classroom as a way to observe communication and language use systematically, at regular intervals. I visited the
two schools for periods ranging from a minimum of two hours a week to several days a week. For ethnographic research, it is important to devote time for long-term observations to obtain rich data. These long-term, deep sessions of ‘hanging out’ are also important since over time, those in the setting become habituated to the presence of the researcher. I agree with Esterberg (2002) that: “If you spend enough time in the field, it is likely that people will eventually come to behave as they ordinarily would, or at least approximately so” (p.72).

I not only observed classes but I also ‘hung out’ with students during their lunch breaks and special events, such as the culture fest and job fair events. The informal conversations during these events helped me to get to know the students on a more personal level. For example, during the job fair, some drama-ESL students from Braeburn were too intimidated to go and ask questions on their own and they wanted me to go with them. I helped them verbalize their questions and fill out forms about possible careers that they were interested in. When I went to the culture fest after an interview with the ESL teacher at Middleview, she introduced me to an ESL student who had previously taken her drama-ESL class. I had a chance to interview this student later that semester. When we began talking about drama, embodied learning and embodied expression, the student invited me to her dance class. One of the other teachers I worked with also informed me about this dance class and encouraged me to see the performances of two other ESL students in this same class. Here is an e-mail I received about this class:

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Hi Burcu,

I just wanted to tell you that 2 of the girls in the dance group performed solo pieces that they had created based on a sound that triggered a memory for them. For one girl, the memory was based on the sound of applause which reminded her of her last night in Iran when friends threw a party for her. She used Turkish music and danced this incredible dance that had Persian dance influences.

The second girl danced a piece inspired by the sound of thunder when her plane to Canada when she was moving from Greece got delayed and there was a lot of
I went to visit this classroom and I was able to see both of the amazing performances of these two students. I was also able to have a conversation with their dance teacher. I would never have met these three ESL students and interviewed them if my participants had not introduced them to me, and if I had not shared my observations and my interpretations of what I thought I was observing. Similarly, my informal conversations and long-term presence in the field also helped me to meet other drama teachers. For example, one day I was video-recording the drama class’s performance at the end of a quad for the drama teacher and her students. Another teacher approached me and said his students would also be performing that day in the afternoon, and he wished he could video-tape their performances for them. He explained to me that his class was not going to perform to a large audience, but just to a few parents and friends. I offered to video-tape his class’s performance, and explained to him why I was interested in drama classrooms and what my research focus was. He was interested, and told me that he would be happy to talk about his experiences teaching drama. Because it was the last week of this class and he wasn’t going to teach drama in the next three quads, I couldn’t observe his class or interview any of his students.
But he told me that he always asks his students for a written reflection in his last class after the performance, and said that if I prepared a questionnaire for his students, he would be happy to ask them to respond to it.

I provide these stories to portray the extent of my participant observation in the field. In ethnographic research not everything is set in advance. Many of my relationships with my participants were shaped after being in the field for extended periods of time, as I became someone people recognized. I found this kind of extended participant observation to be one of the most valuable ways of generating data.

4.4.2 Photographs and video-recording

I took photographs and video-recorded some of the drama classes. Photographs and video recordings are especially important for my study since non-verbal communication is an important element in these drama activities. Being able to review the video recording is very helpful both pedagogically and for research purposes, for observing discourse, embodiment, and layers of meaning communicated through drama activities. Kao et al. (2011) strongly recommend keeping an audio or video recording of the drama practices used in ESL classes for two reasons:

On the one hand, teachers can look back at their teaching style, discourse behaviours, and the students’ reactions in each lesson in order to obtain a holistic picture about how and to what extent the drama is working in the L2 classroom. On the other hand, selected recorded materials can be played back to the students for reflection or follow-up work. (p. 511)

The teacher and the students in this class were quite excited to have a record of their drama performances and they voiced this many times. In terms of research, the video recordings, audio recordings and photographs were highly valuable for the many reasons I discuss below.
Pink (2007) explains that the uses of video are “negotiated on different terms in different studies”. She adds, “it may even be several months before the ethnographer considers it the ‘right moment’ to introduce video” (p.104). I introduced and used video-recording at different times in different drama classrooms. Sometimes it was the students and/or the teachers who wanted me to video-tape a certain presentation and at other times I was the one who suggested that it might be a good time to video-record. I sometimes recorded the process and other times the product (students’ final presentations of their work). I also sometimes asked the students themselves to do the video-taping. For example, during my one-on-one interviews with the students, many students referred to their positive and negative group work experiences. Because, as a teacher (or a researcher), it is hard to be present for each of the group discussions taking place simultaneously, Ms. J., in order to better understand the group dynamics, would ask the students to write reflections about their group work process after each collaborative project for each unit. Although some students were open and descriptive about their group work process in their written reflections, others had difficulty expressing themselves once the immediacy of their day to day negotiation in groups had passed. Therefore, to complement this pedagogy, I suggested that it might also be a good idea to offer audio or video recording devices of their choice to the groups so that they could record their reflections on a day to day basis about the decisions and progress their group had made. The teacher and I decided to ask students to reflect on their group work process for their assignments for the Celebrations Unit (for which students in groups chose a specific holiday celebration, wrote a script based on this holiday celebration and performed it through drama). Students had a week to prepare for their presentation. For three days in a row, in the last 10 minutes of the class, instead of a written reflection about their group work, the students recorded their verbal reflections based on the questions they were given about group
work. I brought two video cameras for two groups who preferred to video-record their verbal reflections, and audio-recorders for the other groups. These recordings provided rich data to help me understand the different aspects of group work and group dynamics and the various modes of communication students will choose when given a choice.

The photographs and videos were helpful during the interviews to recall (‘simulated recall’, Gass & Mackey, 2000) certain details about the participants’ experience in the drama class and to offer an opportunity for ‘co-construction’ of meaning and ‘co-analysis’ of a specific recorded moment with my participants. Pink (2007) writes that by showing the participants images or video-recordings, “taking their criticisms of how I had seen (photographed) the performance and discussing what they saw in my photographs,” she came closer to understanding her participants’ perspectives (p.105). She explains that this kind of conversation and collaboration can allow the researcher to see “the local phenomena” in the same way as his/her participants see them (p.105). Feminist, postmodern and critical scholars have all called for this kind of more collaborative or dialogic relationship in which participants contribute to data collection, analysis and writing (Eisenhart, 2001).

It is important to note here that even though, in my data collection, coding and analysis, the multiple modes of data including photographs and video recordings were essential to the study, and despite my initial plan of including video recordings in the dissemination of this research, after my extended time in the field with the students, I took a different position. Because of the complex and vulnerable situations that some of these ELLs, who are immigrants and refugees, are leaving behind, even with full ethical consent that I was given by the students, in the dissemination of my findings I decided not to use any video data and to conceal the faces of students in the selected photographs. This was because, despite my efforts to anonymize
through pseudonyms, I did not want to take the risk of inadvertently publishing any clues about
the identities of the students with whom I was working.

4.4.3 Semi-structured focus-group and individual interviews:

I used audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews with the teachers and students. I
conducted open-ended, semi-structured focus groups with the students to discuss their reflections
about their own experiences as ELLs and the specific drama activities they participated in. I
believe that, besides individual interviews with the students, having the focus group interviews
was important since students could build on each other’s ideas or offer different perspectives. I
used Stimulated Recall procedures during the interviews. Stimulated Recall is an introspective
method in which participants are prompted (via some visual or oral stimulus such as a
video/audio-taped event, written work, drawings, etc.) to recall thoughts they entertained while
carrying out certain tasks or participating in certain events (Mackey & Gass, 2000).

In addition, because I wanted to involve the teachers and researchers more as co-
researchers, one of the ideas I had was to convene an after-school chat with the teachers about
their own pedagogical questions in the drama classrooms. Here is the invitation I sent to teachers
to invite them to the after-school chat.

**An after-school chat with pizza treat:**

*I am not the researcher who knows all the answers. I want to have a conversation about
teachers’ everyday pedagogical questions and decisions. This invites you into the
headspace of a researcher. I am interested in the questions you would ask other teachers,
questions that you hope will help you to get answers and support from other teachers
collectively through conversation. I believe the best questions will be asked by you. Think
about your experiences in relation to English Language Learners, however big/little
experience you have with them, and from these experiences devise one or two questions.
Come to the table with one or two of your most pressing questions about the challenges
and benefits of someone who is ELL encountering drama.*
The three drama teachers I worked with at Middleview were able to participate in this after-school chat. But at Braeburn, despite the teachers’ and my efforts, it wasn’t possible to bring the drama teachers together for an after school chat because their schedules were very different. Some worked part-time, others had commitments right after school. Instead I was able to meet the teachers individually and discuss some of their responses to these questions and thoughts during one-on-one interviews.

Using “the mantle of the expert” drama strategy as a research tool, with the permission of the classroom teacher, I worked with groups of students to come up with three questions they might want to ask other drama-ESL students about their experience in the drama/ ESL class. Then I was going to ask them to find two other ELLs and ask these questions and come back to me with their answers. But since this effort was not fruitful and I realized students were having difficulty and did not show much interest, I decided to change the strategy. After brainstorming with the classroom teacher, I decided to ask the students to write a journal entry as if they were a researcher observing this drama-ESL class. We asked them what they would write about if they were going to write a book about the experiences of students in the drama-ESL class. Both the teacher and I were delighted with and sometimes surprised by the many ideas and experiences they described in these entries.

4.4.4 Coding, analysis and insider/outsider positions

In ethnographic research the data collection, the analysis and the writing are not discrete stages that only happen one after another, but instead create a cyclical process. Throughout my data collection, I kept taking notes of themes that emerged and my analysis of the events that
occurred in the field. I also shared these preliminary observations, interpretations and analyses during interviews or informal conversations with my participants. I asked for their ideas about these experiences and whether or not they thought these represented their perspectives and interpretations. Sometimes these preliminary analyses and my ongoing conversations with the students and teachers directed a change in my data collection strategies.

As mentioned earlier, the multimodal data was coded and analyzed in the ATLAS.ti coding and analysis software program (ATLAS.ti, 2011) and I also edited and analyzed video data in the Final Cut Pro video editing program (Apple Inc. 2011). I used an ‘open model’ (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) for coding my observation field notes. I did not have pre-established codes for my observation data. The themes and categories that I focused on in my analysis come from the data. Both during and after data collection, I used ongoing and recursive analysis by reading, rereading, sifting and sorting data to come up with themes and categories. For the interviews, I used a ‘mixed model’ (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of data coding and analysis since some of my umbrella terms came from my interview questions. These umbrella terms were descriptive and non-judgmental in nature. Some umbrella terms I used for initial coding were: teacher’s perception of the school; teacher’s perception of the students in this school; teacher’s perception of her/his own teaching; student’s perception of the school; and student’s perception of drama pedagogy.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her book Decolonizing Methodologies (1999/2005) discusses the constant need for reflexivity during the data collection, analysis and writing stages of a research study. She argues that the researchers need to critically reflect on their insider and outsider subject positions in the field. For example, my first visits to Braeburn and Middleview brought back memories of my first days in Canada. So at times I felt very much like an insider researcher
attuned to issues of linguistic and cultural diversity, because both of these sites are richly multicultural/racial/lingual high schools with more than 55% of the students having a primary language other than English. But I also felt like an outsider at times, being aware of my very privileged position as a graduate student having the luxury of working on something I am passionate about without the extreme economic, cultural, social and linguistic burdens or other troubling conditions of disadvantage that many of these students said they were facing. I sometimes became an insider, sharing my own experiences of learning a second/third language. At other times, some students saw me more like a teacher in the classroom and asked me questions about things they had difficulty understanding; they asked me how they did during their presentations. Others were curious about my life as a graduate student. Still others approached me and wanted to share dilemmas or problems they had in their personal life and relationships; they needed somebody they could trust to talk to. After the distribution of the consent forms in my earlier visits, one student came to me and said: “I would be happy to participate but I don’t know if my English is good enough for this”. Another student responded similarly when I approached her and explained that I was interested in interviewing her; she said: “Really? You really would like to talk to me? – But is my English good? I don’t really speak it well. I speak very slow.” All of these incidents helped me to reflect on the various ways in which I was both an insider and an outsider in these two sites. And certainly our social positions, our personal and cultural experiences as classed, gendered, raced subjects affect our analysis and our writing.

Therefore, in thinking about ethnographic data collection and analysis, it is essential to consider the important questions which post-modern, post-structural, and feminist theories have raised: How can researchers remove “the veil of objectivity/neutrality” (Fine, 1994, p.73) and
acknowledge their subjectivity in their research? (Gallagher, 2008); How can researchers create ethical representations of the complex and sometimes contradictory narratives of their participants? (Davies, 1999); How can research give voice to the Other without invoking a colonizing discourse? (Foley & Valenzua, 2005; Smith, 1999/2005). According to these theories it is important to give voice to the ‘Other’; however I agree with Kirsch (1999) who cautions us that as researchers, “we need to balance our efforts to represent the voices of Others in our texts with efforts to engage in critical analysis and interpretation of research data” (p.100).

4.4.5 Document analysis

Although document analysis was not the main goal of this research, I looked at Statistics Canada, Land Information and Toronto EDI reports in order to collect demographic (ethnic, linguistic, age, gender, economic and historical) information about the students and the communities where the two schools are located. I examined two international studies: The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004) which presents statistics about youth literacy and the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS; Statistics Canada, 2003) which presents statistics about adult literacy in Canada.

In addition I analyzed federal policy documents (e.g., Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canadian Multiculturalism Act, Canadian Citizenship and Immigration); Provincial policy documents (e.g., English language learners / ESL and ELD programs and services: Policies and procedures for Ontario elementary and secondary schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007; Reach every student: Energizing Ontario education, 2008; Developing and implementing equity and inclusive education policies in Ontario schools, 2009; Realizing the
promise of diversity: Ontario’s equity and inclusive education strategy, 2009) and school policy documents from the two schools.

Finally, I collected and analyzed arts-informed artefacts of drama activities (i.e., student writings, drawings, and photographs as well as digital video-making of students’ dramatic performances).

4.4.6 Multimodal analysis and embodied intersectionality analysis

As explained earlier, analysis through ATLAS.ti software afforded multimodal data analysis by allowing me to hyperlink multiple modes of data and not simply break down the data and their analyses into segregated parts, such as the audio data analysis, the video data analysis, the textual data analysis, etc. Instead, the software innovations allowed me to analyze the data multimodally, to capture a holistic understanding suggested by the Gestalt theory of perception, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Behrens, 1984, p. 49, as cited in Skaalid, 1999, para 1.).

This multimodal analysis that was afforded by the ATLAS.ti software changed entirely how I worked through my analysis. On the screen, being able to see at once the written transcript and the audio document and/or the video document of a specific coded moment, meant that I could look at all the related pieces of data at once. Despite some technical limitations of this software, hyperlinking these multiple modes informed my analysis to move beyond discussing “simply the juxtaposition of image, text, and sound, but the creation of multiple interconnections and pathways (or traversals) amongst them, both potential and explicit” (Lemke, 2002, as cited in Coffey, Renold, Dicks, Soyinka & Mason (2006, p. 24). The ethnographer’s work, as observer of multiple modes in the field, may come closest, among the various qualitative methodologies, to the form of multimodal analysis I am describing here. But the use of technology in analysis
adds another dimension. In the past, different modes such as documents, visuals, artefacts might have been laid out in a physical space and links drawn, but researchers could never go back to the precise moment when these links and multisensory connections were made. What ATLAS.ti software allows, in a sense, is to recreate mediated by the screen, ‘original moments of data resonance’, as Kathleen Gallagher has described it, wherein different modes not only seem significant to one another, but can also be hyperlinked, in a permanent way, to one another so that the work of the analyst could also be documented and captured for revisiting subsequently, or in fact ‘undoing’/recoding later, as the analysis unfolds. Multimodal data coding and analysis (in addition to multimodal data collection) was a central feature of this ethnographic research.

In addition to a multimodal analysis, I found embodied intersectionality analysis (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Mirza, 2009, Smooth, 2010) to be helpful in making sense of the complex experiences of participants in the drama classrooms, taking account of the intersections of race, class, gender, language, ethnicity and other categories of social identity. Embodied intersectionality theory and analysis originated from Black feminism and was first coined in 1989 by Kimberle Crenshaw, a scholar working in the field of law, as “she was attempting to get at the ways in which nobody is ever located only in one category. We are all always multiply located, and the different categories to which we belong decentre each other, but always operate together” (Ali, Mirza, Phoenix, & Ringrose, 2010, p. 650). Wendy Smooth outlines the principles of intersectionality theory in the following five categories:

a) resists additive models that treat categories of social identity as additive, parallel categories and instead theorizes these categories as intersecting; b) adheres to anti-essentialist politics and variation within categories of social identity; c) recognizes that social identity categories and the power systems that give them meaning shift across time and geographical location; d) embraces the co-existence of power and oppression and acknowledges that they are not mutually exclusive; e) changes the conditions of society such that power hierarchies are dismantled in efforts to build a more just world. (2010, p. 33)
These five principles hint at the dynamic and complex nature of this analysis that appreciates the intersections between language and linguistic identities with race, class, gender, abilities, sexualities, and ethnicity. Intersectional analysis necessitates that researchers be “attentive to multiple categories working simultaneously to produce experience” (Smooth, 2010, p. 34). Smooth adds that sociopolitical and economic histories and realities play a large role in defining the power relationships that intersectionality “seeks to make visible” (p. 34).

Although my research specifically focuses on ELLs’ experiences, just analysing their experiences in terms of linguistic diversity would be incomplete. In order to fully understand their experiences as learners in a drama course, it is important to situate these learners, and their understandings and meaning-making in drama classrooms, through an intersectional analysis that takes into account their multiple social locations, analyzing how these students’ experiences have been influenced by factors such as social, economic and cultural contexts, as well as factors such as power, hegemony, and subjectivity, addressed by not only embodied intersectionality theory but also by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999; Johnstone, 2002/2008).
Chapter 5: Drama Pedagogies in Active Practice

5.1 Introduction

Drawing on theoretical work from literacy education, drama education and second language education within critical, postcolonial, poststructuralist frameworks, I analyse the drama pedagogies in three classrooms addressing the following two research questions:

iv) What different drama pedagogies are used in three urban high school programs with a high population of linguistically diverse students?
v) How do the drama teachers view the potential impact of their teaching on the linguistic, social and academic performance of ELLs?

(Later, in Chapter 6, I will address my third research question: How do linguistically diverse students experience drama pedagogy in urban classrooms?)

In the first section of this chapter, section 5.2, I introduce the drama classes and student participants in my three sites (3 different drama classrooms in two public high schools). After this general description of the students in the class, in the second section of this chapter, section 5.3, I introduce the teacher participants in three different sites and describe the drama pedagogies they each employ in their drama classrooms. More specifically, I examine two aspects of Multiliteracies pedagogy: *multimodality* (with a focus on embodied learning) and *situated practice* (with a focus on performance of identities and creation of identity texts).
5.2 Introducing the Three Sites

Site 1: The students in the mandatory Drama-ESL class in the Program for Adult English Language Learners at Braeburn High School

As I explained in the methodology section, Braeburn High School (pseudonym) is an alternative public high school. It has three distinct programs to serve three different populations: the first program serves a large group of students over 21 who have not yet finished high school; the second program serves a smaller group of ESL students, and the third program serves a younger group of ‘at-risk’ students who are under 21, but need an environment that is different from regular high schools. At Braeburn High School, I collected data from both the drama-ESL class in the Adult ESL program and the drama class in the ‘At-risk’ youth program. I will begin by describing the students in the drama-ESL class.

As I outlined in the methodology section, the drama-ESL classroom is in an urban daytime Canadian high school for adults, which grants Ontario secondary school diplomas. This program offers courses in ‘quads’ (nine-week blocks), and each class lasts two hours. The program is quite different from LINC and ESL Centres, because in this high school adult ESL program students are formally evaluated through mid-term and final exams. They must pass these ESL classes in order to gain access to other high school courses. The goal in this specific class is to use drama strategies to improve students’ English language skills. In this program for adult ESL high school students, the classes must have a minimum enrolment of 35 students in order to run. Students are supposed to be older than 21; those I observed were mostly in their late 20s or early 30s. Drama-ESL is a mandatory class for all English language learners at the most basic level (Level BO) at this school. When I asked the teacher why it is called BO, she
explained that there are some AO level classes offered in other adult ESL high schools in the city. These labels – AO, BO, CO, DO and EO – are district-wide labels. AO is the most basic English Language level, EO the most advanced language class offered for adult high school students. To enter the BO level, students have to demonstrate some skill in English by passing a proficiency exam. Mandatory drama-ESL courses are quite rare in Toronto; they do exist in other high schools within this Board, but the curriculum for each course is unique to its own setting. The teacher, Ms. J. (pseudonym)\(^1\) and a former program leader designed this course, and it has been offered for eight years.

Over the course of the data collection year, there were about 50 students in the drama-ESL course in each quad (nine-week unit). Ms. J. explained that in every quad there are certain predominant regions that the students come from, depending on political and economic problems around the globe.

I have noticed, over the years, there might be a predominant area – a hot spot. It’s a hot spot, right, where they’re coming from. Because we’re not getting the wealthy people, in general, from other countries. We are getting the displaced people from countries. You know, there’s a reason…Which is different than when you teach in a private language school. So right now, the highest proportion I have are from, they’re still from Afghanistan. But a few years ago, it was Sri Lanka, and last year I would say it was Ethiopia, Eritrea, right. And then when you read the news, you know these are political hot spots, so you understand why they’re coming from there.

(Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL 7 May 2009)

Ms. J., in this quote, explained that the students who attend her drama-ESL course are learning English in order to survive here, in Canada. This is a clear distinction from an EFL

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\(^1\) All participants’ names are self-chosen pseudonyms. The interview excerpts are transcriptions that include original errors in pronunciation and grammar. The journal passages reflect verbatim writing, including students’ errors in spelling and grammar.
environment where students learn English as a foreign language in a country where English is not the main language of communication in everyday life. Secondly, her description explained that this teaching environment is quite different from the private language school in Canada where Ms J. taught in the past, both in terms of how long the students plan to stay in Canada (coming to live rather than simply to study) and why the students are learning English. She also stressed the fact that there is a big difference in class size between this drama–ESL class and private language classes.

And I actually taught at a private language school, so one where you only have one or two students – six would be a lot. And they would be the opposite, in a way, of our students. Because they would just be visiting Canada for a month, three weeks, six weeks, whatever – two months maybe, maybe even a year. (Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May 2009).

She further explained that students in her class come from a variety of educational backgrounds. Here is how she described them:

Sometimes I do get students who have been to a regular, adolescent high school – I have some of those in the class. I also get students who are highly educated from their country, like for example a student who was a doctor, I’ve had engineers, pharmacists or teachers. And then I get people who were students from their country maybe they got to university. And then I get students who have been in war-torn countries, and they have had very little education, or a sporadic education. (Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May 2009)

As Ms J. described, some of these students already have a high school diploma, even sometimes a university degree, from their country but (because of either the lack of proper documentation due to war and political upheaval in their home country or the Canadian government’s lack of trust in the documentation) their diplomas are not always recognized in Canada. These adult daytime high schools are their only chance to get a high school diploma. Sometimes there are also ELL students in this class who have come from regular adolescent high
schools, because they arrived in Canada during their high school years and did not have the necessary time to acquire academic language proficiency and graduate, since all students need to complete regular high school before the age of twenty-one.

Ms. J. recognizes that this is a high-stakes second language learning context because these students need sufficient language skills to survive in a new country. She appreciates the political, economic, and immigrant realities and challenges that these students experience and bring in to this class:

Well, the number one thing is the language issue. And if you don’t have enough English, then it’s going to be harder for you to get a job, which will earn you a decent wage to have a … “successful life”…. And as students, they’re disadvantaged because they’re adults, they have other priorities and responsibilities…. They have families – they’ve got children to look after. Or maybe they’re the main breadwinner. Or even if they’re the only one here, sometimes they’re in Canada by themselves, maybe they’re responsible to send money back home… And they’re working at, usually, low paying jobs…. I’d say most people are trying to get their Canadian high school diploma…. And their ambition might be to go to college, or university…. A lot of them see this as the land of milk and honey, and then they come here and their reality is they’re going to have to work at something, and they can’t get the job that they had back home. Then, as a teacher, you’re pressuring them to complete assignments and do their homework… But, at the same time they’ve got to deal with these other things… And sometimes they’re refugees, and they’re going for refugee hearings. They’re here in Canada, and they’ve got to go and see their lawyers – so they don’t know if they’re going to get to stay here or not. So there’s that, and that must cause a lot of anxiety for them, and stress for them.

(Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May 2009)

Site 2: The students in the drama classroom in the Program for ‘At Risk’ Youth at Braeburn High School

The second site for this study was the Grade 10-11 drama class for ‘at-risk’ students at Braeburn. Unlike Site 1, the drama class for ‘at-risk’ students at Braeburn is not specifically for
English language learners. I knew that there would be students who might have English as a second language but I was surprised to find a basic level ELL student in this class. This is because the program is normally offered to students who are “at-risk”/“disadvantaged” in other ways, as Mr. R. (a drama teacher in this program) described below:

You have students whose family lives are so messed up that their ability to attend school is just a challenge – every day. They have amazing hurdles they have to go through to get to school. They’re on house arrest. They are relying on a parent for transportation. Their parent refuses to drive and they can’t legally get to school any another way. Their situation is less than ideal. Life has dealt them lousy cards. …Initially, I’d say there was a higher portion of students that come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. I’m not quite sure that’s true now. Braeburn ‘at risk’ program has expanded, and they recognized that students are having a hard time finishing high school for a number of reasons, and economic disadvantages are just one of them. So I’ve had some kids have been economically disadvantaged. But I still say that, in general, my perception is that having economic means confers a greater likelihood of getting through school. So. Many have come from broken families, deaths of parents. A kid that may have gone through normally, all of a sudden he’s going, you know, “What’s this all about anyway? Why should I go to school?” Sometimes emotional fall-outs are not readily apparent. And that leads a whole host of behavioural problems that sometimes students can mask.

(Ms. R., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 15 April 2009)

As Ms. C. similarly explained that some of these students come from troubled families, she added that some have learning problems, and some students have addiction problems. For a number of her students, their previous school did not meet their needs and therefore they either failed to pass, left school, or were expelled. Nezzer, a student in Ms. C.’s class, explained that although some students are motivated to get their high school credits, other students are just here because they want to continue receiving financial support from their parents:
Kids here are generally more into getting their credits done because they wanna finish high school. That’s the reason they’re here. But some of the people who are here are just doing it so that they don’t have to pay rent. Cause some of the parents say that if they are going to school, then they don’t have to pay rent at their house. A lot of families work that way. As long as you are in school can stay here, but if you are not, then you have to pay the rent.
(Nezzer, student interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 20 April 2009)

The same system of 9-week quads also exists for these students. However, the classes at the “at-risk” program have a different funding formula, so the class sizes are smaller. While this class does not need to be over 35 like the ESL class, it did start out with 40 students. For students like Nezzer who had great difficulties with the regular high school system, it is very significant that Braeburn is quadmestered. Nezzer explained his challenging experience with his prior high school and why he believed the quad system at Braeburn was valuable for him as follows:

I was technically grade 14, if you want to call it that. But it was my 6th year at high school and I was going to school but I wasn’t really going at all. So I dropped out for half a year, more or less a year actually, from my previous school cause it wasn’t working out for me, the whole year doing the same stuff, the whole year was just irritating. And the fact that this is quads, 3 credits in 3-4 months…It is more intense but it is a lot entertaining because it changes up very quick and I like change. I don’t like doing the same thing for a year. For example I was doing English and musical theatre (Joseph) last quad and now I am doing totally different things like philosophy, gym, drama (High School Musical). I am doing drama again because it is something I enjoy.
(Nezzer, student interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 20 April 2009)

Although the administration and the teachers at this program would like to see student retention rates improve, their reality is different. In the ‘at-risk’ program there is high attrition (up to 50%), frequent absence and, for the students who do attend, lack of focus. Another drama teacher at this school, Ms. N., explains that many of their students have “chronic attendance problems” because of a variety of reasons:

Some enroll to get welfare and don’t come, some have jobs where they are working late nights and they are just too exhausted to come, some have kids so it’s difficult for them to
get to class – many varied reasons – and some are just not ready to be here, they’ll take
the same course three or four times and eventually when they are ready, they do it. It
takes some students a long time to be ready to get back to school.
(Ms. N., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 8 May 2009)

Absences were a problem in the two other sites, but they were much more prevalent at
this site. In effect, the main goal in this classroom was to try to prevent student absence and
attrition, to help them complete the course.

Site 3: The students in the drama classroom at Middleview Technical High School

The third site for this study was the Grade 11-12 drama class at Middleview Technical
High School. Middleview is a multicultural/racial/lingual urban high school, with 1797 students
(56% of students with a primary language other than English). It is one of the largest
technological schools in Ontario, offering a comprehensive selection of academic and
technological study programs. In terms of gender, the majority of the student population is male
(62% male, 38% female) because of its technological program of study. The school is located in
downtown Toronto but draws students from across the entire city.

Although some students came specifically because of the good things they heard about
the technical program of study or the specialized arts program in this school, there were also a
number of students who said that they were warned by their previous schools that Middleview
was a rough school in terms of student population and that they should be careful, which they all
thought was a constructed and not quite reflective representation of the realities in this school.
Ms. V., one of the guidance teachers at Middleview, also referred to this a couple of times in her
interview. She explained that she also gets similar reactions about Middleview and its reputation
as “rough and tough”:

The feedback I got from the schools in the area is that the PR is horrible, they think this is
a horrible school, and it's rough and tough. They don't know what goes on within these four walls. There needs to be more translated documents. So that's something I'm working on with a few people right now. But, you know, it's slow moving.

Working here, and having grown up in Toronto, when I tell people I work at Middleview, there’s a grimace… And yeah, there are drugs here, too many of them in my opinion. There are guns floating around. Do we ever see stuff like that in the halls? Never. This is a microcosm of our city, and stuff happens all the time. You have to be able to have good decision making skills to be in this school, yes, but I wouldn’t work here if I didn’t feel safe.

(Ms. V., teacher interview, Middleview, 16 June 2012)

Ms. V. added that because of this reputation, the enrollment rates are lower than they would like, especially in the lower grades (Grades 9 and 10) compared to other publicly funded high schools in the neighborhood. She explained that they are trying to actively solve this problem by informing schools and students in the neighborhood from Grade 10 on that they now have a small team working on this. She noted that Middleview has the highest registration enrollment for Grade 11 and 12 because of the specialized programs they offer at that level:

Because of our rep, not just ESL, but all the kids will go to Ashton High School or Lakeview Secondary. We have the highest registration enrolment for senior grades, Grade 11, 12 and because of our specialist programs, the apprenticeship, and because people finally get it, and they hear "Go to Middleview, they have a good ESL program" or whatever it is. But we have to get that message out from Grade 7 on. So that's something that, like, a small team of us are working on. But it's gonna take few years.

(Ms. V., teacher interview, Middleview, 16 June 2012)

Ms. V. added that factors that draw students, especially senior students, to Middleview is the specialist programs offered, as well as the fact that they are sometimes sent students “who are hard to place” because of Middleview’s reputation of being flexible and having resources to include all students, including a strong ESL program:

I know not all high schools have the programs we offer. This is just stuff in my – [hands over some papers]. There is a huge frustration with kids who are “hard to place”. And we are known as the last chance corral, basically. So, informally, we’ve had people trying to come in through the back door from more academic settings where these supports – when
a kid walks into a TDSB school they’re supposed to have, that home school is supposed to have all programs to accommodate them. They’re supposed to. We know this is not true.
(Ms. V., teacher interview, Middleview, 16 June 2012)

Ms. V. explained that another reason some students prefer Middleview is the fact that it is a semested school, and that they want to rush through to complete high school and attend college or university as soon as they can. But she noted that, especially for ELLs, it is important not to rush:

What I always say in that case, for that student, a lot of them want to rush through the levels, this is why they pick a semested school. What I say to them, and what a lot of the counselors and their teachers would tell them, is certainly you could try to rush through, but school is free right now. And if you’re not able to have the level of language in first year university or college where you’re able to comprehend and write an essay, it’s going to cost you money.
(Ms. V., teacher interview, Middleview, 16 June 2012)

In the teacher focus interview that I did with Ms. S and two other teachers (Ms. B, a drama teacher, and Ms. L., an ESL teacher who co-taught a drama-ESL course in the past with Ms. S.), they mentioned that one of the most important things about the drama courses at Middleview is that they draw students from all programs within the school. Here is how Ms. B. (a drama teacher) described the ‘open course’ aspect of the drama courses:

It is one of the most beautiful things about the drama classroom – because in drama you get everyone. You get new Canadian, you get special ed. students… there is no streaming.
(Ms. B., teacher focus group with Ms. S, Ms. B. and Ms. L., Middleview, 15 June 2009)

Many students in the drama classroom speak another language at home (56% of students with a primary language other than English) but only one student identified herself as an ELL. This was often because not all of them were recent newcomers, and they also often did not want to be labeled as ELL/ESL. Although there are many ELLs in this school, in my interviews with the ELL students in the drama class and other ELLs in this school, they said that most of their
ELL friends are intimidated by the idea of taking a drama class because the class would require them to use their English language actively by speaking and performing in English all the time. Here is how Ms. B. explained that even though she only has two students in her drama course who are officially considered ESL (Michael from China, and Irene from Belarus), many of her students are born outside of Canada:

I would say at least half of my students are not born in Canada….A lot of them talk about what it was like when they first come here, learning English or even being someone from the Caribbean country and already spoke English who was treated like an ELL. (Ms. B., teacher interview, Middleview, 20 May 2009)

In my individual interviews with Irene and Michael, I learned that Irene only decided to take a drama course because her uncle wanted her to take this course to help her feel more comfortable socializing with other students and build her self-confidence in English which is one of the major reasons why many other ELLs said they take drama (please see Chapter 6., section 6.4.3.3 for further discussion on this). Her uncle came to Canada many years ago and Irene and her mother to come to Canada three years ago. Michael, the other ELL student in Ms. B’s drama course, said that he came to Canada three months ago on his own from China, with the help of an agency. He explained that life has taught him to be very independent at a very young age because his parents got divorced when he was three years old and his grandparents raised him in China. In Toronto, he was staying in a private dorm for Chinese students. Michael chose to take a drama course because he wanted to improve his English language communication and have some English-speaking friends.

I want to speak English. In drama I am interested. I really like it. People with different personalities. From the beginning we always did those games with people for people to get long with each other. It is like a small group. It is like a family here. We only see each other here but I still feel like very warm. You share more, talk more… In all my other classes all Chinese people hang out with Chinese people, but I don’t. When I came here I decided, ‘learn English’.
(Michael, student interview, Middleview, 6 June 2009)
5.3 Three Different Drama Pedagogies in Active Practice

5.3.1 Introduction

This section introduces the drama pedagogies employed in the three classrooms. It aims to describe the teachers’ goals, philosophies of teaching, and their perceptions of how their pedagogy supports the learning of linguistically and culturally diverse students in their classrooms, and ELLs in particular. Even though this section is meant to focus on teachers and their pedagogies, at times students’ voices are integrated to give a better sense of the pedagogy of each teacher. (Closer analysis of student voices will occur in Chapter 6.)

Two major themes, “multimodality and embodied learning” and “situated practice and performed identities”, will be explored in the analysis of these drama pedagogies. The analysis of these two major themes draws from the theoretical lenses of drama education, language and literacy education, and Multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies frameworks. As discussed earlier in the conceptual and theoretical framework chapter, Multiliteracies pedagogy is an approach introduced in response both to the rapidly increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of students in many receiving countries, and to the sophisticated communication technologies in use in the 21st century.

5.4 Recalling theory in relation to the two major themes

Here, I briefly recall the two themes theoretically. Later, I analyse the empirical teacher pedagogy data from my three sites based on these two themes.
Theme 1: Multimodality and embodied learning

Students in all three classes used different modes of meaning-making throughout the courses. Multiliteracies pedagogy suggests that overlaying these different modes for students to express their ideas and understanding better equips the language learners for life outside the classroom. Drama tasks in these courses provided a meaningful basis for the use of multiple modes of meaning-making. Kalantzis and Cope (2008) state that “meaning expressed in one mode cannot be directly and completely translated into another. The movie can never be the same as the novel. The image can never do the same thing as the description of a scene in language” (22). They explain further that this is why addressing multimodality in the language classroom is integral to Multiliteracies pedagogy. Verbal modes (reading, writing, listening and speaking) as well as non-verbal modes (visual, embodied, audio, gestural, tactile and spatial) were organically/implicitly present in these three classrooms. I say organically/implicitly present because the teachers, Ms. J, Ms. C. and Ms. S., do not talk about their classrooms in Multiliteracies terms and were not trying to explicitly implement classroom practices that were informed by a Multiliteracies pedagogical framework or by multimodality. For drama educators, it may not be a great revelation that drama pedagogy has the potential to organically allow room for multiple modes of meaning-making and representation. Although scholars working with Multiliteracies, New Literacy Studies, and New Literacies frameworks are theorizing pedagogies, trying to make them more multimodal, drama pedagogy has arguably always been multimodal, but perhaps less intentional about theorizing its practices. Although the drama work and pedagogical goals expressed by the teachers of these three classrooms were quite different, students in all three classes engaged in multimodal meaning-making. Both verbal and nonverbal modes of communication extended the language learning possibilities beyond traditional forms of literacy in the three different classrooms.
Theme 2: Situated learning and performed identities

The second major theme I draw from the data is the performance of identities in these three classrooms with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A consideration of the focus on identities is significant both in drama education as well language education. This focus is also connected to the notion of situated practice. Multiliteracies pedagogy advocates for situated practice (New London Group, 1996), which involves the provision of innovative learning environments that create opportunities for students to make use of their linguistically and culturally diverse life experiences.

Maxine Greene (1995) makes a strong argument for not ignoring the lived realities of diverse students in our classrooms and asks educators to “find ways for the young to find their voices, to open their spaces, to reclaim their histories in all their variety and discontinuity” because, she writes, “teachers will confront thousands and thousands of newcomers in the years ahead: some from the darkness and dangers of neglected ghettos, some exhausted from their suffering under dictators, some stunned by lives lived in refugee camps, some unabashedly in search of economic success” (p. 120). The drama performances that the students in these classrooms (especially in the drama-ESL class and the Middleview drama class) created often symbolized, explicitly and implicitly, critical issues at stake in their lives. These issues were representative of political, social, and economic life conditions. I consider these performances identity texts, described as creative work or performances which “hold a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light” (Cummins, 2006b, p. 60).

In the field of literacy education, researchers focusing on New Literacy Studies (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivonic, 2000; Cazden, 2001; Gee, 2008/2012; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007; Stein, 2008; Street, 2003), have recognized language and literacy education as being a socially situated phenomenon, which is attentive to the social, cultural, political and the historical. Jewitt (2008)
notes the important shift from “the idea of literacy as an autonomous neutral set of skills or competencies that people acquire through schooling and can deploy universally to a view of literacies as local and situated” (p.244). Simon (2011) stresses the significance of these human dimensions of Multiliteracies pedagogy, conceptualizing literacy not just as a static skill, but as a practice conscious of the relationships in the classroom: the social, cultural, political and the historical relationships; the interactions among the students, their teacher, and the power relations outside and within the classroom.

These two themes of “multimodality and embodied learning”, and “situated practice” and performed identities, will be dealt with simultaneously in the analysis of teachers’ pedagogies below.
5.5 Analysis of Teacher Pedagogy in Three Sites in Relation to Situated Practice and Multimodality

5.5.1 Site 1: Ms. J.’S mandatory drama-ESL classroom at Braeburn High School²

Table 5.1. Information about Ms. J.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Ms. J.</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Place of Birth</td>
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<td>Other Languages</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe yourself in a sentence</td>
<td>I am always trying to be Conscious-spirit. In this way, I hope to connect with others. My passion for teaching is constantly re-fuelled by my students - what I learn from them, what I learn about myself, as a human being and as a teacher. I receive daily!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher, Ms. J., has a background in drama and theatre, and trained at a teacher education program that had an artist-in-community education component. She also has training in second language education. The explicit goal in this drama-ESL classroom was to develop the English language skills of the students through drama. There were a number of challenges in this

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² Parts of the following data and findings from this site have been published in Ntelioglou, B. (2011b). "But why do I have to take this class?" The mandatory drama/EAL class. Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance (RIDE). 16(4), 595-615, reprinted by permission of the publisher, Taylor and Francis Ltd., http://www.tandfonline.com and Yaman Ntelioglou, B. (2011c). Insights from a drama/EAL classroom: Using drama with English language learners in a Canadian high school. In J. Winston (Ed.), Second language learning through drama (pp. 81-91) London: Routledge. This material is also presented with permission of the publisher.
mandatory drama-ESL class expressed by the teacher such as the great number of students in the class, the fact that the course was only nine weeks long, and other challenges affecting group work, especially absenteeism. Some students were often absent due to other responsibilities such as having to go to work, having court hearings, or taking care of their children. Yet, as suggested in the quotation below, the biggest challenge both the teacher and the students referred to was the fact that drama was very ‘new’ to all the students and they lacked prior knowledge and/or interest in drama/theatre in the context of education. In fact, during the interviews most students said that it was challenging for them to get used to the constant student participation (versus a teacher-centred classroom pedagogy) in the drama class:

This drama class, in particular, is for English as a Second Language students. So I get students who have never done drama at all, who have…never been to see live theatre. And so I think sometimes I’m introducing them to that. Sometimes I’m trying to convince them that this is a good learning tool, because it’s not a traditional way of learning. And a lot of students who come from other countries come from a whole different learning style, where it’s very teacher centered, where the teacher stands up at the front of the room and lectures students, and they just take it in... So right from the very beginning… idea of having them sit in a circle without the desks, and getting on their feet and doing a warm-up. I mean, that is very strange to them. And I also have to convince them that I’m not there to train them as actors, I’m there to use the tool of acting and theatre skills to have them learn more about English. So it’s a good combination. But at the same time I’m introducing them to theatre, and I’m introducing them to a creative way to learn, and those skills.
(Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May 2009)

It is important to deconstruct the idea of drama being a completely ‘new’ experience for these students. One might argue that this is a Eurocentric presumption. The students may never have encountered drama in the sense of practicing it themselves, but dramatic performance in a broader sense is an old artistic tradition present in all cultures, and fundamental to cultural expression all around the world, from small rural communities to large urban settings. Drama brings together both the verbal and nonverbal modes of communication that exist in real life and
students are already familiar with this. However, it was ‘new’ for most students in the sense that they mostly were not familiar with the practice of drama in a school setting derived from Western conceptions of theatre, and new to the use of drama in order to learn a language (please see Chapter 6., section 6.4.3.1) for a description of this sense of newness expressed by the students).

Because taking a drama class in school in order to improve their language skills was not a familiar learning approach for the students, Ms. J. slowly introduced drama activities that reinforced both verbal and nonverbal communication in English.

In the next section, I describe the course content and the specific activities that took place in each unit of this nine-week Drama-ESL course. Because this course is also designed as a language course and uses drama more instrumentally to help students’ language learning, minute details reveal how the course aims to provide students with opportunities for language development. As I explained above, since the students are not familiar with the approach of taking a drama class to improve their language skills, it is valuable to outline here how the course aims to build on new skills step by step. Describing these complex pedagogical details at the outset is crucial in order for the reader to follow the analysis that comes later, when I delve into my two major categories of analysis, ‘drama performances as situated practice and identity texts’ and ‘multimodality and embodied learning’.

The Four Units in the Drama-ESL classroom

There were four drama units presented in the course: a tableau unit, a scripted role-play unit, a story-telling unit, and a culminating unit. The course was designed to gradually increase students’ confidence in standing and speaking in front of others. With the tableau unit, they first
got used to getting up from their chairs and being comfortable with their body language. The tableau unit did not require them to communicate verbally, which was a huge relief to most of these students since they were just getting used to the course at that early stage. For the tableau unit, the goal for the students was to work in small groups to create a series of tableaux (frozen images) to tell a story based on a multicultural folktale, from the book *World Folktales: An Anthology of Multicultural Folk Literature* (Stern, 1994).

Building on the skills developed in the tableau unit, the goal for the role-play unit was for the students to communicate using both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication (Culham, 2002) to help them build confidence speaking in front of others, and improve their pronunciation, intonation, and projection of voice. For the scripted role-play unit, Ms. J. first introduced the difference between improvised role-play and scripted role-play through two different shorter activities. For the first short activity, students tried out improvised role-playing in pairs. Ms. J. handed out a card to each pair and on the card there was a situation, for example: “An employee wants to use his/her vacation days in a certain week and the boss is not willing to give those days off.” Another card said: “You and your friend are supposed to be doing a research paper together. You have done a lot of work, but your friend has done nothing. Tell your friend how you feel.” The students improvised the two outlined characters. The pairs decided on a scene and presented it to the class. For the second activity, students in groups performed a scripted role-play, using a short (two-page) script called “Fly Soup.” This activity introduced the students to the script element and script writing conventions. Finally, as their main project for this unit, the students were asked to write a script in groups about a holiday celebration of their choosing (either a Canadian holiday or a holiday celebration from their
cultures). In groups, paying attention to elements of scriptwriting, they first collectively wrote and then performed their short plays with three scenes about a celebration of their choice.

For the storytelling unit, the teacher wanted the students to perform alone and take sole ownership of telling a story without the dependence on other members of the group both in preparation and also during performance. Before introducing the main project in this unit, and in order for students to get comfortable telling a story, the teacher asked each student to bring an object that is special to them and to tell their classmates, in a couple of sentences, why the object was special to them. After this activity, which was not graded, for the main project they returned to Stern’s (1994) book of folktales from around the world, each pair telling a story to the class with one partner telling the first half and the other telling the second half. The teacher explained that usually the storytelling project is the most difficult one for the students since they have to now make eye contact with the audience and not use their notes, as they tell (not act) the story using their own words (illustrating different characters and emotions in the story through the use of their voices alone). However the teacher believed that the confidence and skills they gained from the unit might likely prepare them for presentations in front of a class in future high school or post-secondary courses.

Finally, the culminating unit integrated what the students learned in the preceding three units. For this unit, Ms. J. first provided the students with a big package with various texts about the Canadian immigrant experience: poems, stories and journal articles with a wide range of perspectives written about newcomers’ experiences, focusing on cultural, political, and socio-economic issues as well as issues concerning learning a new language or first language loss. In response to these texts, students worked in groups collaboratively for a week and wrote a script with two scenes about a Canadian immigrant experience (portraying a conflict that may or may
not be resolved within the performance), and ended these performances with a series of five tableaux showing the possible triumphs and successes of the ‘New Canadian’ (please see Chapter 6, section 6.3.2.1 for a critique of this discourse of ‘possible triumphs and successes of the New Canadian’). The package that the teacher provided to the students also contained graphic organizers that helped the groups to create an outline/storyline of their scripts and performances, as well as other handouts that the group members worked on together: understanding a character; deciding on the mood, the setting, the props; and deepening the role-play.

5.5.1.1 Analysis of situated practice, relational aspects of the embodied, and the performance of identities

Ms. J. explained that, over the years, she observed in her own pedagogy that she increasingly took into account students’ personal and cultural knowledges and experiences. As a drama teacher, one of the most important things for her was to be ‘present’, flexible, and open to learning from the students about their needs and interests. She gave the example of how she decided to integrate students’ cultural celebrations to the holiday celebration unit when students themselves requested it. She honestly admitted that she did not think about this initially, and thought it would be helpful to teach them Canadian Holidays to familiarize the students with Canadian culture, which would be viewed by critical and postcolonial scholars in education as “reproduction in education” (Grumet, 1988):

Because when I first taught it, we only did Canadian holidays, so I taught them Canadian holidays... But then, after I was doing it over a few years, and students asked me about their holidays – cause I would ask them about their holidays while we were talking about holidays in general – and then they expressed an interest in doing theirs. And I thought,
why not? Because, like I said, being adaptive and flexible, I could see, “Well, how’s this going to work?” And it does work.
(Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May 2009)

For Ms. J., responding to learner diversity and finding ways to affirm students’ identities and cultures became an important part of her pedagogy as she continued to work with these ELLs and paid more close attention to their needs. She talked about being open to listening to each other’s experiences, like students listening to other students, as well as she as a teacher “attentively listening” (Khattar, 2009) to her students, being conscious that this is not an easy task:

They learn, in the group, about that cultural holiday or a little bit about that religion…So yeah, it does make people feel valued, because by listening, you’re respecting. By being open to listening about other people’s backgrounds, you are being respectful, not teaching them to be judgmental about it.
(Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May 2009)

“Quality and intent in listening and the actual practice of moment to moment attentiveness” have been discussed by Khattar (2009, p. 103), building on the work of Maturana and Poerksen (2004, p. 131), Khattar explains that “there is listening, and then there is listening” (p. 102). She describes two kinds of listening, the first having the goal of correspondence, the kind of listening we usually find in classrooms. The second kind of listening, Khattar explains, requires “suspension of judgment and openness to our relational structurally coupled ways of being” which, she argues, is rarely part of our awareness in schools (p. 103). Khattar further explains attentive listening as follows:

The promise of attentive awareness is that heedful listening accompanied by a suspension of judgment might open up to an embodied awareness that the world one experiences is not the world, but a word, which we bring forth with others (p. 103). . . Cultivating attentive awareness has great ethical and pedagogical significance, particularly as it brings to bear the kinds of responsive listening towards others across difference (p. 105).
In order to build this kind of space that tries to affirm students’ cultures and identities (Cummins, 2001) and aims to work towards “attentive listening”, Ms. J. focused on the relational aspects of the embodied experience in drama, starting right from the warm-up activities and smaller exercises that introduced each quad. While trying to get students comfortable with the physicality of embodied learning, such as getting upon their feet doing physical and vocal warm-up activities, these activities also brought forth the relational aspects of the embodied mode. For example, one of the first warm-ups in this class, called People Bingo, made students walk around the room, asking their classmates questions such as, “What is your first language? How many languages do you speak? What is your favourite activity?” etc. to help with getting to know each other and learn about their personal and cultural backgrounds. The proverb activity, which was the major activity of the first week, asked students to work in pairs, with each member coming from a different cultural and linguistic background, and try to find similar proverbs from their two cultures. They then presented these proverbs, by first introducing themselves, pointing to their countries on the map, and then showing the class three versions of their proverb – one from each of their cultures, and an English equivalent, if there was one.
The proverb exercise was a situated practice that welcomed students’ identities and backgrounds into the classroom. As further explored in Chapter 6, section pp.187-188, many students felt appreciative of this proverb activity, which built on their funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 1995) and invited them to share their cultural wisdom and knowledge.

Another form of situated practice in Ms. J.’s pedagogy was the use of multicultural resources, seen as a critical practice for ELLs (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002). For example, in the tableau unit Ms. J. introduced students to different folktales from around the world. In the introduction to *World Folktales*, the author says:

In *World Folktales*, you’ll discover stories from many different countries around the world. You may be familiar with one or two folktales in this collection, but you will

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3 All photos in this thesis taken by Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou. It is also important to note that even with full ethical clearance and informed consent (with choices) from my participants, because I worked with vulnerable ELL student populations and situations that some of them are leaving as new immigrants and refugees, I chose to conceal the faces of the students through the blurring of the students’ faces. I blurred the faces of the participants because in this digital age, I did not want to leave clues, despite my efforts to anonymize.
discover new stories as well. And before you read a folktale you will learn something about life in the country from which the story comes. You will also find a variety of activities before and after each tale to help you improve your reading, writing, listening and speaking. (Stern, 1994, p. iv)

Welcoming these stories from many cultures in the classroom gave students the message that their personal and cultural stories were also welcome in this class. For example, in her journal entry about her experience working on the tableau unit, Narges, a recent immigrant from Iran, described how the folktale that her group worked on reminded her of the miseries in her homeland:

I never thought I would leave Iran. I feel like it has been too long since I left my sweet beautiful homeland with its 2500 years history…Our story “Giant’s Bride” reminded me of those evil giants who stole everything: all the happiness and beauty out of the lives of those arrested, these honest and educated people, were first tortured then killed, they were tortured in many ways. Some prisoners were with the little children and these kids with their mothers for many years in prison. All that they knew was to be locked up. They did not know anything about the real world or the normal and beautiful life they deserved. They did not even have any view of freedom. Some people escaped from Iran and emigrated all over the world…[sic: see footnote 1]

(Narges, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 1 May 2009)

Ms. J. explained that in her first years teaching this course she was less aware of the significance of situated practice and the value of explicitly inviting students’ cultural background/funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 1995) into the drama work. But she said that she learned from the students by being open to their suggestions and needs.

During the interviews, when students were explaining the moments that stayed with them the most, many also referred to the Scripted Role Play Unit about holiday celebrations. The class began with a discussion about holidays and celebrations such as Mother’s day, religious holidays, Victoria Day (a Canadian statutory holiday celebrated in honour of both Queen Victoria's birthday and the current reigning Canadian sovereign's official birthday), Valentine’s
Day, etc. The teacher brought a handout with newspaper articles about different festivals around the world such as Christmas (the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus), Chanukah (the eight-day Jewish holiday), Eid-al Fitr (Muslim festival) and Kwanzaa (a seven-day festival held in the U.S. that begins on Dec. 26, celebrating African heritage). She also gave them a handout with a cross-word puzzle made of holiday celebration vocabulary. Students read the information on the handouts, did the puzzle and then were invited to share their favourite celebrations in their country of origin or in Canada. Then students worked in groups to collectively write a short play with three scenes about a celebration of their choice.

Community theatre and drama education scholar Julie Salverson (2011) writes: “Creating collaboratively is about people shaping and sharing the details of their dream, their accidents, their longings. This brings debate and friction and excitement and, perhaps discovery and it’s only good – rewarding, challenging, questioning – when it’s hard work, even if that hard work only lasts thirty minutes” (p. 128). The term ‘collective creation’ is more of a North American term and its counterpart, ‘devising’ is a term that is mostly used in Europe (Govan, Nicholson, & Normington, 2007). Alan Filewod (2008) explains that “collective creation derives its uniqueness from the synthesis of several different perspectives.” He adds that “this is especially true when the actors work as scenariasts and playwrights” (p. 2). In Ms. J.’s classroom, students in groups worked on their collective creations by integrating their multiple perspectives and stories, as well as working collaboratively as playwrights, directors, stage managers, costume designers, etc.

The students in Aisha’s group decided to write about the Eid celebration after a discussion about celebrations in their country, what their favorite celebration is and why.
Aisha shared a personal story about the importance of helping neighbours in need during Eid, with a focus on poverty and how economic disadvantages interact with holiday celebrations. The other group members found the story very appealing, so they decided to perform it.

As Aisha writes in her journal, this was a significant experience for her, especially when she could share and perform a holiday celebration that she herself treasured:

First I wrote about the Eid and I explained the script to my classmates. I was not sure that my classmates would be interested in doing of the play about an eastern holiday because the younger people are more interested to western holiday. But they said eagerly it is good idea. We like it. Then we began to work together and we put also other ideas in the script. We thought our story should have three scenes. Which part of our story should come in the first, second or third. We had to think about characters. We decided who is good for what role…The situation was also important for example there would be a conflict between the families. In the presentation was also the setting, mood and props very crucial…I like the co-operation and patience of each of us. We gave each other feedback. This group was completely different then the last group. This time we worked together and practiced together. Sometime we had to laugh.

(Aisha, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama ESL, 29 May 2009)

Aisha’s journal entry points to the relational aspects of doing drama work. She discusses how her own identity text becomes a springboard for the collective text/performance of her group. Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) powerfully writes about this relational aspect of the embodied:

Along with the fact of embodiment, comes the fact of movement/sensation, which is one way to name the universal and shareable fact of being in relation. As living, moving, sensing bodies, we all exist only and always in relation even as our individual experiences of relationality are singular and unshareable. (166)

What Ellsworth describes is an ideal many drama practitioners might aim for through creative and embodied work in drama. Drama is a powerful tool of communication and language because it provides an opportunity for collaborative work, sharing, and dialogue among students. However, it is important to note here that dialogue and sharing in group work does not come without its challenges. In this entry, indirectly, Aisha points to the fact that not all group experiences are the same or are as uncomplicated as this specific experience when she writes: “I
like the co-operation and patience of each of us. We gave each other feedback. This group was completely different [than] the last group. This time we worked together and practiced together.”

Collective creation is a social process that requires continuous negotiation in order to put the word on a page, and then to embody that script on the page in a performance.

Ellsworth (1997) writes that the ideal of dialogue is not always met and at times it even causes silences. An example of this kind of silencing and unsuccessful dialogue happened in Chantal’s groupwork process for the collective creation. Chantal writes that instead of everybody writing collectively, one person in her group wanted to take charge and do all the script-writing for all the characters in their collective creation. Although the other group members did not appear to mind this, according to Chantal, she was quite upset about this, but could not voice her concern in her group.
Figure 5.2. Chantal, student journal entry excerpt, role play unit, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 1 June 2009).

Chantal, in her journal, wrote that she learned the “valuable lesson to speak my mind and stand up for what I believe”, a lesson that she said she would use for her next project. (Please see
Helen Nicholson (2005) writes, “applied drama is intimately tied to contemporary questions about the politics of context, place, and space, and this means that working in drama often brings into focus questions of allegiance, identity and belonging” (p.13). This was also the case in the context of this drama-ESL class, where the questions that Nicholson mentions were often addressed in students’ representations of significant issues in their own lives. Therefore, the drama performances created by these ELLs could be seen as identity texts (Cummins, 2006a). Cummins writes that identity texts (whether written, spoken, visual, dramatic, or in multimodal form) provide cognitive engagement and identity investment on the part of the students. Recognizing the caution expressed by scholars in drama education (Cohen-Cruz, 2006; Dennis, 2008; Gallagher, 2003b; Salverson, 1999; Zatzman, 2003, 2011) that there is not an inherent good in working with personal stories, these embodied identity texts allowed students valuable opportunities to incorporate their identities and their life experiences into their theatre-making. Through these performed identity texts, using their new language, English, the students in this class expressed their understandings of their lives in this new, urban Canadian context. They brought their experiences of refugee shelters, their first harrowing journeys on public transit, the crushing disappointment of realizing that their qualifications would not be recognized. These immediate, often urgent, experiences of newcomers remained in the foreground in this drama-ESL classroom.

During individual interviews, when I asked the students about moments in this classroom that stayed with them the most, many of them referred to being able to portray their own stories and experiences in group performances. For example, Addis explained: “especially when it is our
real story, it is interesting.” Many students referred to the Culminating Unit, and said that they were motivated and engaged in the process of the creation, rehearsal and performance of these dramatic pieces, especially when the stories were their own or stories they were familiar with.

Although Ms. J explained that this class is less teacher-directed than the classes most of these students were used to in their prior educational experiences, one might argue that the drama pedagogy used in this class was not as student-centered or as progressive as other drama/theatre practices such as extended whole-class improvisations or devising. Yet, the teacher explained that she felt that there was no room for that kind of theatre work because of time constraints (the course being limited to only nine weeks), students’ desires for “hard skills”, the regimentation of mandated evaluations such as having to grade students’ work every week, and the compulsory practices of midterms and final examinations.

5.5.1.2 Analysis of multimodality and embodied learning in the drama-ESL classroom

The interconnectedness of oral language, written language and embodied performance challenges the dualistic thinking about body and mind raised by Merleau-Ponty’s seminal work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/1962). In his work, Merleau-Ponty’s discusses the embodied nature of knowing in response to the Cartesian dualism of the body and mind. Although his notion of the embodied is seen as male-centric by some scholars like Luce Irigaray (1993), his argument about the privileging of the mind or intellect over the body continues to hold sway in current educational discourses. This is especially true in language classrooms, which for a long time have been spaces of cognitive learning strategies. Arguing that the privileging of the mind has its roots in classical Greek philosophy and Plato, Michael Peters writes that: “Perhaps the most culturally deeply embedded dualism with which educational
theory and practice must come to terms is the mind/body separation” (2004, p. 14). O’Loughlin (1995) has powerfully asserted that “bringing bodies back into the picture has been crucial for education” (para. 4). Similarly, Giroux and McLaren (1991, as cited in O’Loughlin, 1995) contend that “students react to information viscerally. Knowledge is not something to be ‘understood’; it is always felt and responded to somatically – that is, in its corporeal materiality. What matters is what is felt knowledge – knowledge as a ‘lived engagement’ ” (para. 22).

Students in the drama-ESL class moved among different modes of meaning-making and expression. For example, as part of Unit 2 (see Table 5.2), students read and performed a script and through this process they were introduced to the elements of a story (setting, plot, conflict and character) as well as conventions of script-writing such as dialogue and stage directions. Then, they wrote their own collective script in groups portraying their choice of a holiday celebration and performed it. After their performance they received feedback from their teacher and classmates and finally wrote post-performance reflections in their journals about the process.

During this unit, students were called on to pay attention to both their verbal and non-verbal modes of expression. As students engaged in the creation of drama performances, besides a focus on oral and written modes (reading, writing, listening and speaking), students worked with physical movements, gestures and facial expressions, intonation, stress, projecting voice, use of props, use of images, use of text, set design, and in some cases the incorporation of music and dance.

Looking at this classroom through the framework of Multiliteracies and multimodality, it is evident from the data (further explored in Chapter 6, section 6.3) that this embodied pedagogy, through drama, provided a space for multimodal representations of meaning and, in addition, drew on students’ lived experiences and felt knowledge in the creation of dramatic performances
of what could be considered *identity texts*. I see these dramatic performances as *identity texts* because, although producing *identity texts* was not an explicit focus of the teacher’s pedagogy, in the process of creating these dramatic performances students used their personal past experiences, present realities and future envisionings and hopes. Using these *identity texts* as a springboard for their performances engaged students’ creatively, emotionally, physically and cognitively while challenging the dualistic thinking about ‘body and mind.’

During interviews, many students said that representing a written text through drama makes the page come to life. In this class, students read short stories, folktales, scripts, and newspaper articles as well as more traditional texts such as handouts that explained what drama is, and what the elements of drama are. They explained that the drama tasks helped them to understand difficult vocabulary as they were trying to embody the written text, and that “words make more sense when you act them out.” The multiple modes of languages available through drama such as the “symbolic, embodied and visual languages” (Nicholson 2005, p.43) assisted students’ conceptualization and use of abstract words and idiomatic expressions, metaphors and symbols (Gallagher & Yaman Ntelioglou, 2011). The difficulty of understanding idiomatic expressions even became part of a performance when students portrayed how misunderstanding the term ‘money-maker’ [for counterfeiter] caused real-life problems for an ESL learner.

Ms. J. explained that reading a story or a folktale and turning it into a drama performance as students did in *Unit 1* (see Table 5.2 for details) or reading a script, writing a script in groups and turning it into a drama performance as students did in *Unit 2* (see Table 5.2) also helped them to understand the elements of a story, which is something they may transfer to other learning contexts:

They’re learning about… the introduction… rising action … climax… denouement or resolution. So… as I explain to them, they can keep using the same skill as they go up to
Grade 12 English. Once you understand that is the formula. And I find ESL students really are looking for formula, something concrete that they can hold on to. (Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 13 May 2009)

Ms. J. said she also teaches English Literature in higher ESL levels and students who have taken the Drama-ESL course in the ESLBO level can usually transfer what they learned about elements of story from this drama-ESL course, to their readings of other texts and scripts by Shakespeare for example.

Ms. J. also aimed for students to work on their writing in the drama-ESL course, although this was not one of the primary learning goals. She believed that because students’ creative writing and journal writing are inspired by their own experiences, it provided meaningful writing tasks through the reciprocal relationship between text and embodiment. In addition, as Cummins suggests, dialogue journals encourage second language learners’ writing in a “communicative manner” because “this type of personal interaction between teacher and student provides an authentic context for students to express themselves and for teachers to provide both affirmation and guidance” (2001, p. 146; see Chapter 6, Section 6.4.4.3 for analysis of students’ journal writing).

Students did smaller writing activities, where they were asked to write a summary of the stories they had read so that they could fill in graphic organizers (work-sheets handed out by the teacher) about setting, initiating a problem, and characters in the stories. The purpose of these graphic organizers was to help them find the key elements in the stories and then create their drama performances based on these key elements. As described earlier, students also engaged in more extended writing tasks such as script-writing and written journal reflections both during and after creation of their drama performances.
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Nicholson (2005) writes that on a practical level “drama is composed of material elements, of bodies and voices in space, and the physical embodiment of knowledge is integral to the artform itself” (57). Students referred to these physical and kinesthetic elements of drama when they discussed the value of embodiment in representation and self-expression. For example, Malika said that drama helped her reading because for the first time, she felt like she understood the function of punctuation. She said she first realized this when her teacher, Ms. J, enacted a scene from a written text:

When Ms. J act [a scripted scene], every expression she act, you understand in the book. You read book, there is lots of expression, exclamation mark… punctuation. You have to understand all those little things correctly. Drama helped me to understand them correctly.…

(Malika, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 13 May 2009)

An embodied pedagogy was at the heart of this classroom and this mode of embodied meaning-making enabled understandings that other modes had not, as both Malika (above) and Lucia (below, see Figure 5.2) expressed in their journals. As Lucia’s journal illustrates, students said that they especially realized the importance of the body for meaning-making and representation, challenging the prevalent cultural about the ‘body and mind’ split (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).
May 13

The tableau was a great experience for me. It reminded me of when I was a child, I loved to dress up as some novel character but, at that time, I only did it for fun. Now, it was more than that because I enjoyed a lot, but I also realized the importance of body language. We sometime feel fear to communicate with people, without realizing that with some facial expressions we can say a lot and show if we are surprised, happy or sad. I found that
5.5.2 Site 2: Ms. C’s drama class in the Program for ‘At Risk’ Youth at Braeburn High School

Table 5.3. Information about Ms. C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Ms. C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First/Home Language</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Languages</td>
<td>sort of Spanish and French</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe yourself in a sentence
A spiritual, passionate artist/teacher who believes that everyone was born good at heart.
A professional actor/choreographer who transitioned into teaching as she had a passion to bring art into education

They [the students in the drama course] get ideas in their bodies, versus in their minds – just their mind. So when they’re in the space, new things happen for them. It’s like a different kind of stimuli in the brain. When they’re physicalizing, their brain works in a more layered way, for them, kind of how I would have to describe it. But the space at, is definitely helpful, cause it’s open. The classroom environment is helpful because it’s a place where you’re supposed to express how you feel, that’s part of the course. So I think it’s all these layers, but I think when they’re in the space, they, the mind works in a different way, cause they’re physicalizing things, and they’re tapping into the best part of their brain.
(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘at risk’ program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP)

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4 The data presented as SSHRC USP were gathered as part of the larger USP study (Youth and Urban School Performances: The Interplay, through Live and Digital drama, of Local-Global Knowledge about Urban Education) supported by the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada and used here with the permission of Prof. Kathleen Gallagher. As explained in the methodology chapter, my research was part of a larger international research project, USP (2008 to 2013), and examines how the relationships among culture, identity, multicultural/equity policies, and student engagement have an impact on the lives of youth in schools and communities traditionally labeled ‘disadvantaged’ in the cities of Toronto (Canada), Taipei (Taiwan), Lucknow (India), and Boston (USA). My own research describes the experiences of linguistically and culturally diverse ELLs and their drama teachers in Toronto, in the context of this larger study and uses some common data. However, in addition to this SSHRC/USP data, the
Ms C. refers to the meaning-making and knowledge construction that comes from the embodied though drama. She challenges the dualistic thinking about the body and mind. Her observations are consistent with the arguments put forward by Michael Peters, who, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter (see p. 115-116), challenges the primacy/privileging of the mind that is deeply embedded in our culture and our educational practices. The pedagogy in this classroom, which produced embodied and multimodal meaning-making through drama, challenged this dualistic thinking about body and mind. Language and literacy education often privilege the kind of cerebral learning that Ms. C. is reacting to. Reading and writing are traditionally seen as the most essential literacies. Strong reading comprehension, for example, is seen as one of the most important skills leading to literacy engagement (Day & Bamford, 1998). In the conversations that I had with Ms. C., both about drama and drama pedagogy’s connection to language and literacy education, she described her drama class as a rich and innovative route to learning in general, and to language learning in particular with its focus on the body as biological/corporeal/kinesthetic and relational/social site simultaneously. In the quote below, Ms. C. explains that, for the kinds of ‘at-risk’ students that she works with who “have trouble reading” or who “get stuck with pen and paper” her drama classroom offers an entry point to learning unavailable in more traditional classrooms:

I think with drama we talk about the body, mind, and spirit. That’s how I break down the teaching in dance and drama. The body has to learn it physically, the mind has to remember the detail of it, and the spirit has to tell the story, emotionally. I also think that

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bulk of my data at my three research sites came from individual interviews and focus groups that I conducted with teachers (drama teachers, ESL teachers, a teacher of English language and literature, a guidance teacher), and both ELLs and non-ELLS in the classrooms of these teachers, to better understand the drama pedagogies and their impacts on the students. As explained in the Methodology section (Chapter 4), interview data was supplemented with video and audio recordings of classroom activities, photographs, student journals and other multimodal artefacts collected from the students and the teachers.
when you teach in a physical space, there is a natural organic way that people start working together. So there is no textbook where people who have more trouble reading get caught or writing where people who get stuck with pen to paper get caught. When you learn something physically in space, all of a sudden afterwards you can write about it. There is more of a translation into writing that’s easier from drama. Or, if you have trouble - sometimes if you are just sitting, students who are hands on, kinesthetic learners can’t come up with something clever from pen and paper perhaps, but they could find the story first in the space, act it out, find the character. They have great instincts usually physically, and so they find that physically and then they can come back to the writing or to the reading.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

In my interviews with Ms. C, the words “body”, “physicality”, “kinesthetics” and “space” came up many times. She often invited other artists into the classroom, for example to help with students’ vocal production. Ms. C. always started the class with an extended physical warm-up. In the first couple of classes she led these herself, and subsequently she asked the students, in pairs, to design and lead a physical warm-up activity. She said that it is a mixture of a dancer’s warm-up, an actor’s warm-up and a health warm-up. When I asked her whether the warm-up was another form of ‘caring’, the word that she often used, she said, “part of the caring is emotional, but part of the caring is also physical. And respecting each other… respecting the space. So we’re always doing the emotional and physical thing in the classroom” (Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4).

Ms. C. saw these warm-up activities as not just a physical element, but also serving a social/relational/emotional need. What is also significant about her understanding is that, in her identity as a drama educator, the art of theatre and being an artist is as important to her as being a teacher. Ms. C. has both a dance background and a theatre background. In the first page of her course outline, it says that this course is designed to give students a “professional theatre world experience” by bringing drama, dance and music together in a show (for example, Joseph and
the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, presented in the first quad I observed her class). Mr. A., who was responsible for the music and vocal training of the students, played the keyboard and was also the music director for the show. Ms C. was the lead teacher, as well as the director and the choreographer. The course outline explained that for this show “students will focus on a Broadway musical theatre style of dance. Student learning will include identifying and using the principles of space, time and movement in creating production numbers that will be performed for a live audience at the end of the quad.” I observed Ms. C.’s drama course for two consecutive quads. Attendance was always the biggest challenge for Ms C. Below I provide one of my fieldnotes from this classroom. I include this because it provides a glimpse of the drama pedagogy in this class and gives a good sense of the teacher’s and students’ everyday struggles in trying to address this lack of focus and absenteeism of many students in the program.

Fieldnote, March 1, 2009, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, Ms. C’s classroom:

Ms. C begins the class with a warm up. Two students lead a warm-up that they themselves created. They also brought their own music for the warm-up. There are 15 students today. After the warm-up Ms. C. takes her position for the choreography instruction. A young male whom I have never seen before in this class is playing the guitar quietly at the back. Ms. C calls attention from all by calling out “Find your starting spots”. They are going to revisit the last scene they worked on the last time. Ms C. says “people who are always at the back, come to the front. You are telling me you don’t know the choreography.” For this scene students dance in groups of four. Ms. C. asks them: “Remind yourselves how it goes please. Who is going first? Who is going second, third and fourth.” 3 students come in late. They join their groups. Mr.
A starts playing the keyboard, they begin singing and dancing following Ms. C’s instructions.

“Gentlemen, you are taking 4 steps backward, 4 steps backward. Then offer your right hand...”

Ms. C hears some students talking. One of the girls at the back is texting. In frustration Ms. C. says “I am teaching this for people who weren’t here and the only people listening are the people who were here.” One student (Tara) says: “That’s not true.” Ms C. sees a student sitting and says “I don’t get to sit, you don’t get to sit,” then turning to the group she says “Why am I getting Friday energy? It’s not even Friday.” Now the students at the back seem more attentive. I realize that the young man playing the guitar is a friend of one of the students (Tiffany). I learn that Tiffany has offered to sing “Hotel California” for a particular scene and her friend is going to play the guitar for that scene, since the students didn’t like the song in the original show/movie. It is time for Stephanie to sing, her friend is playing the guitar. She starts singing and then turns to Ms C. and says “My voice is not fully back so, I’m not gonna push it today.” On they move to the next scene....

At the end of the class, as I walk with Ms. C, I learn that yesterday, after watching the movie together as a class, the students decided to replace the “old songs” in the performance with pop songs.

Attendance problems did not always happen because of the students’ disengagement with the class. In fact, Mr. A., one of the two teacher candidates doing a placement in Ms. C.’s class
in the quad in which students worked on the *High School Musical*, said that: “often they have legitimate reasons to not show up to class.”

Also, when the student were in class, it was again not always easy to judge who could be considered engaged or disengaged. Shannon, for example, seemed to spent a lot of time chatting and texting at the back of the room with two friends of the same gender and race. One day, in my fieldnotes, I noted a change: “Shannon seems remarkably into the class today. She is genuinely trying to learn the choreography, moving forward from her usual place at the back of the class, free of her cell phone, and even volunteering to be assigned a solo piece.” I then noted that after the first 45 minutes of the class, her two female friends arrived, and suddenly Shannon, who was fully present in class slipped back next to her two friends and resumed her regular inattention to what the class was doing. When I shared this observation with Ms. C. and Ms. K. (who was the other teacher candidate in Ms. C.’s class), they had also noticed what I noticed, recognizing the performed nature of engagement and disengagement of students based on peer influences. Ms. K. said “When you’re one-on-one with Shannon, she seems to engage with everything, but when she’s with her two buddies, that’s when she goes all wonky.” Ms. D., another teacher at the school, said that she finds that sometimes students bring the worst out of each other when they perform for each other, instead of the best. Shannon’s example illustrates the slippery boundaries of engagement and disengagement and points to the danger of portraying a student as a motivated/unmotivated learner, or engaged/disengaged. The experiences of engagement and disengagement are affected by many factors from home, school, peer relations, issues of identity and self-representation, as well as societal conditions (Dei et al., 1997).

In my interview with Shannon, she explained that she often had to miss classes because she needed to help her mother take care of her brother, who has a disability:
Shannon: In the beginning it was good, in the middle I lost focused…I have a brother who is physically and mentally handicapped. So a lot of my attention goes to him and my mom. Because my dad is usually working and my mom is full time with him (my brother) and he is getting older and heavier. Cause he needs to be moved and my dad is not there and my mom can’t do it, so it is me - A lot of the times his behavior isn’t as proper as it should be so I have to help. I try to stay at home as much as possible, just help as much as I can.

Burcu: And also probably she needs moral support.

Shannon: Yeah. Cause it can be really hard especially when–I don’t want to say stuck at home but when you have to be at home all day.

Burcu: And moms always blame themselves.

Shannon: Exactly, that’s the first person everybody else wants to blame too. Something happens, -where was the mother? So definitely I understand all of that and I know she is trying her best so the most I can do is help.

(Shannon, student interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 14 April 2009)

Shannon also explained that her family situation was not the only reason for her initial hesitation with the course. She said that she is a shy person and she didn’t initially have the courage to take risks to completely buy in to the dancing and singing and being out-there. But after the initial ‘holding-back’ as she explained in the interview excerpt below, in about the second half of the course she did volunteer for a solo, made more effort to learn the choreography and her lines well, and said that for her the experience of finally accepting to “open up faster and take more risks” was very satisfying.

I am naturally a shy person. I am reserved. I am not usually the life of the party. It takes some time for me to get used to someone and open myself up. So I kind of held back initially on what I could have done saying “ok when the production time comes I will do it” but you really always need to practice. So that was my problem…I learned that next time I will open up faster and take more risks.

(Shannon, student interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 14 April 2009)
5.5.2.1 Analysis of situated practice and honoring the students’ needs and their personal and cultural background: the notion of care in Ms. C’s pedagogy

Ms. C. explained that she always tries to honour the background and unique characteristics of her students in her drama work. She said that students’ personal and cultural experiences are important for her pedagogy. She explained that her first show with the students at Braeburn was called “I Am…” . She noted that the show was a collective piece that presented all her students’ lives in a snapshot. For this show all the students prepared monologues that represented a snapshot of a turning point in their lives. Then the majority of the students chose to combine these narratives with Hip Hop dance “since that was their choice of culture, dancing.”

In addition, Ms. C. explained that there were a couple of female students from India in this group, and they chose some Indian dancing to accompany their monologues in the “I Am…” piece. In this piece her attention to the personal and cultural backgrounds and identities of the students was apparent, and students’ performances of personally created monologues and dance pieces could be considered as identity texts. Ms C explains that drama/theatre brings out and honours the unique skills, interests, and characteristics of the students “They come in with such a unique palette already. To honour that and to shape that, that’s what makes amazing theatre, when that influence comes out, in even their character work. It’s going to shift who they are, and how they represent characterization” (Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4).

But this focus on students’ identities was not this explicit in the shows she created with the students in the two quads when I observed her class, because this time students worked with an existing script instead of devising a script themselves. Ms. C. explained that she enjoys working with different genres of theatre. She said “if I did the same piece in every class, the
artist in me might die.” For example, last year her students performed Fiddler on the Roof because she felt that there were discourses of anti-semitism in the school. She explained that she “used the play as a mirror against nature” to try to change how people may think. In my first quad in Ms. C’s drama course, students performed the musical Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat; in my second quad they performed High School Musical. Here is how Ms. C. explains why she chose these two musicals that year:

Um, why’d I choose Joseph this year? Cause of the fun, musicality of it, you know – a very opposite of Hitler, there’s a lot of layers and sadness. But the thing [Fiddler on the Roof]’s very depressing, this [Joseph] is very upbeat, you know, fun, layered, you know, not as layered, but a lot of exciting-type, fun choreography. Why’d I choose High School Musical this quad? Cause there’s hip hop, and there’s a lot of kids who requested, um, a different kind of style, versus Broadway style choreography. OK, now we can do some hip-hop with basketballs, which is what we just finished today. So, um, I think just to give a different taste of theatre…So I’ll give them, um, a piece on history, a piece on just fun corniness, a piece on, you know, different kinds, you know Fosse has a different kind of dance style, and then, uh, maybe West Side Story, which, you know, has another kind of dance style, so it’s just to give a taste of different things…Uh, if I have repeated students, I’d definitely go, like, across genres.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

The discourse of professionalism and craftsmanship was very important in Ms. C.’s classroom. Ms. C was a professional actor and choreographer. She explained that first she started teaching as a guest artist in schools before becoming a full-time drama teacher:

My mandate as a teacher [is] to really strive for incredible integrity in the art, so that art is about craftsmanship and real detail and real skills and strategies, and not just about ‘can we get along’. That’s definitely part of it, and part of the big picture and it just happens when you focus on the craftsmanship. So I really was excited by that, and I really had a lot of passion and energy to share art.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)
Both Ms. C. and other drama teachers in this program explained with gratitude that the ‘at-risk’ program at Braeburn has always been open to let teachers develop local courses for the specific needs of the students and the specific interests of the teachers.

Treating our bodies as instruments was a tenet of Ms. C.’s pedagogy. And for some students, this meant physical change occurred that signaled other changes and ways of being. In the above excerpt, I asked Ms. C. about the notion of ‘care’ in her class because I had observed her talking to the students many times about the importance of ‘caring for ourselves and for each other.’ Also, in my conversations with Ms. C. and other teachers in this school, the notion of ‘care’ came up. Ms C. and other teachers explained that, because of the special needs of the students in this program, the classroom had to be a “safe”, “caring” space.

The teachers had to be understanding about the students’ special circumstances, to expect a lot of absence and several ‘drop-outs’ during the quad, and to be very careful with sharing information about students, even when they phoned the students’ homes. While the stated goal of this drama course’s curriculum was to mount a performance (more specifically the production of a musical: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat that took place in quad 1, High School Musical in quad 2) the underlying goal was to help the students to stay with the course until the end, and to realize that they were capable of finishing a task. In Ms. C.’s explanations about her philosophy in this classroom, along with the notion of ‘care’, I noticed that she often used the terminology of ‘coaching’ and discussed the healing potential of coaching and coping strategies to help her ‘at-risk’ students. In this way she sees her pedagogy as being situated in the

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5 It is important to note the term ‘drop-outs’ needs to be deconstructed since as Dei et al. (1997) state in their book Reconstructing Drop-out, “coupled with ideological factors, it becomes apparent that ‘drop-out’ is a loaded term and commonly embodies an aetiology” (p.47). They write that “when causes are connected to individual shortcomings, they contribute to negative stereotypes and the stigmatization of leaving school, rather than implicating the school and society as part of the problem.”
lives of her students. But her approach to helping these students with their difficult life
experiences is more of a psychologically oriented coaching style where, for example, when she
experiences that a student is very angry for some reason, outside of the classroom, she explains
that she gives the student a strategy:

Write down everything that you’re feeling, it doesn’t matter if it’s coherent, you just say:
. . . I’m so fuckin pissed off, I fucking hate this fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.” Whatever they
need to say, Write it down! To clear out some of that crap.
(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from
SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

This kind of psychological framework, and attention to the healing potential of coaching
and coping strategies, looked quite different from the pedagogy in the other two classrooms,
which invited students’ own narratives into the classroom to look at larger social conditions and
discourses. In contrast to the pedagogy in the two other classrooms, Ms. C. explained that
because of the difficult life experiences these students usually bring to this class, she tells her
students to “leave life outside the room and come into this totally safe space” (Braeburn, teacher
interview, 6 February 2009). Viewed from the theoretical lens of Critical Pedagogy, Critical
Race Theory or Postcolonialism, this kind of pedagogy that attempts to leave students’ lives
outside of the classroom in order to provide safety, would be seen as a misconceived pedagogy.
As Foucault would argue, the students’ lives and the power relations outside of the classroom
will never stay outside. In fact, these theories would argue that each classroom will always be
embedded in relations of power, and therefore insisting that a classroom can be a space divorced
from the ‘rest of the world’ would signify a lack of understanding in this pedagogy about the
impact of the ever-existing power relations. However, Gallagher, Freeman and Wessels (2010)
caution us to not judge this pedagogy too quickly, by providing an example of how a student in
this class, Peanut, explained that this classroom space, and its norms of singing and dancing,
relaxed her from outside pressures and returned her to her childhood years when she was untouched by the serious addiction problems that had taken over her life.

It is important to deconstruct the idea of the “totally safe space” since it represents a romanticized view that needs to be challenged. It is also important to deconstruct the idea of “leaving life outside, outside the classroom.” This pedagogy stands in direct contrast to the other two classes, where the students were invited to bring their own personal narratives into the classroom to look at larger social conditions/discourses. Compared to the other two research sites, this class did not experience much collective writing or expression of personal narratives. The class format usually took the following pattern: students started the class with an extended physical warm-up, then in one segment they received some singing instruction from a vocal teacher who played the piano and assisted Ms. C. with the technical vocal exercises, and singing instructions to practice the songs from the Broadway musical. In the other segment, Ms. C. walked the students through the choreography that she had designed and the specific dance moves that accompanied the songs. According to Ms. C., this polished, performance-based pedagogy was a way of ‘caring’, protecting the students from their outside troubles. In the interview she explained that these students have difficult lives outside of the classroom that troubled them. She explained that she sometimes had students who were members of rival gangs. So Ms. C believed that these students would only be able to work together if they could leave their outside worlds outside the classroom. Sophie, an ELL student whose first language is Cantonese (whom I introduce in more detail in Chapter 6, section 6.2.2), attended the classes regularly, actively participated in class and seemed engaged, and took the drama courses *Joseph* as well as the *High School Musical*. Sophie said that she appreciated this drama classroom, which provided them a “safe” place that relieved them from the current issues that they were
dealing with in their own lives. This classroom space, and its norms of singing, dancing and acting, took her to a place where she was free from the pressures of her social life. She was working on a musical for which she could use other modes of expression instead of just relying on the traditional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in English, which she was having a lot of difficulty with. She said that she learned the choreography easily even if she couldn’t understand the verbal instructions of the teacher because she could just do the movements by observing her classmates when she couldn’t understand the teacher’s instructions. The physical aspects, movement and visual images, of the embodied meaning-making in drama were providing Sophie with alternative ways of learning. She could also go to the library to watch the movie of the musicals, Joseph or High School Musical, to listen again and again and again to the songs so that she could master them without the stress of having to grasp all the meanings of the words, their pronunciation, the correct intonation, etc. For the first time in a Canadian class, she said she felt integrated, not isolated. She could feel like a ‘normal’ student again in this drama class – a feeling that she had not experienced since she came to Canada.

Based on her comments, one might reach the conclusion that the teacher’s goal of “leaving students’ negative life experiences outside of the classroom” worked for this student. However, when one carefully examines what this student said, one realizes that the actual reason she was engaged was that she did exactly what the teacher told them not to do. What the teacher believed she was doing was keeping their identities, who they were and the negative social conditions under which they lived, outside the classroom because she cared for them. However, the reason Sophie was engaged was because she made direct connections to her own life experiences (her social isolation outside of the classroom) as she was engaging with the drama work. Sophie’s experience in this classroom made her think about what it was like to feel like she belonged, as
she did back home in China. She enjoyed the drama space as a collective. She experienced a sense of belonging to a group and the dynamics of doing things collectively, where she felt connected to other people. The drama space became a social space of connectivity, which in fact was precisely the opposite of her social isolation outside of this classroom. It can be argued that the drama pedagogy that Ms. C. uses both enabled and constrained the incorporation of students’ identities. It was constrained because students were not invited to bring their own personal stories and narratives into the drama work. In fact, they were asked to do the opposite (to leave their lives outside the classroom). On the other hand, the drama pedagogy in this class enabled the incorporation of students’ identities because of the interactive/relational, imaginary, and make-believe space created in the drama class. Building on Doreen Massey’s (2005) description of social meanings of space and ‘cartographies of power’, in which identities are seen as not fixed, but are developed in relation to other people and negotiated through local and global power, Nicholson (2011b) writes about the significance of this re-imagined space in drama:

Practices in drama education and different forms of applied theatre and performance depend on an ability to re-imagine space, to reshape identities in space; learning how to produc[e] space creatively is inherent to the art-form and its methodologies. This renewed emphasis on space, and on the cultural meanings produced in spatial practices, has political as well as aesthetic implications. (p.1)

Based on both Massey’s notion of space and Nicholson’s extension of that to the drama space, it can be argued that the concept of “figured worlds” might be helpful in making sense of what Ms. C. refers to as a “safe space”. Figured worlds is a notion used “to study identity production in education” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 112). A figured world is defined as a: “socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 52). A key concept in figured worlds is
a “collectively imagined situation” (Jurow, 2005, p. 39). Jurow writes that: “Through extended participation in a figured world, one comes to inhabit this imagined space, embody its perspective, and act according to its local order” (p.39). Medina and Campano (2006) suggest that drama affords a generative nexus between the imagined worlds in the drama classroom and students’ own identities. They write, “participants at once inhabit and co-construct a "make-believe world" (O'Neill, 1995) parallel to their own lives…and they mediate their own experiences of the world with those of the various roles enacted in the drama.” For Sophie, the drama space re-shaped her map of the power relations within the classroom, so that she felt relieved from the social dynamic of the outside world which left her feeling isolated and marginalized in the other classrooms. In the space and time of the drama class, her identity was redefined. The multimodal characteristic of this drama class was significant for her. As explained earlier, Sophie was relieved in this drama class, because she did not only have to rely on her limited English skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. She could learn the choreography visually and kinesthetically by observing others without necessarily having to understand the verbal instructions of Ms. C. The words and music were accessible to her through repeated viewings in the library. These other modes (which I will explore in more detail in the next section), that were not available to her in other classes, empowered her both expressively (embodied practice of singing and dancing) and receptively (observing the body language of her classmates /teacher and viewing and listening to the tapes).
5.5.2.2 Analysis of multiple modes of meaning making and representations in Ms. C.’s class

I think with drama we talk about the body, mind, and spirit. That’s how I break down the teaching in dance and drama. The body has to learn it physically, the mind has to remember the detail of it, and the spirit has to tell the story, emotionally. I also think that when you teach in a physical space, there is a natural organic way that people start working together. So there is no textbook where people who have more trouble reading get caught or writing where people who get stuck with pen to paper get caught.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

Multiple modes of meaning making and representations were available to these students through drama. I view Ms. C.’s pedagogy as multimodal because it not only relies on the body, but also often integrates multiple modes (the audio, music, visual, written, spatial, tactile, etc.) in addition to the body.

In the interviews with Ms. C., when asked about the multimodal affordances of her drama pedagogy, she explained that she consciously plays with different modes of expression and meaning-making to engage her students through multiple possibilities for connecting to the drama work in class. She also stressed that these multiple modes of meaning making and self-expression are especially important for the kind of students that she teaches since most of her students were disengaged/alienated by traditional forms of literacy practices.

Carey Jewitt (2008) outlines the new conditions for literacy, questioning the dominance of the reading and writing modes, and stressing the importance of “multimodal perspectives on pedagogy, design, decisions about connecting with the literacy worlds of students, and the ways in which representations shape curriculum knowledge and learning” (p. 242). Jewitt goes on to say that “multimodality attends to meaning as it is made through the situated configurations across image, gesture, gaze, body posture, sound, writing, music, speech, and so on” (p. 246).
Not seeing these modes as static, we understand that, “any given mode is contingent on fluid and dynamic resources of meaning, rather than static skill replication and use” and that “new modes are created, and existing modes are transformed” (p. 247) based on the needs of communities in the larger society, and the needs and interests of the learners in the classroom. Ms. C. gave examples of how different modes generated different “physical, material and social affordances” (Jewitt, p. 247) to provide different ways of accessing meaning-making and representation.

For example, she explained in the excerpt below that she sometimes presents a visual/photograph/picture as a springboard for students to write or to create a scene. She suggested that if she asks the students to just write without the incorporation of other modes (the visual and the embodied mode in this case) in her teaching, she finds that it becomes “one dimensional” lacking “emotional quality.” She argued that when the visual and the embodied modes are integrated into the writing, students not only engage cognitively but also emotionally, bringing both personal connections and connections with others (other characters) embodied by other students. She explained that this energizes their writing in ways that are not possible only through the traditional literacy practices of reading and writing.

I give them something visual, so for example I give them a picture of a scene in a war. I say “what do you think is happening for this person, what do you think they are thinking about?” and so they write from that. So it is still a visual stimuli to get them writing. When I have them just write, I find that it is very one dimensional, that we don’t get a lot of emotional quality in the writing, that it is very text-book like writing. It’s that kind of ‘in the box’ type of format. And when they explore it through the body, they are getting heights of the character, the depth. And there’s also the interaction with other characters that they take into context when they’re writing. That doesn’t happen when they just sit, from paper to pen. They don’t have the energy behind it. . . . A lot of them, at this school particularly, don’t get excited or energized by that part of the process. So I need to energize them elsewhere, and then they don’t even know they’re writing. They’re just putting their character on paper. Even the reading within text work, if they have a scene, they have trouble reading it. But when they get up in the space, they don’t have as much trouble, because they’re acting with a script in their hand, and with their bodies. And it’s OK to ad lib a little bit. So they get a
little bit of freedom, so they’re not as scared, and then they actually read it quite well. Because that fear aspect has been taken away. When you’re sitting at a desk with a piece of paper, the anxiety blocks the reading properly.
(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

Ms. C sees this kind of energizing pedagogy and engagement as key to meaningful language and literacy education. This view is in line with Cummins’ literacy engagement framework, which conceptualizes literacy engagement not just as a factor in literacy attainment but as an outcome. In line with Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences framework, Ms. C. explained that she tries to integrate multiple learning styles (at least two different learning styles) into each lesson:

I think there’s so many different kinds of learners. In general, a lot of them are definitely the kinesthetic and the visual learner. What I love to do in designing lessons, is bringing in at least two learning styles, for example, into one lesson. I would play music, and then I would have them with a crayon on a piece of paper feel the music and make a line of that colour, for example, and then try another music which is a little bit different tempo, and a different colour, . . . so then they have this kind of map that’s an audio thing, because they have to use their listening, and a visual thing where they have to create this kind of map of the page, and then maybe you’ve got a spatial part of the exercise where they have to actually physicalize that line on the page. I’m trying to use as many different learning styles as possible within the context of a lesson, and then there’s one aspect of that lesson they really connect to, hopefully. Or you can do storytelling with music. You can play music and say “What story came to your mind when I played that? OK, now let’s tell a story through the physical space, using that music.” So like a dance/drama type of context.
(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, February 6, 2009 data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

Ms. C stresses the significance of this kind of energizing power of the embodied pedagogy through drama, especially in language and literacy education. In the quote below, she strongly argues that her students, who are often reluctant readers and writers disenfranchised by traditional literacy practices, instead of just working with traditional text (reading /writing), benefit from first thinking and exploring ideas, stories, and characters in texts through the
embodied mode in the drama space, in a way, they are “working backwards”. Ms. C. believes that through this kind of embodied exploration, students become less intimidated to “tackle” traditional texts:

You’re going to connect on some way - their best learning will come out of that. And then you’ve got the reluctant reader who doesn’t want to pick up a book and do things like that, but you can get them out, creating in the space and then coming back, and then not being afraid to tackle the story that they just acted out. You talk about it first, they act it out, then OK, let’s see what the details are in the story. So you’re working backwards almost.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009 data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

5.5.2.2 Analysis of embodied meaning-making

In addition to Ms. C., I interviewed three more teachers, two of whom were drama teachers (Ms. N., and Mr. R.), and one English language and literature teacher (Ms. D.) who had been trained in drama teaching, and incorporated drama pedagogy into her classroom. I also interviewed two student teachers trained in drama education, who were doing their teaching practice in Ms. C.’s class. I would like to bring some of these teachers’ voices into the discussion about multimodality and embodied learning.

Similar to Ms. C.’s explanations about her efforts to bring embodied learning into her teaching, Ms. N. also expressed her concerns about the cerebral nature of learning in schools and the lack of attention to the learning that comes from the body:

School is traditionally centred around ...academic learning, cerebral learning...so I think we tend to separate...our heads from our bodies...If you engage the body, say with physical warm-ups or anything physical that gets you out of your head... it opens people up, takes away the intimidation, brings out their confidence so that they can explore...new aspects of themselves or new ways of thinking, new perspectives. I guess the body just opens up the mind, in a way.

(Ms N., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At Risk’ Program, 8 May 2009)
This concern about the privileging of the mind that both Ms. C. and Ms N. express reminds us of the fundamental philosophical problem of the body/mind separation (“Cartesian cogito”); the call for “reclaiming the centrality of the lived body (Leib)”; and the need for an account of the “actual body I call mine” that Maurice Merleau-Ponty raised in the 1950s (as cited in Zarrilli, 2004, p. 655).

As expressed by these teachers, in drama the embodied experience is an important mode of meaning-making, interwoven with other traditional modes of meaning-making. The attention to the body and embodied learning is more than a kinaesthetic/biological notion. Drawing from the feminist educational philosopher Judith Butler’s work (1990a, 1990b, 1993), drama education researcher Anton Franks (1996) describes bodies as “simultaneously biological, social, cultural and thinking beings—beings who are not only, or simply, situated in time and space, but who create history and geography by the presence, co-presence and action of their bodies.” (p.106). It is very important to note here that even though, for theatre and drama education, the body is central; as Franks notes below there is very little attention paid to the theorizing of the body and embodied learning in both the theatre and the drama education world:

> Despite the fact that drama education relies on bodies, and the body as the main means and form of mediation, there is very little in theories and ideas around drama in education which raises the body as an object of study and as a problem. (Franks, 1996, p.105)

Ms C. explained that, as her class was working on preparing the performance of the musical (*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*), she wanted them to explore their characters by physicalizing them in space. She explained that she wanted the students to first physicalize their characters, and then try to figure out who their characters were from the inside. In order to develop the characters, she would instruct the students, saying “imagine the way your character walks, how does your character interact; how would you say hello to a friend in the hall
as your character; how would you say hello to your teacher; how would you say hello to your parent; do you have a parent; or do you live alone?” She explained that in this way, students developed the character’s biography. And then, within the scene context, students looked at the beats and the rhythms within a character. In order to do this, she asked questions like, “Do you talk really fast because really you’re kind of nervous; or are you someone who stops, and talks?” She added that she asked the students to look at the moment before the specific scene they were working on, asking questions like, “What just happen before this scene?” Students would improvise this so that they could build the context of this ‘placed scene’ within the context of the play.

Theatre scholars (Riley 2004; Zarrilli, 2004) also write about the absence of focus on the body and truly embodied practice within theatre and actor training. Using what he calls “a post-Merleau-Ponty phenomenology,” Zarrilli problematizes the lack of centrality of the lived body and the embodied experience in the theatre world. I would like to elaborate on this critique. Although Ms. C. uses the body and physicalization through the body as a central pedagogy here, one might see an instruction like “imagine the way your character walks” as a theatre of the mind (like the “mind’s eye” (Riley, 2004, p. 445)). In her article on embodied practices and their use in rehearsal and production in professional theatre, Riley argues that this kind of “image-screen of the mind represents a positivist Western metaphysics of the mind over matter, brain over body, and intellectual transcendence over crude materiality” (p. 445). She adds that, “within this model, the images on the screen, or in the mind, can directly affect the body, but rarely are affected by the body” (p. 445). She raises the important issue of “whether the actor’s emotion is motivated internally or externally”, explaining that this question parallels the question of “whether the image is inside or out” (p. 446). Drawing on the work of Samuels and Samuels...
(1990), Riley argues that, “[w]ithin the Cartesian model of the mind/body split, it is nearly impossible to talk about different relationships between image, mind, and body or to think of images as anything more than visual representations” (p. 446). From this argument, she concludes that, “in the West we often continue to describe visualization as a kind of mind over matter.” She gives an example, from instructions in her own practice in theatre, of trying to get away from this privileging of the mind (see below), but explains that, although her goal here was to move beyond the mind/body dualism, her “polarization of mind and body simply restated the split from the other direction – body over mind” (p.446). She recognizes that this was equally problematic and argues for an “embrained and embodied” model of mind for actor training and rehearsal:

I have often found myself left with unsuitable metaphors and descriptions, such as “let the image emerge from your body rather than your mind,” or “insert the image into your body and let the movement come from this place;” or, perhaps worse, “become the _____,” or “be the _____.” (Riley, 2004, p. 446)

Acknowledging Riley’s two important arguments: (i) the privileging of mind is prevalent, even in the drama and theatre world, where the body is relied upon, and ii) if we continue to see the body and mind in dualistic terms, the Cartesian split will continue to exist whether the mind is privileged over the body or the body is privileged over the mind, and therefore these two approaches are equally problematic. I propose that a multimodal pedagogy that respects all modes of meaning-making and representation might be a first step in attaining the kind of embrained and embodied practice that Riley calls for. I suggest here that Ms. C.’s pedagogy was mindful of the importance of not talking and seeing the body and mind in dualistic terms, but that the Cartesian split continued to exist. In order to locate this in an interview excerpt, I would like to go back to the very first excerpt I shared from Ms. C’s explanation of her pedagogy (section 5.5.2, p. 123) in which she said the students in drama class “get ideas in their bodies, versus in
their minds – just their mind.”. She first says here “get their ideas in their bodies, versus their mind” and then she corrects herself and says “just their minds,” understanding the importance of not talking and of seeing the body and mind in dualistic terms.

They [the students in the drama course] get ideas in their bodies, versus in their minds – just their mind. So when they’re in the space, new things happen for them. It’s like a different kind of stimuli in the brain. When they’re physicalizing, their brain works in a more layered way, for them, kind of how I would have to describe it. But the space is definitely helpful, cause it’s open. The classroom environment is helpful because it’s a place where you’re supposed to express how you feel, that’s part of the course. So I think it’s all these layers, but I think when they’re in the space, they, the mind works in a different way, cause they’re physicalizing things, and they’re tapping into the best part of their brain.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 6 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

Yet it is important to note here that despite our efforts in speaking and writing to not discuss body and mind in dualistic terms, it is difficult not to talk about these terms without invoking this binary of body and mind. It has been engraved in us deeply and for a long time since we are, especially in the West, (since Plato and Greek philosophy, as Merleau-Ponty and Michael Peters would argue) culturalized to think in those terms, especially in the world of education.

My observations in this class and my interviews with the students helped me to better understand the significance of the embodied practice and its multimodal nature in drama. This multimodal nature of the drama class, as Ms. C. explained, energized some students who were most disenfranchised by traditional schooling and traditional literacy practices. Towards the end of the quad where students worked on the Joseph performance, Tim, who was playing Joseph, brought his friend Nezzer (who had left high school and was not attending any school at the time) with him to class, and asked Ms. C. if Nezzer could watch, or be part of the production. Ms. C., seeing Nezzer’s interest, allowed him to stay as long as he was going to be part of the
performance. In the interview that I did with Nezzer, here is how he explained why he had left school.

So I just decided to drop-out, I was failing all my courses cause I wouldn’t go to class, once or twice a week. I had no motivation. I didn’t wanna be there. School just bored me. If there was any project that came along I either thought it was too easy or that it was going to take too long. I didn’t wanna do it at home. I am a procrastinator. I am a champion of putting things off – I would decide to do it the next day and then that day comes and I would be “I don’t really need to do it until three days from now so I guess I will do it tomorrow.”

(Nezzer, student interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 20 April 2009)

Nezzer explained that this drama course drew him back to school because of the different form of engagement that it afforded. The embodied, active, aesthetic engagement in drama was significant in Nezzer’s decision to come back to school after having left for a year. Bundy (2003) writes that one of the important elements of aesthetic engagement in drama is the experience of animation, feeling “more alive, more alert” (p.180). Nezzer said he felt energized in drama, comparing it with his experiences in other courses such as English or philosophy, which he described as courses where you just “sit and talk”. This engagement was so strong for him that, as he explained, this drama course was the reason why he decided to come back to school and take another drama course from Ms. C., this time for actual credit:

Nezzer: I took drama because I love to act first of all, and I got to use a lot of my energy. Just acting in general is entertaining for me. Tim, who was the lead of the play, who was playing Joseph, came up to me cause he knows that I have been acting for a number of years and he said, “Well, you are not really doing anything right now.” I wasn’t working or going to school, I was pretty much sitting on my ass.

Burcu: You are sharing the same house?

Nezzer: I have lived underneath him. I live at the basement of his house and I pay rent to his mom. He told me “Why don’t you come to my performance – my teacher would probably allow you to join us as long as you do the work and actually put energy to do it.” And I said “OK, that’s good, cause I love acting, why not?” So I came, just joined it.
I may not have gotten a credit out of it but I enjoyed myself doing the coursework and just doing. . . . That got people in the class to enjoy it more because I don’t like people sitting around when there is performance. You are supposed to be energetic. The people who think “I am just here for the credit” the people like that should really just join philosophy or English, something you can sit and talk cause that’s what they do anyways – just sit and talk which is irritating. It really bothers me to be honest.

Burcu: In your view, were there many students who weren’t participating?

Nezzer: There were just four or five – the ones who are like that – really don’t come after the first three weeks. So that performance really went well and because of it I decided to come back to school. Ms. C. was telling me that I could get my credits done and just get my high school diploma and we had another teacher, Mr. T. They both told me this school is much better than any other school for the kind of condition that I am in. Being 21 and coming back to school and I need the Grade 10 credit and if I went back to Hillcrest Tech I would be with 15 year olds

(Nezzer, student interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 20 April 2009)

I wanted to end this section with this rather lengthy quote from Nezzer, because it illuminates what Ms. C. argued about her drama pedagogy, which brings together multiple modes of learning to engage students, potentially reaching students like Nezzer who want to engage untraditionally.
5.5.3 Site 3: Ms. S’s drama class at Middleview Technical High School

Table 5.4. Information about Ms. S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Ms. S.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>Class</td>
<td>middle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>straight</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
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<td>First/Home Language</td>
<td>English</td>
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Ms. S. has training in theatre and education. She teaches a couple of drama courses at Middleview. In addition to teaching drama, a number of years ago she also co-designed and co-taught the first drama-ESL course at Middleview Technical School with an ESL teacher (Ms. L.). The course was designed for students who enter the most basic level of ESL in that school. They invited a couple of non-ESL volunteer students to this class, as well, so that they could function as mediators, and support ESL students’ learning when necessary. This beginner level (ESL A) drama-ESL course is still offered at Middleview Technical High School and was taught by different teachers including Ms. B, another drama teacher whom I interviewed at this site.6

Ms. B. explained that her teaching within the drama-ESL course helped her to better understand “the nuances of language that you don’t get with pen and paper” and the role of the body in communication and embodied learning including the fact that “there are certain things you can express with words, and some things you cannot”. She said that she translated this

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6 As I explained in my Methodology section, the current teacher of the Middleview drama-ESL course had had a difficult and deeply troubling experience with a university researcher a number of years ago, and therefore preferred not to be observed or to have a formal interview for this study.
learning that she gained in the drama-ESL course to her regular drama courses (Ms. B., teacher interview, Middleview, 20 May 2009).

Ms. L., who had co-designed and co-taught the drama-ESL course with Ms. S., described some of the drama work they had engaged the students in as follows:

When we started, we had a large class. I remember this one activity was a poem. The title was Missing My Country. So we were on the stage in the auditorium, we were all sitting in a circle and Ms. S. had a flip chart. We had to go around the circle and answer what do you miss about your country…Some of the things they said were so powerful. “I miss the sound of my grandmother. I miss the smells of…”- So we go around and then one of us typed it up and so it was a beautiful poem…It was like a three stanza poem – I miss….I miss … and then the things listed…And then we handed out the poem and we practiced it in choral reading…So we sort of built it up that way, sort of trial and error.

(Ms. L., teacher interview, Middleview, November 2009)

Christensen (1999) asks “Why is it important [for students] to write about their lives? Why is it part of critical literacy?” then she answers: “Because in critical literacy, their lives are part of the text of the class.” Ms. S. and Ms. L.’s pedagogy here is situated practice that builds on the students’ life experiences, bringing students’ memories of their countries of origin, providing spaces for them to share their cultural and personal stories, validating the importance of their experiences and affirming who they are (Christensen, 1999, 2001; Cummins, 2001; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005/2011). Ms. S.’s and Ms. L.’s examples of pedagogy described in the quote above, as well as Ms. S.’s pedagogy in the drama classroom that I describe in the section below, are resonant with Christensen’s query: “How else can we understand our society and our world if we don’t bring in the lives of the people who are living it?” (1999, p. 60). This kind of situated practice is important for all students, since personal identities strongly intersect with literacy practices (Campano, 2007; Cummins, 2001, 2005a; Gee, 1996, 2000; Moje & Luke, 2009; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010b, 2005/2011; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007; Simon, 2011; Street, 1993). It is even more important for students of diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds to be able to express
their in-between identities and experiences, what Anzaldúa (1999) calls being at the ‘Borderlands/La Frontera’, living in the margins.

5.5.3.1 Analysis of situated practice: Exploring selves creatively through collective creation

It was a good practice forcing me to write with different prompts. Sometimes in English class you’re given a chance to write but you’re not interested in. Drama, cause it’s a personal thing, it forces you to do things because you’re interested in it. The fact that it was creative writing for the most part, I really enjoy doing that a lot. . . . I feel like, in moments of creativity, you feel like yourself. You feel free in a sense cause it’s YOU. It’s what YOU made, YOU did. I feel that moments of creativity are very liberating and also very necessary because I don’t know, cause we need that…I just find it liberating and also like, calming, just more natural I guess. Life is not a straight line. Life is this big wave, creativity is just so necessary.
(Moonbeam, student interview, Middleview, 11 June 2009)

Ms. S often referred to her desire to connect with broader issues and stories in life; to connect with students, their personal and cultural narratives; and to create a community in her drama classroom. Moonbeam, whose home language is Portuguese, but who speaks English fluently because she was born in Canada, explained that despite the fact that she failed her Grade 10 English, she likes writing on her own. Moonbeam added that the fact that drama relies on creativity and that Ms. S.’s pedagogy relies on creative writing were important for her, as she describes in the excerpt above.

In Ms. S.’s pedagogy, in addition to going to see plays and providing opportunity for reflections, both written and oral, and doing drama games and improvisations from scripts, the main project was working on a collective creation called The Doors Project. Ms. S. used the idea of a door as a metaphor for writing journal entries, first about open doors and then about closed doors in students’ lives. Then, Ms. S. introduced multimodal artefacts as a
springboard/writing prompt for their third journal entry. Drawing attention to multiple modes of text, Ms. S. asked the students to bring in three artefacts: one written, like a poem, story, or scientific text; one material, like an object, pictures, drawings or music; and the third one an artefact in a mode of their choice. Pahl and Rowsell (2005/2011) explain that: “Cultural artifacts bring a new dimension into literacy learning” (p. 134). With their Artifactual Critical Literacies theory, they argue that: “material culture brought into classrooms from the home and conceptualized as funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005) can have a powerful lever to support literacy learning in educational contexts in that material culture signals identities” (p. 134). In addition to the term funds of knowledge, they draw on Bourdieu’s term habitus and suggest that:

What the concept of habitus offers is an account of social reality inside and outside ourselves/in people and in artifacts. . . . These artifacts can be used to elicit stories within school and community settings. . . .Artifacts give power to meaning makers. They can lever power for learners, particularly learners who feel at the margins of formal schooling. (p. 134)

Fieldnote, Middleview; 15 November 2008

Ms. S. laid out on the floor all the artefacts that she and the students had brought from home. There were keys, key chains, door knobs, poems, photographs of different doors, Wikipedia search print-outs about doors, two big doors that Ms. S. found in the school, and a saying printed out on a page, by Flora Whittemore: “The doors we open and close each day decide the lives we live.” Students had a chance to look at the artefacts and choose one to write about. One student wrote about a key, and how it represents past, present and future. Another student chose the saying by Flora Whittemore, and stressed the importance of keeping our heads up, even if the doors we choose in real life end up being incorrect choices. Another student wrote about an unpleasant memory about
doors: her father closing the door and leaving her and her mother. One student wrote about how doors remind her of her family, more specifically her Grandma’s house at Easter. She also wrote that each charm on her keychain reminded her of a specific memory, for example Dora the Explorer, the first trip to Wonderland; the initial ‘B’, all of her names and nicknames; and her Toronto Raptors charm, a Raptors’ visit to her school.

These journal entries created from the artefacts, and from the metaphors of open doors, and closed doors, inspired students in the creation of their individual monologues. They later merged these monologues into a collective piece that was performed by the students in the school auditorium. As seen in the fieldnote above, many of these entries were personal and there were some that were less personal. The students themselves made those choices. What Ms. S. provided in the space of the drama classroom was an invitation to take as much from the real or the fictional as they liked. Because of the nature of the use of metaphors, the blurry boundaries of the real and the fictional in drama, and creative monologue and dialogue writing, students were provided with both proximity as well as the distancing necessary for them to explore complex real-life realities. In my interview with Ms B., she explained this necessity of distancing and proximity as follows:

We can improv conversations and stop. What did that person just say? Why do you think they said that? And you get to take it away from the individual student and make it the character. Like why did student X’s character say that? So it is not student X who is being homophobic, or it is not student X who is being sexist, or racist, but it is the character. And I think it just gives them permission to work out all kinds of demons and to explore and clarify many questions that they have. (Ms. B., teacher interview, Middleview, 20 May 2009).

Describing why she is drawn to collective creation work with youth as her drama
pedagogy, Ms. S. explained that collective creation comes from students’ own words, their ideas, and is shaped by who her students are and what they are interested in. Cummins’ Literacy Engagement Framework (2011b) stresses the importance of situated practice, activating prior knowledge, and affirming identity. He writes that: “The claim that personal identities intersect with literacy practices is unlikely to be controversial to anyone who has observed human behaviour for more than five minutes. We invest our time, energy, intellect and imagination in literacy practices that are meaningful to us in relation to our life goals and personal interest” (2005b). In addition to situated practice, the importance of critical framing and transformed practice is stressed by Cummins (2005b, p.144); and the New London Group (1996). Davies (2006) writes: “As a sense of writing the self develops, a sense of possibility as an active agent in one’s own life emerges” (p. 227).

In my interview with Moonbeam, in accord with Davies’ and Cummins’ arguments, she stressed that what is significant for her in collective creative writing is the fact that her writing and thinking “change” and help her “grow” because of the new perspectives she gains through the kind of critical framing and transformed practice that happens during the process of collective creation:

Sometimes there are certain things about ourselves we think about but we never actually say it or do anything with it. And sometimes there are little things that are eating you and you don’t feel comfortable enough to say it. So in drama class sometimes you’re more comfortable to actually be who you are and then that helps you grow. So then your writing changes because you kind of delve at something, and then you moved on. (Moonbeam, student interview, Middleview, 11 June 2009)

Pahl and Rowsell (2005/2011) write that critical literacy pedagogy is needed to look within, but also beyond, texts to consider where they are situated (p.132). Other students’ writings, such as Mya’s writing, (the only student in Ms S.’s class who considered herself an
ESL student, whom I introduce in detail in 6, Sections 6.2.1, and pp. 216-217) was deconstructed and re-constructed in the process of collective creation through a critical lens. Mya’s initial monologue was re-shaped within the context of multiple drafting and collective peer feedback in the process of collective creation. Mya, in her first entry, wrote about Canada as a place of open doors. But after the multiple sharings of their writing with peers and Ms. S., her idea of Canada as a place of open doors was transformed when contrasted with the ideas and writings of other students who portrayed Canada or other Western countries as places of closed (or limited access) doors. For example, one student wrote about her father’s search for a country as a refugee, as he was trying to flee Ghana, a country at war at the time. He was first denied permanent residency in two European countries, finally coming to Canada, where it took him almost 18 years to find a full-time job “because he was a refugee and colour of his skin wouldn’t let him work there. Because of his ethnic background being West African” (Fieldnote about Mya and Carmen’s journal entries, Middleview, 30 November 2008). These layered and at times contradictory voices in the collective creation gave the performance a “polyphonous” and “multivocal” quality, using Bakhtin’s terms. Understanding that literacy is ideological and “knowledge in drama is embodied, culturally located and socially distributed” (Nicholson, 2005, p.39), to create the kind of situated and meaningful moments for students was an ideal for Ms. S., as she explained in the excerpt below.

For me partly it is a personal need for connection and community, for something to happen, for it to feel like a moment, and for it not to just feel like part of the daily grind and slog. We create these moments that live, and feel compelling and exciting. To do that, it takes a certain amount of nudging and vulnerability on your part [as a teacher] to share as well. In the class that you saw it did happen, but it also didn’t happen, in a lot of ways. That is fine [because] the work is flawed; it is never perfect. That’s what makes it dynamic and interesting.

(Ms. S., teacher interview, Middleview, 3 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4; this quotation was previously published in Gallagher & Yaman Ntelioglou, 2011)
This excerpt is significant in a number of ways. First of all, it frames Ms. S.’s deep desire for “connection” and building “community” in her classroom that I referred to earlier. Second, using a situated practice that affirms the identities of students and values their personal and cultural experiences is often discussed in the literature of language and literacy education. Yet, something often not stated when discussing situated practice is the acknowledgement, as Ms. S. argues, that those moments of connection and community are not easily achieved. Trust that is necessary for sharing and real connections to happen, and for a classroom to feel like a safe community, “is negotiated moment by moment; trust is not a state that can be achieved for all time” (Gallagher, 2006, p. 77). Those temporary moments of real connection and attentive listening cannot be taken for granted and need to be negotiated constantly in the classroom. The third point that is significant about what Ms. S. says in this excerpt is that it takes a certain amount of vulnerability on the part of the teacher for a pedagogy like this to work. The teacher, along with the students, needs to contribute to the sharing of personal and cultural stories and allow his or her ideas to be discussed, tested, and contested by the students. The fourth point is that, in this collective creation environment, the teacher is a co-creator and collaborator, a mediator but not an imposer of knowledge. The final point that Ms. S. raises here is that the teacher needs to be open to risk-taking, to exploring untested waters, and to talk about failure or conflict in the drama classroom when it happens. Ms. S. contended that when the moments of connection, sharing and attentive listening happen in teaching, we recognize them because “[the] reasons those moments are special is because they happen rarely”.
5.5.3.2 Analysis of multimodality: the interplay of the written, the oral, and the embodied modes of meaning-making and expression

We need to connect writing more to that shared experience, that community of listeners. And have someone really listen to what you write. (Ms. S., teacher interview, Middleview, 3 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4).

When you write in your own, you sometimes get trapped. You write good for sometimes and then you say “I don’t have any other ideas.” But at least with drama and stuff like that, it kind of helps your brain to keep going all the time. So then those ideas keep coming instead of being trapped in different places in your head. And then you’re like, Ah, now I got an idea – that’s cool. And also the plus side of working with the people is like, you don’t always have ideas and then you get stuck, at least if you have ten other writers then you’re like, Oh, that, that would go good with that. And that would go good with that person’s, and with that person’s. It’s really useful. . . .I don’t know, it’s a very cool process. I wish I could always work in an environment like that. (Moonbeam, student interview, Middleview, 11 June 2009)

I didn’t think I would be any good at it because I’m not a top English student. I’m not very bad but I’m just about average. I never thought I could write in artistic forms like just express myself really. But when I started writing in my journal [in drama class] and having, like, the reactions from Ms.S. and my fellow peers saying wow that’s really good, I really liked it. . . . But I wasn’t expecting it because I never tried. It is different and I guess I can write now. I think I have the confidence that I can write and it doesn’t have to be a certain way. Like what people say, like I can step out of that limit. And be like ‘I’m really good at this’.
(Bella, focus group interview, Middleview, 23 November 2008, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4)

Both verbal (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and non-verbal (embodied/aesthetic/performative, spatial, audio, tactile, visual modes, etc.) were present in Ms. S.’s pedagogy. In the above interview excerpts, Ms S., Moonbeam and Bella explain why collective peer feedback, as well as the embodied and oral sharing of the written text, were necessary for the collective writing process in collective creation. In order to analyze this multimodal, relational and dialogic approach to writing in drama, I will first discuss the writing in this class in
relation to the concept of “writing-as-a-process” examined in L1 and L2 writing research. Next, I will explore the embodied, oral and immediate peer and teacher feedback in collective writing.

Writing-as-a-process

Researchers in the field of writing have frequently discussed the issue of the ‘writing product’ versus the ‘writing process’. The development of the writing-as-a-process approach has been widely recognized (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 84). The writing-as-a-process approach was developed as a reaction to the traditional writing instructions of three or five paragraph models, with a typical one-draft writing assignment that asked each student to work alone or with an instructor for summative feedback, and relied on a linear composing model based on outlining, writing and editing. In contrast, the writing-as-a-process approach placed importance on self-discovery and the authorial “voice”, on meaningful writing opportunities with multiple drafting, feedback between drafts, and feedback from real audiences such as peers or small groups. The writing-as-a-process approach embraced free writing and journal writing as alternative means of generating writing, self-expression, and overcoming writer’s block. This approach also replaced the linear composing model of outlining, writing and editing with the idea of the cyclical/recursive composing model of multiple drafting, outlining and revising (Grabe & Kaplan, p. 86-86). Grabe and Kaplan added that this writing-as-a-process movement has become so popular that there has been a “paradigm shift” in writing theory and instruction:

The fact that this movement has developed so strongly and remains so popular testified to the fact that the writing process perspective has captured certain important truths about language. (p.87)
Revision, multiple drafting, teacher and peer feedback

Tsui and Ng (2010) explore revision as the most crucial aspect of the ‘writing process’. Arndt (1993) similarly argues that feedback is a “central and critical contribution to the evolution of a piece of writing” (p. 91). Literacy and second language education scholars who focused on writing and especially writing-as-a-process have investigated the impact of teacher feedback and peer feedback on student writing (Arndt, 1993; Ferris, 1997; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). This is because it has been found that teacher feedback was not always successful or sufficient for ELLs or non-ELLs to improve their writing. If students receive feedback from the teacher on their writing, the ideal is that they will read the feedback and correct their mistakes and improve their work, but research in this area of teacher-student feedback in writing found that this is not always the case. For example, Ferris (1997) looked at the influence of a dedicated and experienced teacher’s feedback on ESL students’ writing and found that there were a few students who paid a great deal of attention to the feedback and integrated their teachers’ suggestions to improve their papers, but there were also many students who completely disregarded the comments of their teachers.

Dynamic and Circular Interactions among Multiple Modes and Dialogic Feedback

In the interview excerpts at the beginning of the section, Ms. S., Moonbeam and Bella stress the value of having an oral stage in between a first piece and a subsequent piece of writing. The connection between orality and literacy, and the need to disrupt the constructed binary division of literacy and orality, have been challenged by both literacy and drama/theatre scholars (Bell, 2008; Gee, 1986). Bell (2008) writes “Long before the written word, information was stored in bodies, in cultural memories and in oral traditions, enacted only in their performances”. Drawing from Ong (1982), he writes that before the printed text, “valuable cultural information
is available only in sound, in bodies, and performances, and in fixed oral phrasings that aid memory. The knowledge stored in bodies was passed on, generation to generation, through performance–face-to-face, participatory, immediate, and empathetic” (p.57). Bell and Ong point not only to the connection between orality and literacy but also to the multimodal and embodied ways human beings use “higher order mental skills, such as analytic, logical, or abstract thinking” that is now mostly attributed to traditional literacy practices of reading and writing (Gee, 1986, p.719). Multimodal Pedagogy is a resistance to seeing text only as print and attributing “higher order mental skills, such as analytic, logical, or abstract thinking” to the written mode. In this section, with the voices of the participants in this site, I argue for the importance of other modes of meaning-making and self expression such as the oral and the embodied (which is in itself multimodal with its synthesis of the audio, the visual, the affective, the performative etc.). I illustrate this with the Figure 5.4 below.
Figure 5.4. The dynamic interplay and circular relationship of multimodal and embodied meaning-making in drama.

Ms. S. explains that in drama, through the collective creation process “when the student reads what they have written out loud, if their purpose is to make the listener understand, then as they are reading they recognize the inherent problem between what they meant to say and what they have written”. (Ms. S., teacher interview, Middleview, 3 February 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4). Similarly Booth explains “we search for informed opinion, ideas that can take us beyond our own limitations and stretch and enrich us, so we bring more depth to what we have experienced. Wilhelm (2001) says we have to help students hear their own thinking about a text “out loud” (as cited in Booth, 2005a, p.45). Through the transferring back and forth of the written text into the oral and then to the embodied mode of performance “drama forces participants to consider the content and context of the statements, and provides a forum that
allows for communication, restating, and subsequent interaction” (Booth, 1991, p. 95). Students become aware of their own weaknesses and problems in writing, by reading each others’ writing and working collaboratively. If the feedback came only from the teacher, students would have missed out on the opportunity to learn from their classmates’ knowledge and mistakes. The multiple voices in the text in collective creation give voice to the collective writing piece. Sperling and Appleman (2011) write that “what begins as interaction or dialogue in the social sphere becomes, for the individual, internalized as thought” (p.74). Writing about the connections of drama and voice, they say that “in oral reading and surrounding discussion, students hear other ways of understanding and expressing, and they incorporate these ways into their own language repertoires” (p. 77).

Although my focus in this section has been the process of collective creation and the multiple modes that are engaged during this process, of the embodied, written and oral language, it is also important to note that the product, the actual performance itself, was also multimodal, integrating the audio, the visual, the sensory, the tactile, the spatial, the performative, and the aesthetic.

In this chapter I focused more heavily on the teachers’ voices to describe and analyze the drama teachers’ pedagogies in my three sites. I further examine both situated practice and multimodality in all three sites in Chapter 6, focusing more extensively on the students’ voices.
Chapter 6: Students’ Experiences of Drama Pedagogies

6.1 Introduction

“What is thought is never what is understood.” (Ellsworth, 1996, p. 44)

Ellsworth cautions us that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between teachers’ pedagogical intentions and their perceptions of their students’ learning experiences and the students’ own perceptions of what they learned and how they experienced the pedagogy. To more fully appreciate the potential and acknowledge the limits of the drama pedagogies in my three sites, drawing on theoretical work from literacy education, drama education, and second language education and taking a poststructuralist and postcolonial, third word feminist, intersectionality and critical pedagogy frameworks, in this chapter I address my third research question by analysing the voices and experiences of students from the location of these three classrooms: How do linguistically diverse students experience drama pedagogy in urban classrooms?

I start by providing detailed descriptions of one student from each class (knowing that I could not provide the kind of detailed description for all of my participants because of the large number of students I observed and interviewed in all three sites), in the hope not only of offering thicker descriptions of who they are as students, but also of providing a glimpse of their past experiences, previous education, and their social, economic, and historical locations as individuals (Section 6.2). Just knowing these students as English language learners in a drama
class would be incomplete; in order to fully understand their experiences as learners in their drama classrooms, it is important to historically and socially situate these learners and examine their identities, knowledges, beliefs, goals and future dreams. These three students are not meant to be ‘representative’ in any sense, but their stories provide an opportunity to probe individual students’ perceptions of how each teacher’s pedagogy was received. To do this, I will relate each of these three students’ stories and experiences to the experiences of the other students in their own classrooms, as well as making connections among the experiences of the students in the three different contexts (the three drama classrooms), overlaying, juxtaposing or contrasting multiple voices (the engaged voices, disengaged voices, hesitant voices, contradictory voices, excited voices, etc.) to provide a fuller picture of the experiences of these ELLs. (Britzman, 2000; Gallagher, 2008; Lather, 2000; Morgan, 2000; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). Following poststructural notions of ethnography, this is an attempt to write what Britzman calls an “ethnographic opera”, which pays attention to the caution raised by poststructural theories about issues of representation, troubling ‘truth’ and troubling the notions of ‘the objective researcher’ (p.31). Gallagher writes:

> When research in the ‘human’ sciences is conceived as a series of moments, performances, creative encounters, and temporal relationships that can never be repeated, rather than as a series of value-free and distanced observations, the research encounter itself cannot help but challenge some of the traditional questions about the nature of truth, the power relations of knowledge, and the politics and ethics of the ‘human sciences’. (2008, p. 67)

I portray the experiences and voices of these ELLs in the three drama classrooms using the two major themes that I described earlier: situated practice (with a focus on the performance of identities and the creation of identity texts) discussed in Section 6.3 and multimodality (with a focus on embodied learning) discussed in Section 6.4. It would be incorrect to assume that the two themes completely emerged from a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967),
since these two themes grew from a synergy of what emerged from the data in the three sites, as well as my theoretical understandings of drama pedagogy and language and literacy learning; and my own socio-cultural location as a researcher, educator and language learner.

6.2: Three Student Portraits

6.2.1 Mya

(in Ms. S.’s Drama Class at Middleview Technical High School)

Table 6.1  
Social Descriptors for Mya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym:</th>
<th>Mya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>average class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First/Home Language</td>
<td>Tigrinya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Describe yourself in a sentence or two: | I am caring and myself. Different from other.  
                                        | I am Eritrean              
                                        | I am 5’6”                  
                                        | I am dreamer                
                                        | I am into fashion            |

Mya came to Toronto from Eritrea with her parents in 2003, five years before my interview with her. She speaks her home language, Tigrinya, with her parents. She has three older brothers doing military service in her home country, Eritrea. This was one of the first things I learned about her. As part of the Doors Project in her drama class, she wrote about her immigration story with her parents and how they had to leave her brothers in Eritrea. Mya explained that it was hard for them to leave there and come to Canada, because her brothers have to finish military service. Her brothers do not have permission to leave Eritrea. In my individual interview with
her, Mya said that she thinks this is because her brothers are young men, and the country might need them to fight another war. She also knew that young adults are expected to stay, to help build the country in professions like teaching and nursing.

Mya started learning English in Eritrea. She started with the alphabet and some simple words in Grade 4, and then learned to write sentences and paragraphs in Grade 5:

“Well, until Grade 4, you learn with your language… like so Grade 4 you do learn the ABCs only, and the basic ‘cat, dog’ and Grade 5 you start to write, like, a paragraph, and you have English course.” (11 January 2009).

Mya had one year of academic English instruction before she came to Canada. When she came to Canada, she first attended a different public middle school. She thinks because she was born in December, she was placed in a Grade 7 class, instead of Grade 6, skipping one grade. She took ESL classes at that first school that she went to, completing all the ESL levels (ESL A, B, C, D and E, each one semester long). She studied Grades 7 to 11 and the first year of 12 in the other school. The year I met her, (2008-2009 academic year) it was her first year at Middleview Technical High School and she was doing another year of Grade 12. In terms of her speaking, among all the ELLs that I interviewed in all three sites, Mya was probably the most fluent in English. When I asked her how she felt about her English language skills, she explained “Well, my speaking, I think it’s OK, for me to get where I want, kinda. But like writing, I’m improving on it. I think writing’s harder maybe”.

The year that she came to Middleview Technical High School and took the drama class where I collected my data, she was taking Grade 12 for a second time. In addition to drama, she was taking three other courses: English, Travel and Tourism, and Cooking. She explained that she could now take these electives because she had fulfilled most of the required courses. Her
goal for this last year was to raise her grades in this semester and the next semester, which she
hopes will be her last one.

When Mya came to Canada, she did not understand the credit system. By the time she was
finally able to understand how the school system works in Canada, she was at the end of her
Grade 9 academic year. She realised that she did not make appropriate choices and she also did
not work as hard as she could have (especially in Grades 8 and 9), because she had not realised at
the time that her high school grades were important for admission to college or university. She
was disappointed that, she lacked this knowledge about the school system in Canada. She did not
realise that the kind of courses that you take and the number of credits and the grades that you
get in the high school years all affect college and university entry possibilities. She said when
she came to Canada she was given a package of documents that she couldn’t understand because
of her lack of English at the time. She said “who knows there might have been a paper about this
but I doubt it”. Without any verbal explanations, she had no way of knowing that high school
credits and grades were important for access to university or college. She did not remember
anyone in school actually telling her explicitly about the importance of course choices, even
though she always went to the guidance counsellor in her school. She said she wished that
teachers would talk to students about career choices, and the courses you need for those choices,
as soon as they get to high school. She says that Canadian students know much more about
possible careers and what it takes to get there, but new ESL students do not.

From my experience, I think for people that’s going to be new to country, and especially if
they’re coming to high school, or like close to high school - cause they don’t know, like at
that moment - kids that grow up here, as soon as they’re in Grade 9 they already know what
career they want to do, so they already start getting ready for it, right. But me, I didn’t even
know about it. I didn’t even start thinking about it at that time. So helping them with that and
asking them what they want to do, and then telling them to take the course that they need -
that would be so much helpful.

(Mya, student interview, Middleview, 11 January 2009)
In this last year of high school, she only needed four more credits to complete after the current semester. After that semester, her hope is to be done. But she does have another problem. She took the Grade 10 OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test) a year before, when she was in Grade 12 for the first time (She was not permitted to take the test in Grade 10 because students in her school needed to finish all five ESL levels before taking this test. Mya took ESL A in Grade 7, B in Grade 8 and so on, finishing with ESL E in Grade 11.). She was very disappointed to learn that she had failed the test (she got 250 points, when she needed 300). She thought that this year (second Grade 12 year), she had a choice of re-taking the OSSLT or the OSSLC (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course). She reasoned that, if she failed the test again, she could not graduate at the end of the year, because she would have to wait another year to re-take the test, or take the course. Therefore she was planning to take the course in second semester so that she could be sure of graduating (if she passes; in my conversations with ELLs, I found that students generally consider the course to be easier to pass than the test). When I asked her why she thought she failed the OSSLT, she said the hardest thing on the test for her was the essay writing, especially as she was afraid of running out of time. She also thought some of the language on the test was challenging to her, and she had to re-read the test several times to understand what the questions meant. When asked about her future goals, Mya openly shared that she was not quite sure. She had a number of ideas about what she could be, from an accountant, to a nurse, to a model:

I’m not exactly sure yet. Like, I’m lost. But I do have accountant and nursing right? yeah. Basically, I want to do accounting because I’m pretty good with math and I like math and I like to challenge myself. But then they’re saying, you know like family tell you that you have to do a job that’s good for your future and make good money and plus I already like to help people, so nurse. But, my main thing is that I want to get into fashion and maybe modeling too right? So yeah.
Mya had taken a drama class in her other school, the year before taking Ms. S’s class. She said the first time she took it, she was looking at electives. She had taken three “gym classes” already and then she decided to take drama to see what it was like. Mya said the main reason she took Ms. S’s drama class this year was so that it could help with her language and self-confidence:

For me it’s like, to build my confident more, to be able to open up and say whatever I want. ‘Cause drama does help you like build a confident. And for English being a second language for me in drama can help a lot ‘cause we communicate a lot and yeah. And I wanna build my personal skill I guess.

Most of Mya’s friends in school also had an Eritrean background. The drama course provided her a space to have extended conversations with English speaking students. Different from the previous drama class she had taken, she explained that Ms. S.’s class had given her a chance to act first in front of and along with her classmates, and then in the large auditorium in front of the other students and teachers in the school. Always interested in improving her writing skills, she said she also enjoyed the free writing experience for the Doors Project in Ms. S.’s class. She appreciated not having to worry about grammar or spelling as she was free writing, which she considered to be a nurtured writing environment. The sense of nurturing came not only from the fact that she could put on the page what was on her mind without the fear of being punished for her errors, but also because of the dialogic drama space, where she could do multiple drafts after sharing parts of her writing with peers and the teacher in the embodied process of translating words from the page to the theatre performance. She said she valued this
form of receiving continuous feedback from peers as well as Ms. S. When it was time to create a performance, Ms. S. helped her to edit her monologue/writing. Together with Ms. S. and her peers, she made choices about what part of her monologue she would share as part of the collective creation. In my conversations with her, Mya also referred to Ms. S.’s drama class as being fun but at the same time being a lot of hard work:

I did take drama before and it was like in Grade 10 drama and I was like in Grade 12, which was last year and I didn’t do a lot, which was like, I just went there and talked and sit. I didn’t do the real acting. Now that I’m taking drama this year, writing and stuff like that I do find that like, it’s good but it’s really hard like to do and memorize and stuff like that.

(Mya, focus group interview with Mya, Bonnie and Bella, Middleview, 23 November 2008, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)

When asked about the most significant and memorable moment for her in Ms. S’s drama class, she explained that performing their *Doors Project* monologues was the most important experience:

For me, it would have to be one of the times we did the monologue performance. It was a big deal for me right? Because I never have the guts to say “Ok I’m going to go up to the audience and present” even though I don’t do that. I was afraid I actually had to come and go up there and just present, you know? Get over it. I like the fact that Ms. S. does push us to do stuff. So that would be one of the best, yeah.

(Mya, focus group interview with Mya, Bonnie and Bella, Middleview, 23 November 2008, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)

They performed the *Doors Project* twice in their school auditorium. Because the auditorium could not fit all the students at once, this devised play was first performed in front of the younger grades (9 and 10), then in front of their peers (Grades 11 and 12). She said her friends congratulated her on her *Doors* performance, and said she did not look nervous at all, which she found significant.

They’re like, Oh, you did a great job. I was like, I felt nervous. They’re like, no, it didn’t even show at all.

(Mya, Student Interview, 11 January 2009)
Mya felt that she had accomplished something valuable taking this drama course. The course had helped her get closer to her two goals of focusing on and improving her writing, and developing self-confidence speaking in front of an audience because of the pedagogy in this drama course that integrated both verbal (speaking, reading, writing, listening) and non-verbal (embodied) modes of meaning-making.

6.2.2 Sophie

(in Ms. C.’s Drama Class in the Program for ‘At Risk’ Youth at Braeburn High School)

Table 6.2. Social Descriptors for Sophie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym:</th>
<th>Sophie</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First/Home Language</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe yourself in a sentence or two:</td>
<td>I like dance and drama.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sophie has been in Canada for six years. She is an only child. In the drama classroom, I was amazed as I observed Sophie’s relentless efforts to learn the moves by closely watching Ms. C.’s and her classmates’ body movements in the choreography for the drama performance. Sophie was one of the very few students who attended Ms. C.’s class regularly (This is significant because for example, in Sophie’s second drama course with Ms. C., out of the 41 students who began the class, only about 16 of them stayed until the end). In class, she stood closer to the front of the classroom so that she could see the teacher and follow her instructions.
After the first course Sophie took with Ms. C. (the Joseph performance), she and four other students told me that they were going to register in the next drama course taught by Ms. C. (putting on High School Musical). This information was important for two reasons: first, it showed that they were interested in continuing to engage with drama and Ms. C’s musical theatre pedagogy, secondly, knowing this made me decide to continue my data collection and observations of these students in the next quad. Despite her visible interest and engagement in this course, Sophie did not volunteer for a lead role in either of these drama courses.

Sophie entered the Canadian school system in Grade 10 at Braeburn (at the age of 19). At the time of my interview with her she said she was now 24 years old. She first applied to the adult ESL program at Braeburn and a teacher there said that because at the time she was younger than 21, it would be best for her to attend their “at-risk” youth program. Since then, Sophie has completed ESL B, C and D in the school and has taken Grades 10, 11 and 12 College English. She had to repeat Grade 12 College English because “the writing no good.” She explained that her goal now was to take Grade 12 University English because some of her friends said she would learn more about academic writing and essay writing in that class. But before that, she needs to take Grade 10 and Grade 11 University English. Therefore, in the subsequent quad she wanted to study chemistry and take Grade 10 University English. Even though Sophie was struggling with English, she did very well in certain other classes. For example, her mark in Grade 10 computing was so high (95%) that the guidance counselor suggested she go straight into the Grade 12 computing class, skipping Grade 11 computing. She said her goal initially was to study computing (IT), but that her mother says that too many people are studying IT, and that she may not be able to find a job after she graduates. Instead, her mother wants her to be a nurse. Sophie said that she would want to be a nurse but she thinks biology is too difficult because of
the vocabulary. Therefore, her guidance counselor recommended the Police Foundation college program instead. Sophie took only the drama course in the quad when she took Ms. C.’s High School Musical. She had intended to take more, but the guidance teacher told her that computing is not needed for the Police Foundation course, so she decided to just take another drama course from Ms. C. She explained that currently she has 15 credits. Sophie was not sure how many credits, and what specific courses, she needed to go to university or college (including the Police Foundation program). However, after I asked her that question, she said she was now going to inquire about this, and she knew that the person who could help her was the “choose the courses teacher” (guidance teacher).

In my informal and formal (interview) communications with her during these two quads, it became more clear to me how much she was struggling with the English language. Many students in Ms. C.’s class were bilingual or trilingual individuals, and many of them (10 out of 16) were born outside of Canada (Bangladesh, China, Guatemala, Jamaica, Pakistan, Trinidad and Tobago, USA and Yugoslavia), but most of them now were fluent at least in their conversational skills and none of them considered themselves ESL/ELL, even though some still explained that they were having difficulties with their academic literacies, especially their writing. When I heard these students’ struggles, I was often reminded of Cummins’ Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) Theory that explain that although it might take about two years of exposure to the target language to develop conversational everyday language fluency, ELLs need at least five to seven

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7 The fact that the guidance teacher recommended the Police Foundation college program and suggested that she shouldn’t take more computing (which is a subject Sophie is successful at) could be seen as a way of streaming and labelling, that Dei et al. (1997) write about. They argue that processes of labelling and streaming can be “played out in the hidden curriculum— in subtle behaviours of teachers and guidance counsellors—as well as the practices directly associated with streaming” (p. 119).
years to catch up to grade-level academic language proficiency (Cummins, 2000). For Sophie, it was a huge struggle to find the words in English. She said she struggles with academic writing even more than speaking. She also said she finds it difficult to listen and take notes in class. As I explained previously, Sophie thinks that teachers can help her more at school by giving her more help with writing. That is why she is interested in taking the Grade 10, 11 and 12 University English. She also said that she is scared about reading aloud in class in other courses. Just like most ELLs that I interviewed in all three sites, Sophie did not know about the Grade 10 OSSLT, which must be passed, or substituted for with a special literacy course, before students can graduate. I would like to share an excerpt from my interview transcription with her to provide a sense of her proficiency with the English language:

Burcu: So why did you take this drama class?
Sophie: I always watch TV, movie, looking for the people dancing. But my mom say you so fat, maybe you can’t do it. So fat, so heavy. But I -- dance together, so happy.
Burcu: Yeah, so when you’re dancing together with your friends in this class, that makes you happy?
Sophie: Yeah.
Burcu: Did you take any other drama classes before this drama class at Braeburn?
Sophie: No.
Burcu: No. So Ms. C’s class was the first drama class that you took. And you took it because you were interested in dancing, and...
Sophie: Yeah, interesting.
Burcu: And how did you like the class?
Sophie: How?
Burcu: Yeah, what did you think about this class? What did you like or didn’t like about this class?
Sophie: The teacher - so many-English word - a little bit. The teacher, .... she can help me out, tell me what it means for that.
Burcu: You’re learning many words.
Sophie: Yeah.
Burcu: How does she help you? What does she do to help you?
Sophie: Sometimes she tell me these word? I say I don’t know what’s mean. I use Chinese dictionary. She say, don’t dictionary. I tell you. She say the word “plodding”. I don’t know what’s meaning. She say maybe I’m the older woman. [Sophie physically shows how her teacher uses her body to teach her specific vocabulary, in this case “plodding” by showing the slow body motion of an old lady.] She walk fast or slow? I say older woman, slow. She say, Yeah, it mean ‘slow’.
Burcu: Oh, yeah. So she physically acts and helps you to guess the meaning of the word. That’s great. So you think this class helps your language skills, your English?
Sophie: Yeah. I always speak Chinese…In drama class everybody know my name – “Sophie, come here, come over here”. Speak English. Other class only Chinese people, speak Chinese. No English friend.
Burcu: Yes. The students in this class seem very supportive of each other. Are there times when it’s difficult for you?
Sophie: When?
Burcu: What is something that is difficult for you in this class?
Sophie: Singing song? Because they always speak English, and they sing so fast. I’m so slow.
Burcu: Yeah. They sing really fast, and sometimes it’s hard to follow.
Sophie: Yeah.
Burcu: And how about the words, lyrics of the songs? Do you understand the vocabulary, what they mean?
Sophie: I see the movie. So I understand. I go to the library, or the movie. See again, see again, see again. And I know, oh, what’s the meaning.
Burcu: Oh, that’s great, so you have a chance to watch the movie a couple of times to understand what it says, until it makes sense to you.
Sophie: Yeah.
Burcu: Comparing your experiences in the last class and this class, which one did you like?
Sophie: Both like.
Burcu: You like both?
Sophie: Yeah.
Burcu: Both performing the Joseph musical and the High School Musical experience?
Sophie: Yeah.
Burcu: What experiences, what aspect of the class did you like? [pause] Did you like the dancing part more, or the singing part more?
Sophie: [long pause] Uh, everything.
Burcu: Everything. Um - hmm. So Ms C. tests you sometimes, for example a week after teaching you a certain part of the choreography and songs. And I see that you’ve always done a very good job remembering the songs and the choreography. How do you get ready for that? What do you do to prepare?
Sophie: Teacher asks, “go home, listen the music, and dancing, repeat it”. So I go home, repeat, repeat, remember, remember, remember. And sometimes come to here, talking to a friend, maybe Tiffany (pseudonym), and ask her teach me a little bit, maybe I forget.
Burcu: That’s good. So you get help from friends, and you listen to CDs of the songs. Do you have these CDs that you can listen to at home? Does Ms. C. give you the CD?
Sophie: No. Go to the library, and maybe go to internet download.
(Sophie, student interview, Braeburn At-Risk Program, 13 March 2009).

In my interviews with her, just to make sure that what I was understanding was correct, I often found myself trying to paraphrase what she said for clarification, as is apparent in this transcription. I felt that Sophie was struggling with her speaking in many ways, more so than
most of the Level B adult ESL-Drama class students I was interacting with at the same time (who were supposed to be several levels below Sophie’s ESL level).

This excerpt also tells us that Sophie was compelled to take Ms. C’s drama class, despite her mother’s discouraging comment articulated by Sophie as “my mom say you so fat, maybe you can’t do it.” She described her personal interest in dance and musicals. She said she had taken ballet, and now is taking drama, because she enjoys watching movies and musicals. She explained that she doesn’t have many friends in Canada and she said she spends a lot of time at home, watching Chinese, American, and Canadian programs and movies on TV, especially when they contain dancing.

Both in my informal conversations and formal interviews with her, Sophie brought up many times the fact that the drama course has helped her with her English. She referred to both the kinesthetic aspect of the embodied in drama as well as the relational aspects of the embodied in drama work, as she described the impact of this drama class on her English skills. Instead of always relying on her Chinese-English electronic dictionary, Sophie enjoyed the opportunity of learning vocabulary when Ms. C. physicalized the meaning of unknown words that Sophie encounters. This is important for her since Sophie found that there were many words that Ms. C. used that she did not understand. Sophie was also very appreciative of the relational aspect of the drama work as she discussed her relationship with her classmates in this class. At the beginning of the excerpt above she said “But I -- dance together, so happy”, referring to the joy she experienced when dancing collectively in the drama class. Later in the excerpt she said “Yeah. I always speak Chinese…In drama class everybody know my name – “Sophie, come here, come over here.” Speak English. Other class only Chinese people, speak Chinese. No English friend.” Here, she referred to both how much she appreciated being able to speak in English with her
classmates, since this was the only class where she could do this. She also referred again to how
she was made to feel like she belonged, for the first time ever in a Canadian classroom (please
see pages 133-136 for an earlier discussion of Sophie’s sense of belonging/not belonging in
Chapter 5). She referred to this many times in my conversations with her. For example, she
referred to it when she was describing how she could just easily ask her classmates to help her
when she was not sure about the dance steps or the words or rhythm in the songs. In the excerpt
above, when I asked her about how she prepares for the continuous assessment in her drama
class, where Ms. C would ask two or three students to come up and dance and sing a scene that
they completed working on the week before, this is what Sophie said: “Teacher asks, go home,
listen the music, and dancing, repeat it. So I go home, repeat, repeat, remember, remember,
and sometimes come to here, talking to a friend, maybe Tiffany (pseudonym), and
ask her teach me a little bit, maybe I forget.”

The classroom work (putting on Joseph or High School Musical) was hard for Sophie
because the words of the songs went by too quickly for her. She coped by taking home the CD
and going over it many, many times to learn the words and the music. Multiple modes of
meaning-making were engaged in Sophie’s explanations about her learning experiences in this
class. She not only paid attention to the verbal modes (understanding vocabulary; memorizing
and singing lyrics; listening to the lyrics/songs on the CD/ iTunes or movie; having
conversations with classmates for clarification of certain choreography, lyrics, music; projection
of voice, intonation, stress, rhythm, and pronunciation), but also to many non-verbal modes, such
as both learning and expressing meaning through the body (by observing Ms. C.’s and other
peers’ body language and movements, using body movements to express feelings and
communicate ideas), using visuals (whether this meant watching the movie of the musicals that
they were working on, or visual work in the drama room, such as the use of tableaux or scene work) and taking into account spatial aspects of a performance (how to use the stage, where to move, when to move there, proximity to others, etc.), and other performative and aesthetic aspects (lighting, costumes, scenery etc.) In addition to the importance of gaining proficiency in speaking, writing was also something she wanted a lot of help with. Although there were brief moments of journal writing and character development writing in this course, because of the nature of performing a scripted, polished performance, this course could not really provide extensive opportunities to work on her writing (unlike the Middleview drama class or Ms. J’s drama-ESL class where this did happen).

6.2.3 Tigris

(In Ms. J’s Mandatory Drama-ESL Classroom at Braeburn)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.3</th>
<th>Social Descriptors for Tigris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Tigris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>Baghdad, Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Straight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
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<tr>
<td>First/Home Language</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Languages</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe yourself in a sentence</td>
<td>I am friendly, I make people laugh all the time but in my first language. Honest and can’t lie.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tigris is from Iraq and, like some of the other students in this class, had already completed high school in his country of origin, yet his diploma is not recognized in Canada. He explained that after completing high school, he started studying chemical engineering at university. But because of the political situation in Iraq, in his second year of university he had to leave the country and go to Syria for safety. When the situation in Iraq got better, he went back to Iraq to continue his studies. By his third year of university, his family decided to move to Toronto, so they moved before he could complete his four-year degree. In the excerpts below from our interview, Tigris described the difficult experience of realizing that his diploma and transcripts from his country of origin were not recognized in Canada:

Actually, I had a lot of problems here. It’s really hard here. Because you know when they ask me what did you study, your high school, your college, university. When I say “in Iraq”, they say it’s a little bit hard. Yeah, because of the war and that situation, actually they don’t – I don’t know how to explain that…because you know after the war, it wasn’t like a real government. So when they see your certificate after 2003, they say maybe it’s fake. Because a lot of people they just fake their certificates and they just, like, they pass university and they didn’t study for like maybe, half a year. They just spend it outside the country but they pay money, they pay money to the big heads, and they gave them this certificates. So that’s why we need more, we need more work here, to work hard to prove that you really studied there, and you didn’t fake anything…I have a transcript, but it’s not enough. They say that this doesn’t say that it’s one hundred per cent legal, they say maybe it’s illegal. Yeah. So I have to study from the beginning here. From the basement. And that’s why actually I’m studying here. You know I’ve started everything here. I’ve started math, I’ve started chemistry, physics. I finished all of them in my back home, but I have to study from the beginning here.

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009, [sic: see footnote 1, Chapter 5])

I interviewed Tigris at the end of his first quad in which he completed the Drama-ESL course; he was now into his second quad. While writing his answer to the question: “How would you describe yourself in a sentence?” in the social-identities table above, he replied with a big smile:
Actually it is hard to say this about yourself, but actually my friends and my family, they all say that I am friendly. And I tell jokes all the time—but not in English because, you know, it is hard sometimes to tell jokes in other languages. But in my language— you have no idea!— because sometimes I kill my family, my friends with my jokes. So I tell jokes all the time. So can I write that here?

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)

I was not surprised about this at all and I could easily visualize him telling jokes in his first language because I have seen him insert his good sense of humour into the drama performances in the classroom through words, gestures and facial expressions that made the whole class laugh. I encouraged him with an enthusiastic “of course!”

Tigris came to Canada in August 2008, 10 months before my interview with him. When I asked him about his future goals and dreams, he told me that he wanted to experience how it feels to be a university student in Canada. He summarized his hopes as having “a better life” because, he explained, right now he is experiencing a “hard life.” In the interview, Tigris brought up many issues and difficulties he is experiencing as an immigrant, from his feelings of loneliness in this new country, to the feelings of not belonging, or not feeling like he has a voice. He said that he feels he doesn’t yet belong to this country and he doesn’t have “rights” or he doesn’t have a “voice”, even though the immigration discourses tell him on paper that as an immigrant he has the rights that Canadian citizens have with the one exception of the right to vote.

Tigris: So actually, yeah, my dream is to try university, to feel the life of university here, of a university student. And yeah, another dream is to get a better life, cause you know, now, it’s actually a really hard life when you move to another country. You feel like you’re lonely, sometimes you feel like you don’t have the right – even though we have our rights here – but sometimes you feel like, Oh, I don’t have my rights here. There’s some people are better than me. I don’t have my rights here. You feel like you miss your friends, you feel you miss your life over there, you miss your family.

Burcu: When you say you don’t have your rights, do you mean a right to say something? You mean, to raise your voice? Is that what you mean?
Tigris: Yeah, that’s what I mean. But even though we have the right – but you feel like something –

Burcu: You don’t really feel a part yet? –

Tigris: Yeah, you’re still like – I’m not even Canadian yet, I’m still immigrant. I still don’t have my passport, my Canadian passport, so I can’t travel, I can’t go anywhere. That’s really sometimes feel like going to prison. Actually my case is a little bit easier than when you come as an refugee. Because I came as an immigrant. They gave me my PR [permanent residency] so I can go anywhere I like. But you still feel like you’re not in your environment. Feel like you’re not in your place that you got used to, the place that you were born in. Like your old friends, your life. You know, actually one thing you asked me about the challenges. When you speak in your own language, you don’t have to think. Like in your brain, OK, “what am I gonna say? I have to say this thing and then I have to say this thing, after that thing and say the other thing and then that thing”. You just talk like a child, you just speak anything you like. Here, it was actually a little bit challenging, even now when I’m speaking to you. A lot of words, I have to think if it is the right word or not. So that’s actually a little bit challenging… Even like when you wanna go to shop something, you’re going to have fun, but you know, when you go there, like when you’re waiting in the line, you feel like, oh, what I’m going to say – I’m gonna say like that, yeah, this is right word, or I’m gonna say like that. You’re going to shop, you’re going to have fun, but you’re going to, to … to think hard. So this was a bit challenging. But as I told you, even though we have the right, we have the right to do things, but you still miss it, like, it’s not your country, unless you live like maybe three years, or five years, and you get your passport, and proper English, and get a new life. And you’re like, OK, this is my country. I can’t leave it now. I have to stay here. Now, all the time I have fights with my parents, because they got me here. I didn’t like to come here.

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)

In addition to feeling that he doesn’t yet belong (which I analyze in Section 6.3.2), he also expressed frustration regarding the difficulty of living in a second language. He explained how he gets tired of always having to think hard in order to find the right words as he tries to express himself in English, even during the supposedly pleasurable time of shopping. Tigris had received English language education prior to coming to Canada. He went to a private high school in Baghdad where he studied everything in English. The school was founded “by the British in 1920”. Then, when Tigris came to Canada, he first went to an Adult ESL class (funded by the
provincial government) offered in a public library for a couple of months. Then he heard about the public Adult ESL high school program at Braeburn from an Iranian friend, passed the English language assessment exam, and was placed in this BO level. As mentioned previously (in Chapter 5, pp. 86-87) BO is the most basic level in this specific adult ESL high school. From my observation, Tigris was one of the most fluent speakers in this class. He often looked very confident when he spoke in class or performed during drama activities and I wondered if he should have been in the higher level ESL classroom. I asked him about the assessment process and here is how he explained it:

First they asked me about the English. The first thing was about the English. They asked me which level in English you are- from one to seven? Actually, I wrote between four and five. So they give me a sheet, like a paragraph, about the dinosaurs. Yeah, and you have to write an essay about it, by your own words…It was like a small paragraph about some kinds of dinosaurs. You have to write a paragraph by your own word, so it was really hard. Actually, I got - I think [thought] I did well, but they told me that my writing was poor, so they put me in the basic ESL, yeah. And then after that, um, there was the math test. They told me “OK, you can choose which grade you will be in, but you have to pass the exam for that grade.” So I chose 12, actually I didn’t pass [the Grade 12 Math assessment exam for placement]. It was really hard because, you know, sometimes you have to remember everything, you have to go back –So yeah, I tried 12, I didn’t get it. I tried 11 [the Grade 11 Math assessment exam for placement], 11 was actually a little bit challenging. So then I chose 10 [the Grade 10 Math assessment exam for placement]. I got well actually, I got [the score of] 9 out of 10.  

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)

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8 Tigris explained in this excerpt that he took two courses last quad: Ms. S’s Drama-ESL course and the Grade 10 math course. In this Adult ESL high school, if the students are at the most basic level (ESL BO), they can register in Grade 10 math. But they can only register if they have passed the Grade 10 Math entrance assessment test. It is also important to note here that students are invited to try the test for the grade they think they can pass. As Tigris had completed high school in his own country, he wanted to try passing the placement test for Grade 12 math. When he was unsuccessful, he tried the Grade 11 math placement test and was not successful again and then he tried the Grade 10 math placement test and passed it.
Tigris was not the only student who mentioned that the written task that was asked of them did not make too much sense and who wondered if they were assessed fairly. This current quad (current at the time of my interview with him), he had just begun taking Grade 11 Math and the ESL CO class. He also explained that he wanted to take the chemistry course. However, in order to register in Grade 11 chemistry, even though he passed the chemistry test for Grade 11, he had to wait till he finished the highest level of the ESL class (ESL EO). The same rule held true for other science courses such as biology and physics. If the student is successful in each class (ESL BO, CO, DO EO) he/she will be able to complete all four ESL level classes in four quads, and then later he/she will be allowed to take Grade 11 and 12 science courses.

Tigris was one of the few students in this classroom who was able to find a job as soon as he came, which was not the case for the majority of the students. Tigris explained that his level of conversational English helped him to get his job and added that his older brother, who did not have the same proficiency in English, was not as lucky as him.

Burcu: So when you came here, you went to the school, the ESL school, and then you worked, right?

Tigris: Yeah, yeah. Actually I find work just, like, after one month after I got here. I got lucky, I found work.

Burcu: That’s great! May I ask where you worked?

Tigris: I worked in a factory, in a factory for magazines, distributing magazines and books. So I worked as a stocker. You know you have to lift heavy things. It was good, actually. I made some friends, got some experience. But now actually I got laid off.

Burcu: Because of the economic situation?

Tigris: Yeah, because of the recession and these things. Yes. So now I’m trying to find a job.

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)
Even though Tigris seemed to be one of the most self-confident speakers in the class, and even though his language skills were good enough for him to find a job as soon as he came to Canada, throughout the interview he referred to how difficult it is for him to communicate in English and that he needs to build more self-confidence in his speaking.

In fact this was one of the reasons why I wanted to write about Tigris, after much thought about which ‘one’ student I should focus on for the case study from this site. I was initially drawn to students who were resistant to the drama pedagogy or who were extremely shy. I wanted to write about one of these students to be mindful of the resistance to drama pedagogy and to refrain from the celebratory tone evident in a lot of writing about drama. But then I realized that the feelings expressed in Tigris’ interview actually helped me to understand that Tigris is a good example of the fact that even Tigris, an ESL student who (although initially was suspicious about how drama could benefit his language skills but quickly started engaging with the course), seemed to be positive, comfortable and motivated to learn in class, may also still feel that his confidence in speaking is poor. This is partly related to the difficulty of learning a new language, but indirectly one wonders if this low self-esteem also occurs when adult ELL students coming from situations like Tigris’ are constantly being sent the message that whatever they have done, whatever they have shown to be capable of, is not good enough. It doesn’t matter that he was almost done with university, now none of that counts and he has to start in high school.

Like the other students in his class, Tigris was new to the use of drama and theatre in the classroom. Here is what he wrote in his journal about his first two weeks in the drama-ESL class:

I hadn’t been in a drama class before. So actually I didn’t know anything about it until two weeks ago. I thought that the Drama is all about tragedy and misery of what we always see in television or what we hear. So I wasn’t really excited about the class until the first day. Before that day I hadn’t any expectation about what is going to happen and what I was going to learn.

(Tigris, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 15 February 2009)
In the interview at the end of the quad, when I asked Tigris if he thought the drama-ESL class had been helpful with his English language skills, he immediately responded that the drama-ESL class had helped him very much with his self-confidence in communicating in English:

You have to speak all the time. You have to speak with your partners, you have to speak with your teacher, you have to speak during when you’re acting. And the good thing was, like, they gave me the confidence when I speak. So when I speak I feel more confident, because you know, like when you act in front of these people, and they are staring at you. Like in the beginning you feel like you’re shaking, you feel like it’s really hard. Like after the second time, the third time, you feel like you’re confident, and you can do it in a better way.

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)
6.3 Analysis of Students’ Experiences of Situated Practice

Rather than focusing on the knowledge these [minority] students bring to school and using it as a foundation for learning, the emphasis has been on what the students lack in terms of the forms of language and knowledge sanctioned by the school (Gonzalez et al., 1995, p.445)

Gonzalez et al. (1995), in their work with minority (Latina/o) students, refer to the need for accessing students’ *funds of knowledge*. They argue that educational institutions have “stripped away” the consideration that minority students are coming from “households rich in social and intellectual resources” (p.445). Similarly, Portelli and Vibert (2002) argue for what they call “curriculum of life” which calls for a curriculum that breaks down the walls between the school and the world, and grounds it in the “immediate daily worlds of students as well as in the larger social and political contexts of their lives.” As I described in my theoretical framework and literature review chapters, the following theorists all stress the same point about the importance of validating students’ prior knowledge (what Richards (1983) refers to as “real world knowledge”, or what is sometimes in the second language acquisition field referred to as students’ “content and formal schemata”), validating their cultures, their communities, accessing their *funds of knowledge*, and affirming their identities in the classrooms: *critical pedagogy* (Apple, 1979; Cummins, 2001, 2005a; Christensen, 1999; Fischman & McLaren, 2000; Freire, 1970/2006; Giroux, 1981; Greene,1986; Nieto, 2000, 2004; Portelli & Vibert, 2002); *critical race theory* (Yosso, 2005); *feminist poststructural theory, third world feminism, and Black feminism* (Anzaldúa, 1999; Britzman, 2000; hooks, 1990, 1991; Sandoval, 2000), *Multiliteracies pedagogy* (Cummins, 2006a, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996), critical multicultural literacies (Botelho, 2007) and *New Literacy Studies* (Gee, 1996, 2000; Knobel &
This kind of situated practice is seen as vital for identity construction, school engagement, deep understanding, and literacy/language learning.

In this section, through a focus on this situated practice, I provide an analysis of students’ experiences and their responses to the drama work in three sub-sections: The first part examines situated practice in respect to the relevance of the resources used in class; the second part explores situated practice in relation to working with students’ personal and cultural narratives and their performed identities through drama; and the third part investigates situated practice in relation to the notion of the ‘third space’ of ‘figured world’ as well as imagined L2 selves, ‘trajected’ identities and imagined communities.

6.3.1 Analysis of situated practice and relevance of resources

In literacy teaching the most significant life skill we can begin to develop in students is learning to choose reading resources that will be suitable for their needs and interests. (Booth, 2001, p.66)

Students in all three sites appreciated whenever teachers used resources that were relevant to their worlds, their past and present experiences and when their cultural knowledge was seen as a ‘resource’, instead of a burden (Cummins, 2001). In the interviews the students said they appreciated it when, for example, Ms. J. in the drama-ESL class used a multicultural folktale book; or when Ms C. integrated hip hop dance and popular music or any music of their choice into the musical; when Ms. S. took students to plays (Scratch by Charlotte Corbeil-Coleman, a 23-year old playwright who began writing this semi-autobiographical family story when she was 16; Scorched by Wajdi Mouvad, born in Lebanon, tells a story of civil war in an unspecified Middle Eastern country trying to capture the psychology of violence, hatred,
revenge, war and aggression; and Bashir Lazar, the story of an Algerian immigrant living in Montreal). Not all the student liked all the plays or all the folktales and certainly not all students liked hip hop dance, but whenever students mentioned a real engagement with any of these resources, they said they liked it because it reminded them of something they knew or they had experienced or something they were interested in and curious about in life in general. For example, for most students in Ms. S.’s class the fact that the play *Scratch* was written by a 16 year-old, somebody their age, was quite inspiring.

Hadaway, Vardell and Young (2002) state that multicultural literature enables all ELLs from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds to see themselves. Botelho and Rudman (2009) stress the importance of multicultural literature and its critical reading in reflecting diverse cultures other than those of the dominant cultures. Christensen (1999) writes, “critical literacy is embedded in students’ lives just as deeply as the students’ lives are embedded in the society” (p.57) and considers bringing multicultural and culturally and personally relevant texts into the classrooms as critical to their school engagement. Students from Ms. J.’s class said they very much enjoyed being able to read folktales from around the world, for the first unit. As I mentioned earlier in Chapter 5, Narges, from the drama ESL class, a recent immigrant from Iran, described how the folktale that her group worked on reminded her of the miseries in her homeland, as follows in her journal entry:

> I never thought I would leave Iran. I feel like it has been too long since I left my sweet beautiful homeland with its 2500 years history…Our story “Giant’s Bride” reminded me of those evil giants who stole everything: all the happiness and beauty out of the lives of those arrested, these honest and educated people, were first tortured then killed, they were tortured in many ways. Some prisoners were with the little children and these kids with their mothers for many years in prison. All that they knew was to be locked up. They did not know anything about the
real world or the normal and beautiful life they deserved. They did not even have any view of freedom. Some people escaped from Iran and emigrated all over the world.
(Narges, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 1 May 2009, [sic: see footnote 1, Chapter 5])

Similarly, the Proverb project was a situated practice that acknowledged students’ prior cultural wisdom and knowledge. In his journal Tenzin wrote “in every country there is great proverbs in their own language” (student journal, 29 April 2009). Students interviewed mentioned their delight in being invited to share something from their language and culture.

Usually, in second language classrooms, because the attention is on learning the new language, the first language and culture of the students are rarely invited as relevant resources. However, in this drama-ESL course, the students became the teachers of their own cultural proverbs, validating their cultures and affirming their identities. Here is how Pema described this proverb project and how he felt about it:

I liked to do the proverbs. That was fun because my partner, she is from Philipines and I am from Tibet and we had to match our proverbs at one meaning. She got lots of proverbs from her language and me I also have lots from my language. From that we have to pick up one and presentation in front of all the students. First what is our name and where we are from pointing on map. What is your proverb from your country and we have have to say meaning of proverb in english.
(Pema, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 29 April 2009).

This was the first presentation in Ms. J.’s drama course, which took place in the first week. Therefore, she wanted them to say their name, point to their home country on the map, and share the information about their chosen proverb that they had prepared on a flipchart. Ms. J. also wanted them to tell the class whether there was a similar proverb in English. Students also mentioned a great interest in finding common are from before threads among proverbs from different cultures through collective thinking about the nuances of differences in similar
proverbs, from culture to culture. As Seema and Tigris state in the excerpts below, many of them also expressed an interest in learning about their classmates’ cultures in this process:

I liked proverbs group work because we learn about each other,  
(Seema, journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 29 April 2009).

I liked the proverbs… I worked with a partner from Greece, different country, different culture and different background but I found that we have a lot in common especially the proverbs. Some of them have the similar meaning and some are exactly the same and that was really interesting…Now I think I feel excited about Drama.  
(Tigris, student journal entry, 12 February 2009).

In addition to these experiences expressed by the students in Ms. S., Ms. C., and Ms. J.’s classrooms, other teachers that I interviewed also discussed how well their students responded when these teachers used resources relevant to students’ own needs, interests, and present and past realities. For example, Ms. D, who is an English teacher at Braeburn in the ‘at-risk’ program for youth, said that she tries to keep current with the music that the students are listening to and the current contemporary fiction they might be interested in. She said she chooses books like *Lullabies for Little Criminals* by Heat O’Neill, a story that takes place in Montreal and describes the struggles of a twelve-year-old girl whose father is a heroin addict, and who moves to foster homes and a detention center. Another book she mentioned was “A Million Little Pieces” which is a semi-fictional memoir by James Frey that tells the story of a 23-year-old alcoholic and drug abuser and how he copes with rehabilitation in a treatment center. Ms. N, a drama teacher in the same ‘at-risk’ program, also stressed the importance of choosing texts/resources that are relevant for the youth she teaches:

You’re teaching an English class and you’re studying, let’s say, Of Mice and Men, from the white, male cannon of writing. You’ve got some, you know, references to niggers and a woman who’s killed, really for no reason. It’s not necessarily going to engage them because it really doesn’t connect to them. So you want to study something that does engage them. And that’s their own culture, their own background, their own city, their own age sometimes. I think the age thing is especially important in English. Giving them reading material that’s
geared towards youth, rather than geared towards middle-aged adults. Cause it enganges them.
(Ms. N., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 8 May 2009)

In the teacher focus group, Ms. S. explained that gender also matters when choosing relevant resources. She explained that because of the technical program in Middleview Technical School, she often has more male than female students in her courses. She described that one time, she had an all boy drama class and she brought a male drummer in to inspire the collective creation the students worked on:

I brought in a drummer, this Rastafarian guy… Pierre, to work with my class full of boys. And they did this complicated drumming thing with him, and then I got them to write poems about the drum, and the drum poems were beautiful. It was all about masculinity and the drums. And it was neat. There was something about physically drumming that brought them together as a group.
(Ms. S., teacher focus group with Ms. S, Ms. B. and Ms. L., Middleview, 15 June 2009)

Instead of a traditional print-based practice to inspire the learning, she brought an embodied form of drumming practice. Here Ms. S. says “there was something physically about drumming that brought them together”. The physical experience of drumming trying to imitate the eloquence in the master’s hands to “inculcate the right tension-release, energy input and timing” is a learning that is bodily transmitted (Mans, 2004, p.90). Mans explains that in the past, “much indigenous learning took place through bodily transmission” and argues that this kind of bodily mastery is rarely (if ever) utilized in school contexts, although embodied/corporeal learning is something that feels innate (Mans, 2004, p.90). Yet Ms. S. found that this embodied practice of drumming greatly inspired these students to write in ways that most traditional practices would not.

There were also situated practices in Ms. C.’s drama class in Braeburn’s ‘at-risk’ program. Students in this course began their first day by discussing what they were passionate about as individuals, in groups of four. On flipchart papers, they first wrote about, or drew, what
interested them in life. Then, they looked at the common threads among the depictions and shared these with the class. It was interesting that for the students who took this elective class, music and dance frequently emerged, in addition to the more expected theme of drama.

6.3.2 Analysis of situated practice and performing identities

[The students] themselves are the ‘subject’, the essential content, of the fictional worlds in the creative process of dramatic role-play. (Gallagher, 2000, p.134)

Lortie (2005) writes that, “almost everyone writing on drama treats it as a social phenomenon, but stops short of viewing students’ dramatic role-playing as a play within a play, a dialectic between the ‘real’ and the ‘fictional’ performances of self” (p. 36) the way Gallagher describes it above. In The Theatre of Urban she writes that in drama, “often these ‘fictional’ locations are in dynamic dialogue with the realities of their lives” (p. 98). I suggested earlier, in Chapter 5, that the drama performances of these ELLs of Ms. J.’s Drama-ESL course and Ms. S.’s drama course could be viewed as performances of their identity texts (Cummins, 2005a; Cummins et al., 2005). The drama work that ELLs created often represented, explicitly and implicitly, their social realities outside of the class. They explored issues that are pertinent to their past and present lives in their embodied performances.
For example, in the interviews with the drama-ESL students, many students told me that the moments that stayed with them the most were the ones that incorporated their own stories. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 6, Addis notes: “especially when it is our real story, it interesting.”

In the same vein, students like Moham and Aisha stated that, during the holiday celebrations role-play unit (Unit 2 in the Drama-ESL class), it was quite special for them to be able to share a holiday celebration and then see their own identity texts become a springboard for the collective text/performance of their group.

It was important for me to show this celebration. They [group members] liked it, especially the dancing and the fire.
(Moham, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 24 April 2009)

First I wrote about the Eid and I explained the script to my classmates. I was not sure that my classmates would be interested in doing of the play about an eastern holiday because the younger people are more interested to western holiday. But they said eagerly it is

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9 All photos in this dissertation were taken by Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou.
good idea. We like it. Then we began to work together and we put also other ideas in the
script. We thought our story should have three scenes. Which part of our story should
come in the first, second or third. We had to think about characters. We decided who is
good for what role…The situation was also important for example there would be a
conflict between the families. In the presentation was also the setting, mood and props
very crucial…I like the co-operation and patience of each of us. We gave each other
feedback. This group was completely different then the last group. This time we worked
together and practiced together. Sometime we had to laugh.
(Aisha, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 29 May 2009)

Students not only portrayed the celebratory aspects of these holidays, but at times they
looked at these practices critically. They performed the consequences of getting drunk during a
New Year Celebration because of the cultural over-emphasis on alcohol in the society and media
that creates associations between New Year’s Celebrations and drinking. They performed the
distribution of poisoned candies to kids during Halloween. One group explored what it feels like
to try to preserve a holiday celebration that relies on financial abilities when a father loses his job
in the face of economic crisis. Students wrote original scripts for this role-play about holiday
celebrations. Tarek was in role as the father for this role-play. In his journal entry he wrote about
how the mother and the father respond differently to this overwhelming situation in this role-
play:

The father lost his job in 2008 economy problem. The father doesn’t want to spend the
money for every thing, just he thinks how to management his life without job. Lea my
wife wants to make her child happy and keep the life normal. We worked hard to sent a
small message to everybody ‘How to deal with your children in troubled times’…Really
it was little bit of pain and happy show” (Tarek, journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 1
June 2009)

Another group explored a disfunctional family with a father, Pedro, who is consistently
absent from holiday celebrations and once again chooses to work instead of celebrating
Christmas with the larger family. However the dynamics are not that simple. The role-play also
portrays that part of this resistance comes from his negative feelings towards his in-laws, who
according to him disrespect him and do not trust him. The mother-in-law’s response when she
hears that he is not coming is: “I really don’t trust this guy. My daughter doesn’t deserve a man like him.” The role-play ends with the father deciding to show up at the Christmas party to surprise his two daughters and his wife. The mother-in-law immediately yells at him and gives the message that he is not welcome:

   Pedro: Hey guys, surprise!!!
   
   Mother-in-law: Surprise for what? You think you can show up any time you want? The party is over.
   
   Pedro: I can explain. Don’t make it difficult. I am here now.
   
   Mother-in-law: No, it is too late. The party is over.
   
   Pedro: Meron, Indush: come on my sweet daughters, don’t you want to give a hug to your dad? Aren’t you happy to see me?
   
   Wife: Yes, thanks for coming…. (and she gives a hug)
   
   (Holiday Celebration, excerpt from original script created by the students in one group, Braeburn Drama-ESL)

   They chose to end the scene with these seemingly happy words from the wife but the visuals/the body language in the scene told us another story. As the wife thanked the husband and was giving him a hug, the two daughters’ facial expressions and body language was disapproving and distant towards their dad. And the wife’s facial expressions pictured a forced smile mixed with concern. The power relations shifted at different points in the performance (drama role play). The wife’s social performance (performing ‘happy’ as a wife, to her audience of family members) was almost a performance within a performance. It was maybe an ‘I am in control’ performance of trying to make things work but not truly believing it herself, and a social performance that tries to signal to others that everything is OK and resolved. Yet as the two
audiences – both us the real theatre viewers (those of us watching in our seats) and the other audience, which is other characters in the play, the daughters, the mother-in-law, the father-in-law etc. – we were all made aware through the body language that nothing was really resolved or OK.

Analysis of these performances through the framework of embodied intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Mirza, 2009) afforded me the opportunity to examine the students’ representations of hybrid linguistic identities as well as their other multiple subject positions such as race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, religion etc. This framework originated from black feminism “to reconfigure the complexities of black female marginality in an intersectional analysis where race, class, gender, and other social divisions are theorized as lived realities” (Mirza, 2009, p.3).

In embodied intersectionality theory, although the focus is on the lived embodied experiences, Mirza writes that “the purpose of the focus on the embodied experience is not to privilege the experience”, which is different from Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and his focus on the ‘lived experience’. Mirza explains that experience is a problematic epistemological concept:

> [it] appeals to experience risk obscuring regimes of power by naturalising some experiences as normative, and others as not, leaving the processes that structure dominance intact. Thus experience should not be an explanation or justification in itself, but be seen as an *interpretation* of the social world that needs explaining. (p. 3)

These students from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, gender and sexual-orientation subject positions created embodied narratives that were representative of the realities and discourses current in their lives: social, political, economic, linguistic, cultural and gender-related. They questioned certain real-life practices and troubled the existing power
relations in society with these performances. One group, for example, decided to write about Eid. Two out of five students in this group were celebrating this holiday. Aisha, an older student in the class, suggested writing and performing a script about Eid. As I explained in Chapter 5, p.110, she was really surprised when all her group members were interested in this suggestion because she initially thought even the younger male student who also celebrates this holiday might not be interested in performing this. She had written in her journal that all the other students were much younger than her, and as I shared earlier, she wrote, “I was not sure that my classmates would be interested in doing of the play about an eastern holiday because younger people are more interested to western holiday”. It could be argued that this experience affirmed her identity because everyone else valued what she treasured. Charuni and Nadia, two female students who were not familiar with this celebration wrote the following entries before this group work:

My role of the play was a boy named Oumer. This boy is a poor man’s son, didn’t have money to buy new clothes or anything to celebrate with. In Eid time people buy new stuff to celebrate but Oumer did not have. The neibour’s boy Asife came from rich family. His family help Oumer and give him new clothes and shoes to celebrate…My role was very interesting role and I enjoyed acting it out… Every group choice different topic and these topic were helpful to us because we learned out different cultures holidays.
(Charuni, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 30 May 09)

I like it to play role as a wife in the family. I had fun. I like the idea of working in group. It is going to help each other and to be more close. The presentation helped us to know and to learn about different celebration, culture and religion.
(Nadia, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 1 June 2009)

A REAL EID

Characters:

Mr. Ahmed (Father)

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10 This group wrote the Eid script collectively. The writing process in collective creation is described in Chapter 5 (Section 5.5.1.1 p. 110-112).
Mrs. Ahmed (Mother)
Sana (Daughter, 18 years old)
Sidra (Daughter, 15 years old)
Asif (Son, 12 years old)
Umar (Poor Boy/ Asif’s friend, 13 years old)

Scene 1
(Moon sighting night: Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed are sitting on the sofa and watching TV. Sidra is fixing cartons and Asif is helping her. Sana is doing some work in the kitchen)

Asif: Hey guys! Aren’t you going to see the Eid crescent moon?
Sana: I am going to the roof. Who wants to come with me?

(Sidra and Asif shout together)

Sidra & Asif: We are coming too.

(Mrs. Ahmed stops doing her work in the kitchen and says to Mr. Ahmed)

Mrs. Ahmed: Let’s go to see the moon with the children

(They both head towards the roof)

Asif: I see it! I see it!
Sidra: Where?
Asif: There. (pointing to the moon) Don’t you see? It is above the tree.
Sidra: I see it now. It is there (Sidra pointing to the moon.)
Sana: I can’t find it.
Sidra: It is just on the right of the tallest building.
Sana: Yes! Yes! I see it too.

(Everybody greeting each other saying “Chaand Mubarak”)

Mrs. Ahmed: Guys, let’s do everything fast. Tomorrow will be Eid and we don’t have much time to prepare.
Sana: We have almost finished everything. Now Sidra and I are going to put henna on our hands.
Asif: Sister, can I do henna on my hands too?
Sana: No Asif, only girls can apply henna on their hands.

(Everybody is moving downstairs. Suddenly Mr. Ahmed sees a child outside the house and he seems very sad.)

Mr. Ahmed: Who is this boy?

(Mrs. Ahmed and Asif stop to see the boy)
Mrs. Ahmed: He is our neighbour.
Mr. Ahmed: Why is he looking so sad?
Mrs. Ahmed: I don’t have any idea. Let’s talk to him.

In what follows next, similar to the group who wrote about the job loss of a father in harsh economic conditions, this group also troubled the reliance of holiday celebration on financial ability. But in this group’s performance instead of writing from the viewpoint of the mother and father, the central character was the child’s perspective. Later in the script/performance we learn that the neighbour boy was sad because he did not have new clothes, shoes or other new things for Eid since his family could not afford it. Since all the shops are already closed because of Eid celebrations, Asif decides to try to cheer the boy up by giving him the new clothes and gifts that he received himself for Eid, and they also decide to give money to this family. The boy and his parents get really happy when they receive the gifts. The script ends with everybody celebrating the Eid party at this family’s home.

This group troubled economic pressure, and issues of poverty and class that created outsider (those who can not afford)–insider positions in the society. They touched on gender roles as well when Asif asked his sister if he could also apply henna on his hands and his sister said “No Asif, only girls can apply henna on their hands”. It seemed to me that the motivation for inserting this did not seem to be to trouble the constructed nature of gender, but more so to include it because of its humour in the text. However another group, while portraying the preparations for the Eid celebration, were troubling gender-roles in their performances by actively resisting the unequal and unfair gender roles in a specific family context. Their performance contained not only scenes where they simply illustrated these unequal gender roles by depicting women doing all the preparatory housework, but they also portrayed an active
resistance to and criticism of, these oppressive gender roles by confronting the male figure in-role within the performance. In the performance, the daughter of the family was responsible for cleaning the house while the mother cooked. In one scene the daughter, tired from all the housework and setting up the table, saw her brother lying on a bed just listening to music. She asked him to help her because it was not fair for her to do all the housework as he was lying down, not doing anything. (In the photo labeled Figure 6.2 the woman standing is confronting the male lying on the floor/bed). Butler (2004) writes “the critique of gender norms must be situated within the context of the lives as they are lived and must be guided by the question of what maximizes the possibilities for a livable life, what minimizes the possibility of unbearable life” (p.8). This embodied narrative of the holiday celebration role-play raised these questions that Butler suggests and directly illustrated Butler’s argument that “gender is performative” and socially constructed; it also portrayed the illusion of stable gender identity (Butler, 2004, p. 218). Maxine Greene (1993) draws our attention to “imaginations’ capacity” to deconstruct the structures that oppress us (such as deconstructing the ascribed gender roles and relations embodied in this group’s performance) as she writes:

Human beings are prone to take action in response to the sense of injustice or to the imagination’s capacity to look at things as if they could be otherwise. The democratic community, always a community in the making, depends not so much on what has been achieved and funded in the past. It is kept alive; it is energized and radiated by an awareness of future possibility. (p. 17)
During interviews and my informal conversations with the students, they explained that these performances in their drama-ESL course for the Culminating Unit were often directly related to their lives, since the project asked them to write and perform about the experiences of an immigrant to Canada. As I described in Chapter 5, for this unit, students wrote two scenes about a Canadian immigrant experience, portraying a conflict that may or may not be resolved within the performance. In addition they also created a series of five tableaux showing the possible triumphs and successes of the ‘New Canadian’ as the last component of their presentations. The students brought their understanding of their lives in Canada as newcomers/immigrants/ refugees into their theatre-making as they prepared their performances for this unit.
Students performed these *identity texts* in English, their new language, as they expressed their understandings of their lives in this new, urban Canadian context caught up in certain webs of power and powerlessness. For example, they performed their experiences about the difficulty of communicating in another language; their experiences about living in refugee shelters; their experiences about the disconnect that appears between them and their children or parents because of this new cultural context; and the crushing disappointment of realizing that their qualifications are not recognized.

*Figure 6.3*: Performance about a newcomer’s experience of unfulfilled expectations about Canada and the use of drugs and alcohol to cope with disappointment.
Performing these identity texts, the students said, was important to them especially since these ELLs often felt their ethnic, classed, gendered, immigrant and language experiences and histories were being silenced in the larger society and this was their chance to talk back to these issues collectively and in the ‘safety of fiction’ (Gallagher, 2000). Many of the students in this drama-ESL course, as well as other ELLs that I interviewed, referred to the feeling that they do not yet feel they belong in the larger Canadian society. As newcomers, they experienced isolation because of existing power relations in society. Based on Bourdieu’s concept of ‘capital’ extending beyond that of economic capital, the students not only lacked economic capital, but also social, cultural and symbolic capital (1990). Dance (2000) defines social capital as “resources that result from social relationships among individuals, families, communal groups, social networks, and the like” and cultural capital as “the linguistic and cultural competencies of the dominant group in society” (p.72). Bourdieu’s symbolic capital refers to, for example, the respect and recognition received from others. ELLs in these classrooms, especially the ones who had less economic capital, could not make friends easily (social capital), could not understand and respond to the implicit culture specific codes, such as humour (cultural capital) and usually
did not feel they received much respect (symbolic capital). For example, when I asked Steph and Shahla about some of the challenges they faced as newcomer ELL students, they both explained that their biggest challenge was to make friends:

Actually my biggest challenge was to make friends. When you come to a school and you don’t know anyone, you feel different and you are scared they might not like you, be rude to you. (Steph)

I never had troubles making friends except for coming to Canada. I remember, oh my god, Ok. Because everytime I stepped to a school, after at least a month I had friends, everyone knew me. (Shahla)
(Steph and Shahal, students’ interview, Middleview, 16 April 2009)

Moham, a student in the drama-ESL class said that not only did he not have friends, in fact for a long time he did not communicate with anyone at all. He said:

When I came here, I got silenced. For the long long time I didn’t speak. Even-they say-small talk. I didn’t even start small talk in elevator- hi, how are you?- nothing at all. Because I [ was] scared if for example, I say ‘hi’, they’ll start talking, you have to say nothing. When you don’t know it is embarrassing so I never did that. (Moham, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 24 April 2009)

Many ELLs that I interviewed referred to these feelings about not yet belonging to the larger Canadian society. They left a strong impression that as ELLs in Canada, they do not have a voice and feel isolated. For example, about her experience in Ms. C’s classroom, Sophie said that she felt, for the first time, like she belonged in a Canadian classroom. For Sophie, in the drama class, the singing and dancing as a collective was an escape from her social isolation outside the classroom. Kitty, an ESL student at Middleview Technical School (who was a prior student of Ms. L.-an ESL teacher at Middleview that I interviewed) and who previously took the dramas-ESL course offered for ESL A-Level students at that school, points to how she feels completely isolated and voiceless in her life as an incompetent English language speaker: “The always ‘pardon me’. When I speak they always say ‘Pardon’. And some people are not so nice. They say “AHHH, never mind!” As identified earlier, Tigris also shares these same feelings of
isolation and voicelessness and not feeling like he has ‘rights’. These students’ words about not feeling like they have a voice or they have ‘rights’ reminds me of the vital question that Gayatri Chakravotsky Spivak (1998) asks in her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak asks the same question that Tigris asks: “Does the subaltern really have a voice?” Although Spivak is mostly concerned with the subaltern class under colonial rule (and the subaltern who literally cannot speak since she/he is no longer alive), her argument can still help us analyze Tigris’s and other ELL students’ experience of voicelessness.

One of the reasons why these ELLs feel they do not have a voice is, of course, related to the fact that they don’t feel they know English well enough yet. Tigris said: “When you speak in your own language you don’t have to think…” so speech comes more freely in ELLs’ own language but they have to work at it in English. ELLs referred to other factors in the interviews that relate to their lack of voice. Like in the examples I provided above, these included their feelings of isolation and loneliness; the fact that some of them had to come to this new country based on their family’s decisions, even in some cases despite their resistance to the idea of leaving their country and their friends; their experiences that make them feel powerless because of hidden, as well as overt, power relations in Canada both in the school system and the larger society. These are exemplified by many experiences including their diplomas and transcripts not being recognized, to economic concerns of not being able to find a job, to difficult experiences with guidance offices. So even when the subaltern (or an ELL) does speak, who would listen to her/him? In a way, these ELLs and Spivak all argue that even when they, the subalterns, speak, it is not recognized as speech or is not heard. This is especially true if it is in line with the authorizing/authoritative narratives of the “Occident” (West) that continue to produce an objectified and negatively stereotyped “Orient” (Non-West; Said, 1978). Spivak criticizes three
groups of intellectuals: i) the two French intellectuals Foucault and Deleuze; ii) Marx and Marxists; and iii) The Subaltern Study Group, a group of Indian intellectuals who pioneered post-colonial thinking about the oppressed in India in Spivak’s article “Can the Subalter Speak?”. All three groups of intellectuals share a primary concern with the oppressed, yet according to Spivak, they all assume that the subaltern/oppressed can speak and in addition it is the responsibility of the intellectuals to uncover this subaltern voice. In Marxism, for example, the proletariat will reach freedom and will have a voice, and through voicing their concerns, they will have the intellectuals on their side. Spivak explains that Foucault believes the oppressed can speak and can transparently express their own true interests to the intellectuals. For Deleuze, the oppressed not only can speak, but they would tell us with full knowledge about their own oppression and the conditions for their liberation. Spivak asserts that this thought undermines the poststructuralist idea that there is not a direct link between consciousness and knowledge and that the individual is split and heterogeneous, and is defined by multiple intersecting discourses.

11 Spivak’s argument on the role of intellectuals and appropriation of voice is also important to note here. Spivak in the article “Can the Subalter Speak?” stresses that all three groups presume that someone else, the intellectual, is listening to the Otherings of the oppressed. But Spivak explains what the intellectual uncovers is only his/her interpretation. She writes:

…We must ask who is the real receiver of an ‘insurgency’? The historian ‘the intellectual’ who is transforming ‘insurgency’ into ‘text for knowledge’ is only one ‘receiver’ of any collectively intended social act. With no possibility of nostalgia for that lost origin, the historian must suspend (as far as possible) the clamor of his or her own consciousness, so that the elaboration of the insurgency, packaged with an insurgent consciousness, does not freeze into an ‘object of investigation’, or worse yet, a model of imitation. ‘The subject’ implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counter possibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subject in the dominant groups. The postcolonial intellectuals learn that their privilege is their loss. In this they are a paradigm of the intellectuals. (Spivak, 1988, p. 82)

Even though I am using Tigris’s own words extensively here, am I still not doing the same thing that Spivak criticizes as I try to make sense by providing my analysis and interpretation as an intellectual? Aren’t Tigris’ words enough? Or do I owe to the research community this analysis, which can only present my own interpretation of Tigris’ experience? I believe what Spivak suggests in her article is not that the intellectuals stop trying to think and write about the subaltern, but for the intellectuals to realize and be mindful of their limitations that there is no such thing as a “transparent intellectual”.


that do not constitute a unified whole. Through these examples, Spivak points out that with Foucault and Deleuze, even the notion of the subaltern is encoded with notions of a Western self. Spivak asserts that even though Foucault and Deleuze resist the euro-centered understanding of power, they cannot escape the European tradition of philosophy that the subaltern consciousness has a desire to speak, a desire for freedom and a desire to tell the truth. Spivak writes:

Foucault is a brilliant thinker of power-in-spacing, but the awareness of the topographical reinscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions. He is taken by the restricted version of the West produced by that reinscription and thus helps to consolidate its effects. (1988, p. 85)

That Deleuze and Foucault ignore both the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labor would matter less if they did not, in closing, touch on third world issues. But in France it is impossible to ignore the problem of the tiers monde, the inhabitants of the erstwhile French African colonies. Deleuze limits his consideration of the third world to these old local and regional indigenous elite who are, ideally, subaltern (Spivak, 1988, p.84).

Both Spivak’s and these ELLs’ answer to this question “Can the subaltern speak?” is “No”. For example, Tigris mentions that even though he knows that he has certain rights on paper, he doesn’t feel he has them in his day-to-day life as an immigrant. He doesn’t think that he has a voice or rights in this new country. The feeling of disempowerment that Tigris expresses is also echoed in the findings of many research studies on language, identity and citizenship (see Dhruvarajan, 2000; Churchill, 2003). The notions of ‘rights’, ‘access to rights’ and ‘belonging,’ (using Jenson & Philips’ (1996) terms) that these students raised in the interviews and through their performances are important in understanding the immigrant and refugee experience in relation to developing a transnational civic identity. Churchill suggests that adult language education classrooms can be environments in which to gain a more developed sense of ‘belonging’ and civic identity for immigrant and refugee students:
The pervasive nature of difficulties that affect immigrants’ socialization into any host society raises questions about policies for adult language training that, by and large, have been conceptualized around narrow employment objectives. An alternative would be to examine the possibilities of using the formalized second language learning environment as a vehicle for shaping more directly aspects of civic identity and assisting in developing more effective skills for access to rights and a more developed sense of belonging - all key elements in citizenship and national identity. (Churchill, 2003, pp. 39-40)

For example, Tigris explains that maybe after three or five years, after he becomes a Canadian and gets his passport and hopefully learns proper English, he will get a new life. In the following interview excerpt that I previously shared, Tigris’ explanation about becoming a ‘proper’ Canadian is tainted by neo-liberal discourses of the ‘proper’ citizen:

But as I told you, even though we have the right, we have the right to do things, but you still miss it, like, it’s not your country, unless you live like maybe three years, or five years, and you get your passport, and proper English, and get a new life. And you’re like, OK, this is my country. I can’t leave it now. I have to stay here. Now, all the time I have fights with my parents, because they got me here. I didn’t like to come here. (Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)

The importance of proficiency in English has always been considered an important indicator of a ‘good’ Canadian citizen. This discourse is strongly reinforced by the federal government’s recent proposal for changes to the Canadian citizenship test to include submitting proof of English or French language proficiency in addition to writing the test. Immigration Minister Jason Kenney expressed his rationale for the proposed changes, stating that:

The ability to communicate effectively in either French or English is key to the success of new citizens in Canada. This change will encourage applicants to ensure that they can speak English or French when they apply for citizenship, thereby improving the integrity and effectiveness of the citizenship program for Canada and for new Canadians alike. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011)

These discourses also became the topic of some of the students’ performances in the culminating unit of the drama-ESL class. For example, one group explored the discourses they encountered through media and in the society, which constructed them as the ‘dangerous’ Other
(just because they were immigrants), by performing how they were made to feel like ‘threats’ without any apparent reason in their work place because of these discourses (please see the youtube link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryd1-xco9cg for an example of this type of media discourse). In Multicultural Dilemmas: Identity, Difference, Otherness, Kalaga and Kubisz (2008) note that:

Threatening presence of immigrants becomes true although the threat was never proven. Citizens become therefore endangered, immigrant endangering and truth becomes a set of different modes of interpretation of relations towards ourselves and others. The truth is therefore not only being produced but it also produces its own consequences. (p.151).

Kalaga and Kubitsz make this point by building on Foucault’s following argument about truth and power:

There is a battle “for truth”, or at least “around truth”-it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean ‘the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted’, but rather ‘the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true’, it being understood also that it’s not a matter of a battle ‘on behalf’ of truth, but a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. (Foucault, 1980a, p. 132)

As the students explored in their performances, society’s conception of legal/illegal immigrants or refugees is produced by media depictions perpetuating the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality (in addition to the governmental discourses), the camera often capturing individuals who look the most different or act the most different to create the Other’s distinctiveness. The Indo-Canadian stand-up comedian Russell Peters in fact, through some of his jokes, explores this concept of Othering that is created in media (unfortunately through the use of the often crude and offensive language of stand-up comedy).

Whenever they show Arabic being spoken on TV, it’s usually these crazy people in these protests in the Arab world and all of them speaking this really horrrish …accent "Khalikokhu kha.. la la la la FUCK AMERICA!"….Basically all they are showing you of the Arab World are the red necks of the Arab World…I bet in the Arab world all they show of America is Jerry Springer. (Peters, 2010)
In the focus group interview that I did with two students, Abey and Addis, who were both from Ethiopia, Abey said that her group’s performance portrayed her own experience of being ‘Othered’ and being seen as a threat in a work context. She explained that a co-worker in the coffee shop she was working at didn’t like her from the first moment they met for some reason she couldn’t understand. Abey said maybe it was because of the colour of her skin and that she looked different. One day Abey learned that this co-worker went ahead and complained to their boss about her. The boss later came to her and without listening to what Abey had to say, fired her, claiming that she was making her co-workers ‘uncomfortable’. Abey explained that she felt terribly crushed and silenced. As I listened to Abey describe this experience, I was reminded of Fanon’s experience about the surveillance of colonial power in “Black Skins, White Masks” in the section where Fanon describes how a little girl, fixing her eyes on Fanon and then turning to her mother, said: “Look, a Negro …Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened.” Fanon concludes that these experiences are enacted every day in colonial societies. One might argue that contemporary Western societies are postcolonial and that Fanon’s insights are irrelevant in today’s world. However, Leila Gandhi argues that, “whenever postcolonialism identifies itself with the epochal ‘end’ of colonialism, it becomes falsely utopian or prematurely celebratory” (1988, p.174). She explains that ‘post’ in postcolonialism suggests the illusion of an enlightened supersession of colonial trouble” (p.174). She adds that:

Needless to say, this suggestion of an improved and unified world order fails to account either for the increased divisiveness between and within contemporary societies, or for the persistence of colonial formations world over. Equally it ignores problems of neoliberalism—held in place by transnational corporations and the international division of labour, linking first-world capital to third world labour markets. (p.175)

Abey was made to feel Othered and seen as a threat, similar to Fanon. Recalling Tigris’ comments in the interview, Abbey was made to feel like she had no voice, not so much because
of her English proficiency level (since she was one of the most fluent students in terms of her speaking; she was in this class because she was much less proficient with her writing), but more because the boss really was not interested in what she had to say in her own defence. He had already made his decision to fire her because she was making others “uncomfortable” by her presence. This relates back to Spivak’s notion of “the subaltern.” Andreotti (2006) writes that “In line with Said, Bhabha, and Fanon, Spivak affirms that the colonial power changes the subaltern’s perception of self and reality and legitimizes its cultural supremacy in the (epistemic) violence of creating an ‘inferior’ other, and naturalizing these constructs” (p. 87).

In the same interview, after Alem’s explanations, Addis gave another example of ‘silencing’ (Addis used the term ‘unfairness’ as she described what I call ‘silencing’). She added to Abey’s argument that these kinds of unfair treatments can happen not only because a person might look different, but also that it even sometimes happens on the phone when they cannot see you, but still hear your accent. She explained that her group performed her experience of this other form of ‘silencing’. In her first years in Canada, she would answer the phone when telemarketers called. She said that, after some time, she noticed that as soon as the telemarketers heard her accented English, instead of slowing down or rephrasing things, they would speak even faster and pose these convoluted questions that she didn’t understand, then she would be made to feel obliged to answer. She explained that out of helplessness and pressure at times she would say “yes?!” with great hesitation, since she would feel obliged to answer. And then she and her husband would realize that they were billed for purchases or services - things they didn’t mean to buy. For example, she said “One time I changed cable from Bell to Roger”. Because of these involuntary consequences, she said now she has learned not to pick up the phone and talk to telemarketers.
As illustrated in the examples above, through their drama performances, Tigris and his classmates explored what it meant and how it felt not to have a voice; or to be Othered; or to be seen as a threat; not to feel exactly like a ‘proper citizen;’ not to feel like they have ‘rights’ these ELLs expressed in the interviews. When I was learning more about these students’ experiences, I often left the interviews feeling despair at their struggles in this new country, their feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and voicelessness. In my interviews with the students, they often expressed a great joy about what they learned and how they felt in drama classrooms, and how much they grew in terms of self-confidence, pronunciation, and becoming more comfortable with communicating verbally in English and overcoming or lessening their stage-fright, etc. (Please note that I focus on these language engagement and multimodal literacy practices in Section 6.4). However, despite their huge language development over the weeks that I knew them, my excitement was dampened by the difficulty of the ELLs’ (especially those who arrived in Canada in their later years of schooling) journey to succeed linguistically, socially and academically for these ELLs. Reading Ruth Behar’s (1996) book The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart was helpful in these recurring moments of vulnerable reflexivity during fieldwork. Linda Smith and Arthur Kleiman (2010) write about emotional engagement in reference to ethnography and write that anthropologists have been historically, “engaged intellectuals”:

In an anthropological sense, engagement has often emerged from the particular relationship of intimacy with a group of people that the ethnographer develops in her time in the field…for anthropologist, engagement may be, and oftentimes is, born out of proximity, as the inevitable result of a long-lasting process of active involvement and witnessing—what we call ‘participant observation’. Whether or not, as anthropologists, we choose to become ‘public intellectuals’ in the French tradition, whether or not we choose to share our expertise in a language accessible to a general audience, whether or not we find our informants’ struggles sympathetic or repugnant, at the very core of our discipline is the inescapable intersubjective experience of ethnographic fieldwork. It is that experience that engages us, for it never allows us to imagine ourselves as simply
analysts reporting data; rather we are always witnesses evoking the contested truths and troubled emotions of the local moral world with which we have become apart. (p. 171)

For both Behar (1996) and Smith and Kleiman (2010), engagement involves advocacy and powerful emotional commitments and “it is this most basic form of advocacy—choosing sides—that lays the groundwork for other, more public advocacy” (p. 185). This made me more aware that although my interest in researching drama classrooms to understand the experiences of ELLs primarily focused on the drama pedagogies’ impact on their second language and literacy ability, I was consistently reminded in the field that linguistic identities are never divorced from other/multiple subject positions such as race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, religion that an analysis through the lens of embodied intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Mirza, 2009) carefully considers. The urge for advocacy that Behar (1996) and Smith and Kleiman (2010) argued, became for me not only advocacy regarding their linguistic engagement and improved language learning in schools, but also their social, and academic, and political success both in schools and in the larger society.

As I listen, for example, to Tigris’ interview excerpt again and again, while reading the transcription— a translation of real life conversation to the flat written text on a page that will always miss the nuances of real-life speech – in Tigris’s voice, I kept hearing his hesitation and his struggle to make himself believe that one day he would become the ‘proper Canadian’ citizen. He uses the term “maybe” with great disbelief when he says:

unless you live like maybe three years, or five years, and you get your passport, and proper English, and get a new life. And you’re like, OK, this is my country. I can’t leave it now. I have to stay here. Now, all the time I have fights with my parents, because they got me here. I didn’t like to come here.
I also felt a similar sense of hesitation as these students constantly went back and forth between their feelings of hopefulness and hopelessness in this country. For example, the sudden shift in Tigris’s speech is very noticeable in the above excerpt and in his voice as he shifts from the hopeful imagining of himself as the ‘proper’ Canadian citizen proficient in the English language, to the rather pessimistic sentence in which he utters “I can’t leave it now. I have to stay here. Now, all the time I have fights with my parents, because they got me here. I didn’t like to come here.” These shifts from hopefulness to hopelessness and at times the reverse, possibly portrays his inner struggle. He later continues explaining that he has fights with his parents because it was their decision to come to Canada, not his. He explained that life in Canada has been difficult for him as well as for his parents. Here is how Tigris further explained why he was resistant to the idea of coming to Canada:

Tigris: I didn’t want to. Because, you know, my friends, I’m really connected to them. My friends, my life, my girlfriend, my studying there. So I had my life over there, so it was hard to leave everything.

Burcu: But your parents wanted to come here.

Tigris: They wanted to come here. Of course it’s for us. For better future. Because you know there’s no future there, not like here. So yeah, all the time I have fight with them – I told them OK, you got me here, I didn’t like to come, and now we have nothing to do. We have no good jobs. And they say OK, you have to be patient, you have to wait. You can’t get your goal just like after ten months, maybe after eight months when you come here. You have to wait. You have to work hard.

Burcu: Are they happy?

Tigris: No, they’re not happy. But they don’t say that, they don’t admit that, because it was their idea. You know sometimes when you say, “OK, I have to do something,” when you do and you feel that it wasn’t not the right choice, it wasn’t the right decision, you can’t admit that, you can’t say you were wrong. But I feel that. My father, he’s really close to me. Sometimes, when I wake up in the midnight, I see him that he can’t sleep. Just lie on the bed and think about us, about our future – what is he gonna do? I feel like he’s not really happy. I don’t think that he’s really happy about his decision, but he’s really working hard and
he’s trying to make it work. My mother didn’t like it actually, my mother just went back home.

Burcu: Did she go back?

Tigris: Yeah, she didn’t stay. She just stay for, like, four months.

Burcu: So now it’s your dad, and, do you have another sibling?

Tigris: Yeah, I have my brother, he’s older than me. He’s twenty-six.

Burcu: And does he go through the same schooling?

Tigris: No, actually. Actually, he’s not interested in these things.

Burcu: OK

Tigris: He kind of likes staying home. He’s not really friends with people. Stay at home. And sometimes you go to work. He has a part-time job. So he doesn’t like to study from the beginning. Cause you know he’s graduated, and he feels like it’s hard to study from the beginning.

Burcu: Oh, yes, I understand.

Tigris: Yeah.

Burcu: Will your mother be back in Toronto?

Tigris: Yeah, she’s coming actually. She’s coming in – we are May, right?

Burcu: May

Tigris: Yeah, she’s coming in June.

Burcu: Good. So what was it like not to have her here with you?

Tigris: Oh my God. My dad is cooking, and it’s really [makes a facial expression that shows dislike]

Burcu: It’s not good?

Tigris: You have no idea (laughter)

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)
Kitty had similar hesitations and struggles. A mixture of hopelessness and hopefulness was often present in her speech. She said “what I learned from China when I came to Canada – everything is useless. I was like, Oh, my God, my English is not good so I thought I couldn’t go to university but my dance class teacher, she said to me ‘don’t worry about your English, but you need to graduate from high school in Canada and get stronger and go to dance [program] to York [University]’ [with a smile on her face].” At the time of the interview she was 21 years old and she had arrived in Canada when she was 18, already with a high school diploma. At this point Kitty was taking Grade 10 math, computers and dance. She explained that she still needed to take Grade 11 and Grade 12 math because she just finished her ESL levels. She said she was going to take the literacy test in April but she was quite worried about it. “Especially my written is very slow, it takes for me a lot of time. Like each time I don’t have time. They say that my exam skill is not good. I can do better than that but exam skill is not good. Now I am very happy because my dance class teacher said I can go to York. Now I can see a little bit my future – before everything was dark.”

Being able to express these struggles in their performances was important for these ELLs. In their performances, they explored different ways to think about social situations, “in this way they developed a practical social imagination to help face the social reality outside the school” (Regnier, 1988, p. 26). Explaining Regnier’s work, Cummins (2001) writes that inner city First Nations’ (Native) youths’ drama performances based on the original scripts that they wrote themselves reflected these students’ lives and that this process “has exerted a powerful impact on their sense of self and on their academic development” (p. 147). Cummins argues that this kind of situated practice activates students’ prior knowledge, “increases students’ cognitive engagement and enables them to function at an intellectually and linguistically higher level” (p.
In their description of a “curriculum of life” Portelli and Vibert (2002) write about the importance of moving from students’ life experiences and personal narratives yet, they caution teachers, educational researchers, and educational curriculum designers that what they mean by ‘curriculum of life’ is not to simply to use “student-centered notions of making curriculum relevant or linking it to students' experiences” but to move beyond this to a curriculum that focuses on the experiences of “co-construction and co-production of knowledge” among students:

We want to be clear that, while we intend the phrase to include an approach that takes students' experiences seriously, we do not intend the often superficial constructivist notion of linking classroom activities to students' personal interests. A curriculum of life centres on the possibilities for the co-construction and co-production of knowledge, rather than on knowledge as simply teacher transmitted or simply student-created. (Portelli & Vibert, 2002, p.39)

This kind of co-construction and co-production of knowledge among students that Portelli and Vibert (2002) describe resembles the collective writing that some of the students were engaged in within the drama courses that I observed. For example, in Ms. S.’s drama course, part of Mya’s personal narrative in her journal entry below (which was written in response to the metaphor of ‘open doors,’) became a part of the final Doors performance.

I am very thankful that I live in Canada now. Because if I was back home, I would probably been joined in army after finishing high school for about 2 years at least. Even though my brothers (3 of them) are already in the army training. Which is really sad because they don’t get good food or get to see their family members for pretty long times. I am very thankful for the people that had fight for my country with Ethiopia and past away for their land.

(Mya, in class student journal entry, Middleview, 6 November 2008; data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)

The final performance was not just the mere translation of this monologue to the performance. Through the embodied dialogic negotiation, and collective peer feedback, and multiple drafting in the drama work in this class, Mya’s ideas were contrasted with the opinions of other students, who provided examples of why Canada’s doors could be seen as closed in
some cases. Right before Mya performed a modified version of this excerpt from her monologue, there were two scenes: one with the refusal of the application of a Nigerian refugee “because the war ended at 3 o’clock yesterday afternoon”, and with the acceptance of an internationally trained medical doctor. What was troubled in that scene was that although she was accepted to Canada under the "skilled worker category”, her credentials and professional status as a doctor were not accepted. In order to gain what the immigration officer called “Canadian experience”, she had to start somewhere else… “Can you drive a cab? Do you clean?” Mya, in this performance, after being impacted by the writing and perspective of these other students, offered a modified version of her monologue that still expressed her gratitude to Canada for having an open door for her and her parents, but was tempered by some of her parents’ realities about their difficulties finding employment.

Gallagher argues that, while it is essential for learning to begin from ourselves (situated practice), the larger goal is to move beyond this “solipsistic tendency” to a place where all meanings/ texts/ discourses are deconstructed through dialogic negotiation in the drama space so that “the distance necessary (the alienation) to provoke new understanding.” (p.6) is made possible:

One of the ways that drama can accomplish this is by our working toward an artistic commitment that is larger than self, where there is affective as well as intellectual investment, and where solipsistic tendencies are squarely confronted. And yet, it is a dramatic imperative that we begin from ourselves while asking how to find the distance necessary (the alienation) to provoke new understanding. (Gallagher, 2003b, p.6)

This is directly in line with John Portelli and Ann Vibert’s conception of ‘curriculum of life’ where the goal in education is to have a pedagogy that enables “the possibilities that can emerge from a critical pedagogy” (2002, p.39). Curriculum of life, they explain take “social and political lives very seriously; it does not avoid dealing with the controversial nor hide behind the
pretense of neutrality. In short, it is an approach that finds the neo-liberal agenda in education problematic, since the latter does not encourage the critical and democratic transformation purposes of education” (p.39).

6.3.2.1 Pedagogical challenges

This kind of critical thinking has the potential to happen through the use of drama pedagogy, as the students transfer their written, individual personal narratives to an embodied drama performance. Through this multimodality, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, the written/oral text (that represents the perspective of a student on a specific story or event at the time of composing the written/oral text) is often altered through the immediate feedback from peers and the teacher, in the process of this transfer from the written/oral to the embodied performance (please see section 6.4 for more detail).
This dynamic interaction between the oral/written text and the embodied mode made it possible for personal narratives to be deconstructed and re-constructed through multiple drafts. However, it is important to note here that my use of “drafts” does not only refer to the multiple written drafts, but also to multiple versions that take place in the oral and the embodied modes as the personal identity text is transformed into the collective, embodied text. A critical reflection is necessary and organic in these reconstructions. Students in the interview said that they recognized and appreciated these critical turns in their drama creation. However, one student in the drama-ESL class also recognized the lack of a critical dialogue in one of the pieces for the Culminating Unit project. Tigris, when asked to reflect on his group’s performance for the Culminating Unit, expressed his discomfort with the series of tableau showing the possible triumphs and successes of the ‘New Canadian’. (As I explained earlier, students presented these
series of tableaux right after performing the scripts they wrote about a Canadian immigrant experience, portraying conflicts that sometimes were and sometimes were not resolved within the performance). He compared the tableaux series in this Culminating Unit with his experience of performing a folktale in groups through a series of tableaux in Unit 1. He said that the tableaux series depicting the folktales were rich and meaningful for him. But he explained that he felt like the tableaux they created for the Culminating Unit were limiting. Because this is a big class, some groups performed it on one day, other groups performed it on the next day. Tigris’s group presented on the second day. He said that as he watched the performances of the groups on the first day, he felt uncomfortable with something, and he became more aware of the fact that although the scripts that each group wrote were diverse, the tableaux series that ended each group’s performance were almost all the same. He explained that because he now knew about this problem of lack of authenticity/originality with the tableaux, he talked to his group members. However, he said that the group couldn’t think of a way to disrupt this (the discourses of happy endings) and change the tableaux in the short time before they would present the next day, so they had to let go of the attempt to come up with new series of tableaux:

Tigris: … you know it was the same idea, it was the same idea, actually. All the groups, they were doing the same, the same tableaux. Like, similar, maybe there’s some differences but it’s actually the same main idea. So like, one day before the presentation, I was trying to change the idea, just to see something new, and that was the confusing part of it. So we were trying to do another one, but we had no time so we had to stick with the old one.

Burcu: What was that idea?

Tigris: Yeah, like if someone works hard he can get what he wants, he can achieve his goals. So it was about a new immigrant, immigrant student, he’s in college or maybe in high school, he works hard, he studies hard. But his friends they don’t, they just like go to parties and have fun. At the end, he got graduated, and the other students they just failed. So that was the main idea.

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)
Tigris recognized that the fact that students ended in ‘possible triumphs’ pre-imagines a particular story. Foucault explains that discourses create “effects of truth” which are neither true nor false as he writes about “seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 118). The teacher’s discourse, describing what the performance should be about (i.e. triumphs and successes) directly impacted students’ performances. Although each group’s scripts and performances about the Canadian immigrant experience were rich, the series of five tableaux showing the possible triumphs and success of the ‘New Canadian’ that ended the student performances were much less creative and original. All groups ended with tableaux that portrayed similar stories with similar happy endings: studying hard and passing the English proficiency tests with success; studying hard and successfully getting a diploma after completing high school, college or university; a refugee getting approval to stay in Canada, therefore now achieving his/her dreams to be able to study; studying hard taking the Canadian citizenship test and becoming a Canadian citizen; working hard in low paying jobs but after learning the language, getting necessary diplomas and finally achieving the dream job and earning lots of money, etc.
Figure 6.6: Performance about a refugee claimant family that finally gets approval to stay in Canada. As a result their daughter can now go to university and graduate.

As Tigris noted, the tableaux seemed to be portraying almost the exact opposite of the complexity portrayed in the scripted role-play performances and the exact opposite of the deep sense of despair I was feeling after listening to the experiences of these ESL students I was interviewing. Tigris was not feeling at ease with that his group was performing, using Tigris’s words, “if someone works hard he can get what he wants, he can achieve his goals”. This can be interpreted as his resistance to the discourse of meritocracy (a fabrication of an ‘effect of truth’ recalling Foucault’s argument about truth and power) that assumes all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, can socially, economically and academically succeed as long as they work hard. One might argue that he was seeking a more authentic, complex, layered, critical depiction in the tableaux instead of the forced unrealistic happy endings that he had difficulty relating to.

Unfortunately, students didn’t have a chance to deconstruct or trouble what the task required them to do (the idea of possible triumphs and successes) as they were preparing for the performances, neither were they able to express some of their critical thinking during a post-performance discussion. Because of the very structured curriculum that was required by this
specific program for Adult ESL learners, because of the high number of students taking the
course at the same time (about 50), and the short time frame of a quad (nine weeks), there was
very little room for extended critical dialogues after these performances. The Culminating Unit
performances all needed to be performed in two days, one group after another. The feedback that
the teacher provided was often not about the content of the issues portrayed in performances, but
mostly focused on performance characteristics such as intonation, pronunciation, projection of
voice, blocking or the presence or lack of eye contact with the audience. Of course, there is great
value in becoming more aware of these specific performance skills, and acknowledging that
“learning has a bodily basis premised on the habituation of certain skills instilled through teacher
direction” (Watkins, 2005, p. 171). But, students would have also benefited from a classroom
discussion reflecting on the issues raised by the performances, through voicing their feelings,
their analyses, their concerns and questions about these complex issues. When I shared these
observations with the teacher in my follow up conversations, as I was already sensing, it was
clear to me that these decisions were due to the multiple restrictions that I mentioned earlier,
since I knew that she was interested in involving students in critical dialogue. Her desire for
critical dialogue was also evident from the package that she had provided to the students for this
culminating activity, which contained various texts about the Canadian immigrant experience
such as poems, stories and newspaper articles with a wide range of viewpoints focusing on
cultural, political, and socio-economic issues as well as issues concerning learning a new
language or first language loss.

According to some, ending with hope might have seemed necessary since they might argue
that in the face of all the challenging conditions outside of school, schooling/education is one of
the few places that gives hope and motivates these students to have dreams. However, Cesar
Augusto Rosatto (2005) would consider this type of argument for education as “blind optimism.” He stresses that:

The consequence of blind optimism is an emphasis on individual hard work and a de-emphasis on collective action or struggle…This notion is primarily supported and monitored by those in dominant positions such as teachers and administrations. Because students from disenfranchised groups must learn to survive in institutions controlled by dominant groups, some select a strategy of confirming to the hidden curriculum of blind optimism. This concept is an antihistorical instruction that penetrates a denial of the past, which influences the present, while favoring a vision of a meritocratic future. The reinforcement of blind optimism makes school complicit in a historical amnesia, which enables forms of education such as memorization or ‘banking’, resulting in students’ alienation and frustration as by-products. Many students react and resist in self-destructive ways. In extreme cases, many students lose hope and retaliate; others choose to simply conform to a given reality…- a limited political view of optimism tends to marginalize other possibilities. (p.85)

Instead, the pedagogical practice that Vanessa Andreotti (2006) suggests, and which I believe Cesar Augusto Rosatto (2005) would agree with, is the integration of critical literacy based on Freire’s notion of not just “reading the word” but “reading the world.” Furthering this notion of “reading the world” for Andreotti, criticality does not refer to the dominant notion that something is either right or wrong, biased and unbiased, true or false. It is an attempt to understand origins of assumptions and implications. In this sense criticality is not about ‘unveiling’ the ‘truth’ for the learners, but about providing the space for them to reflect on their context and their own and others’ epistemological and ontological assumptions. (p.6).

Similarly, Ellsworth (1997) writes that “pedagogy is a performance that is suspended (as in interrupted, never completed) in the space between self and other” (p.17). Ellsworth’s definition of pedagogy and Andreotti’s definition of critical literacy, that aims at what she terms as “critical global citizenship” approach to pedagogy in contrast to “soft global citizenship”, guided my thinking as I observed, examined, and together with the teacher and the students (during the interviews and informal conversations) re-imagined what the space of this drama-ESL class could look like for meaningful learning and relationships to occur: not a recipe nor a
space that tells learners what they should think or do to create, but a space which creates possibilities where students can “analyse and experiment with other forms of seeing/thinking and being/relating to one another” (Andreotti, 2006, p. 6). In many instances this space did exist in this drama-ESL class and in some cases it did not, mostly due to time pressures, the requirement for a structured curriculum, and requirements for accountability and frequent testing and evaluation and dominant discourses of schooling. It is also important to clarify that my goal in this dissertation/research is not to provide a recipe for the exemplary drama-ESL class since as Ellsworth asserts, “Pedagogy when it works, is unrepeatable and can not be copied, sold, or exchanged – it is ‘worthless’ to the economy of educational accountability” (p. 17).

I raised Tigris’s concern about the tableaux that only portrayed immigrants’ triumphs and successes in a conversation with Ms. J. Throughout the data collection and analysis period, I always shared my thinking and students’ voices (without revealing any names) with the teacher, and we both enjoyed extensive conversations about these issues since we shared the belief that both teaching and research are about continuous learning. As she said, “Every day I learn something new about teaching and learning from my students and that’s what I find gratifying about teaching these adult ESL learners.” Whenever I shared some of the concerns that the students voiced, she would always acknowledge and respond to them in her teaching. When I mentioned Tigris’s discomfort with the final tableaux, she acknowledged what he was saying, but said that, despite the fact that she knew that these were romanticized, idealized depictions, she would not change the tone of these tableaux in this Culminating Project. She said that the students needed to leave the course on a happy note, with feelings of hope as English language learners. Her feelings resonated with me. Critical discussion after the performances in each unit remains something that Ms. J. wished for, had there been time. Even though everybody,
including the students, recognized it as something idealized and not always realized, the idea of leaving on a happy note was necessary for their need to have hope and believe in happy endings. Julia Kristeva, in the book *This Incredible Need to Believe*, refers to this “need to believe” as “paradoxical” yet necessary, in a similar fashion to Ms. J.’s reasoning. Kristeva elucidates the idea of “the need to believe” as “that narcotic that makes living easier, for—happy infantile and amourous trauma (Kristeva, 2009, preface). Kristeva stresses here the opposing feelings of hopelessness and dreams. The feelings of hope and willingness to dream a better future despite all the current challenges was a common pattern/characteristic in the interviews. As discussed earlier, students in the interviews also always navigated between these contradictory feelings of hopelessness and dreams, fear of failure and success, despair and hope, chaos and order in their lives. Students’ voices illustrated “this incredible need to believe” often:

So actually, yeah, my **dream** is to try university, to feel the life of university here, of a university student. And yeah, another dream is to get a **better life**, cause you know, now, it’s actually a really **hard life** when you move to another country. You feel like you’re **lonely**, sometimes you feel like you **don’t have the right** – even though we have our rights here – but sometimes you feel like, Oh, I don’t have my rights here. There’s some people are better than me. I don’t have my rights here. You feel like you **miss your friends, you feel you miss your life** over there, you **miss your family**.

They [my parents] wanted to come here. Of course it’s for us. For **better future.** Because you know there’s no future there, not like here. So yeah, all the time I have fight with them – I told them OK, you got me here, I **didn’t like to come**, and now we **have nothing to do**. We have **no good jobs**. And they say OK, you have to be patient, you have to wait. **You can’t get your goal** just like after ten months, maybe after eight months when you come here. You have to wait. You have to work hard. (Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009).

Now I’m **happy** because my dance class teacher said that I can go to university for the dance class program. Now I **can see a little bit my future**, before everything was **dark**. (Kitty, student interview, Middleview, 12 June 2009)

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12 I have bolded keywords in these couple of excerpts to illustrate the constant shift between feelings of hope and hopelessness.
“The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” is discussed by Tara Yosso (2005) in the context of describing aspirational capital as a “community cultural wealth” that minority students receive from their own families or communities. She argues that “aspirational capital is the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality” (p. 77). Further, this resilience develops when minority populations allow themselves “to dream of possibilities beyond their circumstances” (pp. 77-78). Although Yosso illustrates the presence of this aspirational capital in the context of aspirations that are developed within cultural community and family contexts (which was also the case with the ELLs whom I worked with), I would like to extend the concept of aspirational capital into the classroom and argue that the community that was developed in the drama-ESL classroom, for example, was a way of creating a space for them to explore the multiple, at times contradictory, narratives of struggles, challenges, crushing disappointments, as well as dreams and hopes. In a way, they found courage in each other to voice these aspirations and struggles, and strengthen their resilience. In this way, for the students the drama space was a third space where examining imagined possible selves, cultures and communities was possible.

6.3.3 Analysis of situated practice and Third Space: Imagine possible selves, identities, cultures and imagined communities

In Chapter 5, pp. 135-137, I began to describe the drama space as a figured world (Holland et al, 1998; Jurow, 2005), a re-imagined space Nicholson (2011a) a third space (Bhabha, 1990), based on the experiences of Sophie in Ms. C.’s class. In the imagined space of the drama class, Sophie projected a self that belongs to a group, the opposite of the current social
isolation she feels outside of this classroom. In the embodied space of drama, she experienced a sense of belonging to a group and working on a common goal collectively. The drama space, for her, was the social space of connectivity that she craved (This sense of connectivity is described in more detail on pp.134-136 in Chapter 5; also see Chapter 6, section 6.3.3 and section 6.4.4.4 for a discussion of how the body and the embodied practice in drama allows for an alternative multimodal space.)

Drama educators and scholars have often discussed the drama space as a place where students develop connections and feelings of belonging and community especially because of drama’s dialogic and highly interactive nature (Gallagher, 2000; Yaman Ntelioglou, 2007). Both ESL and non-ESL students in the three sites referred to their drama classrooms in these terms of “belonging”, “community”, “connection”, “friendship” and “family”. English language learners, especially, seek this kind of community where they feel like they belong, even more so because of the social isolation they often face outside the classroom due to their displacement of cultural, social, economic and linguistic capital as they transition into a new country. Even Shannon (a non-ESL student in Ms. C’s class), who had sporadic attendance because of her family situation (as I explained in Chapter 5, p. 128), and even more sporadic engagement when she did attend class, (also explained in Chapter 5, p. 127) nevertheless described the drama class as a family:

Definitely in drama class, you kinda like become a family. I noticed that..we definitely - you learn more about people in normal situations you will not approach. Which I - I don’t know I can’t really explain it but it is just this feeling that you get when you are in drama class…I guess it is that family sense knowing that you are all working together towards something…In other classrooms, you kinda are focused on that you wanna get a good mark ok ok ok it is business done, as opposed to drama, it is like you create. You are not exactly- you are not stiff. You have to be flexible in a sense. (Shannon, student interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 14 April 2009)
For Shannon, the drama class felt like a family despite her initial reservations. There were multiple reasons for her initial disengagement; she explained that these reasons were: her family situation that kept her focus outside of school, the shyness that she felt in general, about taking risks and “putting herself out there”, and her reservation about the fact that even though she had done more process oriented drama before, the singing, the dancing and putting together a polished performance were new to her. In this excerpt, Shannon is referring to two significant factors in this family analogy. The first is that it feels like family for her because “it is that family sense knowing that you are all working together towards something”. The second is that she describes the goals of the group work in other courses as more individualistic “you kinda are focused on that you wanna get a good mark ok ok ok it is business done” as opposed to drama where the goal is to co-create, which points to a sense of more collaboration and collective investment on the part of the students.

As I discussed earlier, even though the students in Ms. C.’s class were not asked to bring their own life experiences, and they were in-role as the characters in the musical, Sophie for example, ‘in-role’ was able to bring parts of her trajected identity (the feeling of belonging). Zarrilli (2004) writes “the actor’s body is a site through which representation, as well as experience, are generated, for both self and other. The actor undergoes an experience that is one’s own, and is therefore constituitive of one’s being-in-the-world, and simultaneously constitutes a world for the other” (p.664). Medina and Campano also write about the co-existence of both real and fictional, and self and other: “text and selves work together in a productive dialectic that creates a dynamic, in-between space where students explore characters' fictional lives but also their own actual lives and identities in schools” (2006, p. 339). I consider
this in between space between the fictional lives and actual lives and between self and other as a *third space*.

In Ms. S’s class as well as Ms. J.’s class, this co-existence between the imaginary and actual selves were even more apparent since, in addition to co-creating and co-performing either as a whole class in front of other audiences or as a group in front of other classmates, the students in these courses co-authored the scripts that they performed. In these scripts they worked with issues they drew from their everyday lives and past experiences, exploring their multiple subject positions (Britzman, 2000; Butler, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Mirza, 2009). Therefore, situated practice took even more precedence in these two teachers’ classrooms.

Gallagher (2003b) expands the discussion on the integration of the real and the fictional in drama by incorporating “the construct of trajectories”. She explains that in drama “we do not only ask where we are located” currently, but “where we are imagining ourselves moving, in the fictional and actual” (p.6). For Tigris for example, (as I noted in Section 6.2.3, p.179) making jokes and making people laugh was a part of his identity in his L1 as he explains in the interview excerpt below:

> Actually it is hard to say this about yourself, but actually my friends and my family, they all say that I am friendly. And I tell jokes all the time—but not in English because, you know, it is hard sometimes to tell jokes in other languages. But in my language- you have no idea! - because sometimes I kill my family my friends with my jokes. So I tell jokes all the time. So can I write that here? (Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)

In the drama performances, Tigris experimented with this characteristic in his L2. In these performances he often embodied the role of an L2 speaker who made jokes and made everybody laugh. Using second language education scholar Zoltan Dornyei’s term (Dornyei, 2008, 2009, 2010; Tigris’ ‘ideal L2 self’ not only consisted of being able to communicate effectively at work and at school in the target language and get good grades, but, as he expressed
at the very beginning of the interview, his ‘ideal L2 self’ also included being able to make jokes and make people laugh in his target language, English. Dornyei (2008) stresses the importance of motivation in learning, and the importance of activating the ‘L2 ideal self’ (which concerns the L-2 specific facet of one’s ideal self) in language classrooms so that students keep their visions of their ‘L2 ideal self’ alive. Dornyei explains that “The ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because we would like to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves” (2008, p. 3). What I would suggest here is that the drama space offers this *third space* where students’ ‘L2 ideal selves’ can be activated because of the fictional/pretend world in drama. I have observed how this fictional/pretend world helped Tigris to activate one aspect of his ‘L2 ideal self’ in his drama performances. Tigris has a number of times explained that he found the drama space extremely valuable because he could feel it was helping his self-confidence in speaking. In the drama space he was taking risks and testing an L2 self in the safety of fiction. This engagement can also be viewed as in turn motivating him to get closer to his ‘ideal L2 self’. Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) also refers to this kind of space as a *third zone* as she writes: “Being in relation opens up a space of difference between self and other, inner and outer realities. It opens up a third zone, a space that I can experience as both me and not me” (p. 64). The fact that, in-role, he can embody someone who not only communicates well but who is also able to make jokes and entertain others in his target language was exciting to Tigris and may give him the self-confidence to aim to be that person in the future.

This imaginative space in drama, as well as the real-life nature of drama, offers an opportunity for students to test out creatively the multiple roles and contexts where they can practice their ‘L2 ideal selves’ in a real-life like context. Nicholson (2005) explains that drama is real-life-like because “the available cultural forms and modes, the ways that we have of making
meaning in drama through the orchestration of speech, gesture, action, spatial relationships, and located in the settings of time and place, closely resemble the ways that we have of making and taking meaning in everyday social interaction”. Tigris illustrated the creative aspect in drama work versus the more structured and rule-based approach that he encountered in his other classes:

Because, you know, like in the math, you just sit in your place, just have to pay attention to the teacher. And you do that in every single day. But in drama, it’s like in every day you have to do different thing. And all the activities depends on how you can communicate with other people. So in the other class, like was like Mr M., yeah, was Mr. M.’s class, in English, we did some group work, but we didn’t do any presentations. We didn’t do any acting, we didn’t do any role plays, stuff like that. We had some group work, but it wasn’t enough to get close to someone…It was all about, it was all about how to answer questions. Like there’s some instructions, and you have to follow these instructions, follow these rules. And you have to work on that. Here, actually, there was no rules. You’re free. You’re free to talk with someone, or to get close to him or her. In the other class, actually it was —….Because actually, for me, I don’t like rules. Don’t like to follow the rules. Like to do my rules by my own, own self.

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 9 May 2009)

Through the unstructured and imaginative collective creation in drama, students could test out possible selves in search of their L2 ideal selves. In addition to exploring their ideal L2 selves, in the interviews students explained that they explored cultures of multiple communities as well as creating imagined communities in the in-between space of the fictional and the real in drama.

The best thing about this presentation was not just Canadian holidays also was from different country and culture holidays that we now know about little bit, that was very interesting for me or maybe for everyone.

(Seema, student journal, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 1 June 2009)

Because you know you have your own experience – you experience these – you have your own backgrounds. So you have your specific experiences. … I really liked it when you try to teach the other people what your culture is. Maybe some people have the wrong idea about your culture. Maybe they think that it’s not a good culture, but like when you explain it better to them, they start to like it and that makes you feel better…
And try to make a mixture between your own culture, and between the culture here. So try to know new cultures. So when you work in a group, like one of your friends is maybe from Bangladesh, the other friend is from Sri Lanka, the other friend is from Afghanistan.

So when they speak, when they speak about their own cultures, you get more information about it. So in that case you have a good mixture of cultures. You can choose and you can make your own culture. Yeah.

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)

Students, like Seema and Tigris, often found that it was exciting and valuable to learn about all the other cultures from their classmates in this very multicultural context. In addition to this, students also felt powerful when explaining their own backgrounds and cultures to their classmates. Tigris explains in the above excerpt that this gave him an opportunity to change some of the misconceptions that people might have about his culture. Furthermore, Tigris explains that this drama classroom provided them a space that welcomed a “mixture of cultures” that made him feel like “You can choose and you can make your own culture”, and conjure up imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Based on these comments, for these learners the drama classes were successful in creating a third space, a place of hybridity (Bhabha, 1990), a space where they could explore possible selves, identities, cultures and imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Kanno and Norton explain that “such communities include future relationships that exist only in the learner’s imagination as well as affiliations—such as nationhood or even transnational communities—that extend beyond local sets of relationships” (p.242). Kanno and Norton (p. 244) explain that the use of the term ‘imagination’ in their concept of imagined communities, “should not be equated with fantasy or withdrawal from reality.” Building on Simon’s (1992) explanation they argue that there is a distinction between wishes “in which there is no possibility of action” and hopeful imagination “which informs the struggle for a better future.” Simon’s argument is that: “Hope is constituted in the need to imagine an alternative human world and to imagine it in a way that enables one to act in the
present as if this alternative had already begun to emerge.” (Simon, 1992, as cited in Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 244). This kind of imagining has the potential to appear in a drama space, where as Gallagher (2003b) notes, “not just identities but trajectories of difference, where our actions, our choices ask us to imagine ourselves ahead differently” (p. 6). She further explains that this kind of pedagogy is very different from “‘emancipatory’ pedagogy [that] implicitly claims to know the direction to liberation” (p. 6). In line with Gallagher’s argument, I have illustrated in this section that the drama pedagogy I observed across three sites made room for students to imagine their possible L2 ideal selves and imagined communities in their own terms and not through a designated emancipatory agenda.
6.4: Analysis of Embodied Multimodal Learning through Drama: Students’ Experiences with Multiple Modes of Text, Meaning-Making and Self-Expression

6.4.1 Introduction

This section analyses students’ experiences of multimodal meaning-making and embodied learning that took place in these drama classrooms. As described in the theoretical frameworks section, Kalantzis and Cope (2008) argue that, “much of our everyday representational experience is intrinsically multimodal”. I am not so much interested in singling out the multiple modes such as the visual, the audio, the spatial, the gestural, etc. But I am interested in the question of “What kind of multimodal meaning-making possibilities emerge when the embodied pedagogy of drama merges these multiple modes through synaesthesia?”

In drama work there is a dynamic interplay and circular relationship between different modes. I explore this multimodal nature of the embodied meaning-making that happens through drama. Communications/language/literacy, in its broader sense, is also a form of cultural production. As I have argued in the Situated Practice section, students’ work in the drama classrooms was part of this cultural production. Based on the students’ learning experiences through drama in these three different classrooms, I argue that drama pedagogy offers possibilities for cultural production, communication, meaning-making and language learning through the synaesthesia and multimodal intertextuality of different modalities in meaning-making and self-expression. For literacy that we can feel connected to, it has to feel alive. It has to not feel passive or static, but dynamic, responsive, sensory. Many thinkers have written about how even when we just read a piece of text, what we understand is coloured by our own worlds, by the connections that we make to texts. But for students like ELLs who are struggling with a new language and for other so-called “at risk students” who are made to feel disconnected from
traditional reading and writing practice, we can take an extra step and build multiple bridges between different modes of texts and students’ social, personal everyday realities and experiences.

6.4.2 The dynamic interplay and circular relationship of multimodal and embodied meaning-making through drama

The fact that multimodal and embodied learning experiences took place in these three drama contexts was not surprising to me. I have argued elsewhere that drama teaching has always been multimodal (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2011b). However I sometimes found it difficult to communicate the enormous significance of this in a static, plain written text format. Even though I was reading the most invigorating thinkers, philosophers, educational theorists, second language scholars, and drama scholars, I was never quite satisfied with the connections that were being made between the links among literacy and language education of ELLs and the learning that comes through the embodied multimodal form of drama. I was feeling that words on a flat page were never enough to describe the complex sensations and deep and wide connections one makes through drama to the world of many texts. In fact for some scholars in this field, even the idea of trying to discuss embodied learning, the knowledge that comes from the body relying on the words, was against the nature of what embodied learning was. What was extremely exciting and illuminating for me was what stories in the students’ voices taught me in the most simple, yet powerful, ways about the embodied and multimodal nature of drama without even using this vocabulary. Sometimes it was not what the students said but the joy and the twinkle in their eyes. As I am writing this I am constantly warning myself, this is not a dissertation where the goal is to romanticize and celebrate a certain pedagogy. This is to say that what I am interested in is not
laying out a particular exemplary drama pedagogy, but instead, finding a language to be able to reflect and lay out some of the most important day-to-day experiences that students and teachers in these drama classrooms felt, encompassing the perceptions of successes, challenges and failures. As the researcher, I will draw on the literature of multimodality and the literature on embodied learning, as well as literature on drama, second language education and literacy education but what I would like to bring to the forefront in this chapter is the voices of the students.

6.4.2.1 Multimodal Texts in the Drama Classrooms

It is 8:30 am. The groups are preparing for their Holiday Celebrations performances. Ms. J. wrote the order of presentations. Again there is a mix of Canadian and non-Canadian holiday celebrations. Students’ excitement, and in some cases nervousness or hyperness is visible as all the groups are in the midst of checking out their final details for their performances. “Did you remember to bring the costume?” “I hope X comes in time today.” “Ours is going to be funny.” “Can we borrow your police hat?” “What do I say after . . . ?” etc. Ms. J. and a couple of students are pulling chairs to the left wall of the classroom for the audience to sit, clearing a performance space in front of the right wall.

The first group that is going to take the stage is getting ready. A student is drawing an image on the board with palm trees, a beach, and the sea, the moon, a boat, and a hut (see photo in Figure 6.7). He writes the title “New Year in Ethiopia”. The other student is placing mats on the floor. In the middle of the mats another student carefully designs a fire, with the logs made of rolled newspaper (see photo in Figure 6.8). Another student brings in paper plates, plastic cutlery and empty wine bottles. Another student is running some specific lines with another student to make sure that she has memorized them. Ms. J. calls for the class’s attention and everybody takes their places. The first group to present takes its place, and the other groups sit in the chairs and become the audience.

(Fieldnote, 18 March 2009)
Figure 6.7: Scenery drawing for the role play of New Year’s Eve in Ethiopia.

Figure 6.8: Fireplace created from newspaper rolls for the role play of New Year’s Eve in Ethiopia.
Figure 6.9. Poisoning Hallowe’en candies.

Figure 6.10. Student’s hand-knitted head and tail costume for a tiger.
Students worked with and created multimodal texts in all three classrooms, as illustrated in the fieldnote and photographs above. These multimodal texts, which were inclusive of but also more than just traditional print texts, not only became the springboards for the writing, as it was in the *Doors Project* in Ms. S.’s class (keychains, poems, doorknobs, photos, actual doors etc.) but were also vital parts of the process as well as the product (final performances) in all three drama classrooms.
6.4.2.2 The Dynamic and Circular Interactions among Multiple Modes

There were dynamic circular interactions among multiple modes in all three classrooms. Students were exploring different modes, recognizing that different modes afford different communication and meaning-making opportunities. In all three classrooms the oral and written language modes were integrated with the drama pedagogy but the degree of the incorporation of, for example, oral and verbal language modes, varied greatly in quantity and form in all three classrooms. Figure 6.12 above illustrates this dynamic relationship between oral language, written language and embodied mode (which is in itself multimodal). This interplay of multiple modes of meaning making and expression took different forms in the very different pedagogies of these three drama courses. All three teachers referred to the vitality of the connection among written language, oral language and embodied language in their drama courses.
One example of this is the value of connecting reading, writing, listening and speaking to a shared dynamic embodied experience as it occurred in Ms. J.’s drama-ESL course. In Unit 2, Scripted Role-play (see Table 5.2), students first learned unscripted free improvisation in pairs (e.g., an employee wants days off on a certain week, the boss is trying not to give her those days off), then read a script individually, and practiced it as a group (silent reading and reading out loud as a group), then role-played/performed a story/script called “Fly Soup” (embodied drama performance). Then students had group conversations about their favourite holidays/celebrations and chose a specific holiday/celebration as a group (student-lead interactive listening and speaking), then they collaboratively wrote a script in groups (creative writing), and performed it for the rest of the class (embodied drama performance). As we can see from this example, students not only used all of the traditional oral and written language modes (speaking, listening, reading and writing) but they also engaged in the embodied mode which in itself is a very multimodal form of self expression, since it integrates attention to physical movements, gestures and facial expressions, intonation, stress, projecting voice, use of props, use of images, use of text, set design, spatial navigation with attention paid to blocking, proximity between speakers, and in some cases they incorporated costumes, music and dance and visual artefacts to their performances. This whole unit took place over one week.

In Ms. C.’s class the attention was more on the connections of transference (synaesthesia) of the written script to an embodied, polished musical theatre performance (in both the performance of Joseph in one quad and the performance of High School Musical in the other quad). Ms. S.’s drama course also integrated these multiple modes of meaning-making and self expression using synaesthesia and multimodal intertextuality as a method, by asking students to first write down monologues (creative writing: written mode), then sharing these in class
(reading out loud: oral mode) and deciding collectively what parts of these monologues could be integrated into the collective performance piece called the *The Doors Project* (interactive speaking and listening: oral mode). Then after multiple oral and written re-drafting of these monologue pieces (writing, listening and speaking), students created and performed *The Doors* drama performance (embodied mode). Of course in addition to these multiple modes integrated throughout the course, just as in Ms. J.’s class, in both Ms. C.’s and Ms. S.’s courses the final products/the drama performances (*Joseph, High School Musical, and The Doors Performance*) were themselves multimodal, integrating the visual, the audio, the sensory, the tactile, the spatial, the performative, and the aesthetic, through physical movements, gestures, facial expressions, pronunciation, intonation, stress, projection of voice, attention to spatial navigation, use of images, use of written texts, and use of other props (costumes, visual artefacts).
6.4.3 Oral language: from conversational to performative

English language learning in the traditional sense (reading, writing, listening and speaking), and especially the improvement in speaking as a result of their drama courses, was something all students, including Sophie, Mya, and Tigris, discussed extensively in the interviews, in my informal conversations with them and in their journals. The importance of speaking in education in general, and in literacy and second language education in particular, is emphasized by many scholars (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Richards, 1990a,b; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Richards writes: “The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second and foreign language learners” (p. 1). Richards adds that “Learners consequently often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency” (Richards, 1990a, p.1). The findings from my study also confirmed this. All of the English language learners whom I interviewed felt that it was necessary for them to improve their English. Even ELL students who seemed to be very self-confident speakers compared to their classmates (for example like Tigris, whose language skills were good enough to even to even find a job as soon as he came to Canada) all explained a need to build more self-confidence in their L2 speaking.

6.4.3.1 Why are ELLs nervous about taking drama?

The Drama-ESL course was mandatory for ELLs in Braeburn High School, but the other two drama courses where I conducted my study were electives, open to all students including ELLs. From my own observations in all three sites, and from my conversations with ELLs and the teachers in these programs, I became more aware of the fact that not many ELLs would have chosen to take a drama elective. There was only one self-identified ESL student (Mya) in Ms.
S.’s elective drama class at Middleview and also just one self-identified ESL student (Sophie) in Ms. C.’s elective drama class at Braeburn. Although I expected the numbers to be low, I never thought that there would be such a small number of ESL students in regular drama classrooms, especially since both of these schools have very large numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students. The ELLs whom I talked to reported the most important reason for this was that the drama course would require students to speak in English and perform in front of others, which was a challenging, even frightening, idea.

All the ELLs whom I interviewed said that taking a drama course was new to them. Even though, as I noted earlier (see Chapter 5, pp. 101-102), it is important to challenge this idea of ‘complete newness’, it was a fact that, except for Mya who had also taken a drama course the previous year, none of the students whom I interviewed had previously taken any drama courses. Students explained that some of this fear, or discomfort, in thinking about taking drama was also due to the fact that they were new to the use of drama/theatre in the classroom and they did not know what to expect:

I hadn’t been in a drama class before. So actually I didn’t know anything about it until two weeks ago [when the course started]. I thought that the Drama is all about tragedy and misery of what we always see in television or what we hear. So I wasn’t really excited about the class until the first day. Before that day I hadn’t any expectation about what is going to happen and what I was going to learn.  
(Tigris, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 15 February 2009)

The following are three journal entries from the first week of class written by other students in the drama-ESL course, each one a different age and coming from a very different

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13 As explained in more detail in the methodology section (see Chapter 4, section, 4.3 p. 65), it is important to understand here that my student interviews were not limited to self-identified ELL students in Ms. S.’s and Ms.C’s classes. I also interviewed non-ELL students to better understand student voices in these classrooms, as well as self-identified ELL students taking drama elective courses from other drama teachers in these two schools, and self-identified ELL students who had taken these drama courses in the past. My access to these students was made possible through connections I made with the drama teachers and students in these three programs.
educational background. I chose these three journal entries because i) they were representative of the very different educational backgrounds of the students in this class and ii) despite these different backgrounds, these journal entries reflected the general class feeling that drama was very new to them and it was not immediately clear to them why this drama class was mandatory for language learners like themselves. Lucia had studied architecture (but did not complete her studies) at university in Cuba; Mahta, a younger student, had just completed high school in Iran; and Aisha was a doctor from Afghanistan. There was both skepticism and surprise that the drama-ESL course was an actual ESL high school class and that it would help their English language development:

Before I started the Drama class I was very confused in my thinking. What the class will be about and also my husband and some friends who asked about my class were very surprised.
(Lucia- student journal entry, 12 April 2009)

I started my first week of drama Class with more stress. I didn’t have confidence and I was a little shy too. I was nervous and asked myself “Can I pass this course?”
(Mahta, student journal entry, 12 April 2009)

Drama class is new for me because I did science in school. I was upset at the beginning but now I really like it.
(Aisha, student journal entry, 12 April 2009)

The ELLs whom I interviewed who had decided to take a drama course as an elective explained that they saw it as a great opportunity to encounter their fears of speaking English, by putting themselves in a situation where they were forced to do so. Some students, like Sophie and Mya, also said that in other courses they usually found people from their own language backgrounds and spoke their home languages with them instead of speaking in English. They knew that in the drama courses there would not be many ELLs, so they would be forced to speak
to English speaking students. As Sophie explains below, in addition to the content of the drama pedagogies, the relationships and connections they developed helped students’ speaking:

I always speak Chinese…In drama class everybody know my name – “Sophie, come here, come over here”. Speak English. Other class only Chinese people, speak Chinese. No English friend. (Sophie, student interview, 13 March, 2009)

Students who did end up taking one of these three drama courses, especially those in the mandatory drama-ESL course, also expressed a lot of fear, discomfort and suspicion at the beginning. For example Moham explained that it was very hard for him to speak in front of other people. He shared with me that when Ms. S. first asked for groups to present their tableaux to the class, he was so shy that when it was his group’s turn to present their tableau, he said “we are not ready”, so they didn’t present. His group members were very upset with him. Fortunately this was just a practice activity that took place before the actual graded tableau project:

None of those activities I liked at the beginning. It was hard for me. I am not used to that. I am a shy person personally. For me it is very hard to speak in front of other people but I had to. At the beginning I hated to do that. But I knew that it’s gonna be fun and I will like it…Acting in front of other was challenging. First time we learned tableau, when it was our turn, I said “we are not ready”. Even others [my group members] were upset with me. But I knew why I said that. Later I thought that I [was] really scared. That was the reason. I was thinking ‘no way I can do this’. When Ms. J. came and arranged the tables and said don’t be like this, not be like that, I said to Ms. J. “we are not ready”. (Moham, student interview, 24 April 2012)

6.4.3.2 “Speaking naturally”, like in “real-life”: Attention to pronunciation, rhythm, stress, intonation and conversational strategies while engaging in interactive listening and speaking through drama

Like all other students who expressed similar concerns and anxieties about speaking in English and performing in front of others, Moham explained that he gradually felt more and
more comfortable with it. All of the students I interviewed and had informal conversations with were grateful for the fact that drama afforded them opportunities to practice the kind of speaking in L2 they need to use in real life:

> It helped to speak naturally. Because you are included in action, you are speaking naturally and - you know- what I mean is naturally with correct intonation and those things. Maybe in other speaks you don’t do that usually. When you answer a question, you don’t do that. When you reading a paragraph, you don’t do that. But this is actually real conversation, almost real conversation. It is more natural. (Moham, student interview, 24 April 2009)

Moham here refers to the extended real-life-like conversation that takes place in drama. He explains that this kind of natural conversation does not happen in other courses in school because in most of those courses, student speaking involves only briefly answering a specific question or reading out a paragraph. However, he said, in drama he was able to speak naturally, the way people outside of school speak, where attention to intonation, stress, and rhythm matters. Strategies in ‘interactive listening’ (Rost 2002; Mendelsohn, 1998; Morley 1991) and speaking which incorporate both active listening and responding that exist in real-life, can actively be used as part of drama pedagogy (Yaman Ntelioglou, 2007). As Moham and other students expressed above, they were very appreciative of the specific focus of this course on real-life like, conversational L2 speaking opportunities. For example, conversational strategies such as: projection of voice; pronunciation; attention to rhythm, stress and intonation; initiating conversation, small talk, turn-taking; sustaining conversation strategies such as asking clarification questions, rewording, repetition, to make sure that you understand what the other is saying; dealing with semantic and pronunciation errors through self-correcting or peer-correcting; appropriate use of non-verbal language; expressing not only information, but feelings, past and present personal experiences, thoughts, ideas and future dreams; and the use of both social and formal vocabulary become part of the real-life-like conversation that Moham and
other students are referring to. As Lucia and Noni voice below, students were very appreciative of learning about and practicing these vital aspects of the oral language, especially since these are aspects that are rarely incorporated in other ESL or language classrooms (Levis, 1999):

I think my biggest problem with the English is my pronunciation and sometimes I want to speak faster than I can and drama and vocal warm-up help me with this problem.
(Lucia, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 12 April 2009)

I have some problems for my voice. I can talk to someone and the person couldn’t get me very well, Because my voice is like it’s ‘blocked’. It’ll [drama in general, and vocal warm-ups specifically] help me a lot. Vocal warming gives me some instructions and I want to practise it at home, to help me to talk clearly. I think vocal warming is one of the keys for my speaking skills in English. If I can follow it very well, it’ll make a big difference for my pronunciation. I appreciate drama because it gives some exercises for my English second language.”
(Noni, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 27 April 2009, [sic: see footnote 1,5])

Although in all three drama courses there was implicit attention paid to these aspects of language, in the drama-ESL course, Ms. J, explicitly taught some of these aspects of language. Levis (1999) stresses the importance of teaching intonation explicitly as part of a communicative approach to language teaching (p. 60). Ms. J., in her teaching, explicitly focused on phonetic awareness and pronunciation, rhythm, stress and intonation as the students mentioned above. For Ms. J. it was important to bring students’ awareness, not just by organically/implicitly integrating these aspects into the performances but through an explicit focus to raise ELLs’ awareness of these important aspects of oral language. For example, the day before students started working on their Holiday Celebrations role-play, Ms. J. did an intonation activity in the context of a dinner party, where the focus was on asking and answering questions provided in hand-outs about intonation patterns in English language, paying attention to rising and falling intonation so
that they could use the intonation patterns appropriately during the Holiday Celebration performances:

Actually in the hand-outs when we do the dinner party…it is about asking questions, and intonation, and how the voice goes up. And you have to even say things like: “Coffee or tea?” And they go around the circle and they have to say that phrase. It might be something simple, because sometimes we use one word in English, like, “Dessert?” You know, making our voice go up at the end of a sentence. (Ms. J., teacher interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 May, 2009).

In my interview with Ms. N. she also discussed how she likes experimenting with different social registers both through the oral and written language in students’ monologues. She said:

The practice – you don’t get that many opportunities to speak out loud in other classes, and in drama that’s all it is, so you’re constantly practising speaking – and from different perspectives. So if you were, say, writing a monologue - look at that one – the gambling addict- can be anyone – can be a dad, can be an eighty year old woman, so they have to learn how to speak like that person. (Ms. N., teacher interview, 8 May 2009)

6.4.3.3 “Drama gave 100% confidence when I speak”

It is impossible for me to include all the students’ quotes, as there were many, about how much they believed they improved their speaking through drama, and how much they developed self-confidence because of their experiences in the three drama classrooms. Below is a small representative sample of ELLs who all elaborate in detail on how drama built their confidence in speaking and overcoming or lessening their fears and stage fright about performing in their L2.

I was nervous at the beginning I was shy and blushed. Then I increased my self confidence. After I though like that an English is my second language so that’s normal to make mistakes. Then I got self confidence and complete draw applouse by I felt good and happy. Even didn’t anyone asleep. Now I have more self confident about speaking in front of people I have to use empazice in my language and now I started to learn. How to use empazice in English. What I learned from this activity is havin self confidence help to
improve language better. (Arda, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 7 June, 2009, [sic: see footnote 1, Chapter 5])

For me it’s like, to build my confident more, to be able to open up and say whatever I want. ‘Cause drama does help you like build a confident. And for English being a second language for me in drama can help a lot ‘cause we communicate a lot. (Mya, focus group interview, Middleview, 23 November 2008; data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)

One of the interesting methods of teaching English as ESL is Drama that every student has to does his own role to can get the courage of speaking. Most of the students know English a little, but they dont have the courage of speaking, some of them are even ashamed to speak and some of them are in a panic while talking, when they do a drama they have to learn necessary words well, so that they can speak fluently. It is clear that the students get more courage of speaking in their second and third dramas & they speak better than their first drama. (Asif, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 8 June 2009)

You have to speak all the time. You have to speak with your partners, you have to speak with your teacher, you have to speak during when you’re acting. And the good thing was, like, they gave me the confidence when I speak. So when I speak I feel more confident, because you know, like when you act in front of these people, and they are staring at you. Like in the beginning you feel like you’re shaking, you feel like it’s really hard. Like after the second time, the third time, you feel like you’re confident, and you can do it in a better way. (Tigris, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 12 February 2009)

Another of the memorable experience in this Drama class was the storytelling. Although we had learned English for a long time, we are also afraid of speaking English, especially in front of people. I knew it took a long time to get used to speak English in front of audiences. It was a big challenge for me to tell a story in English. We only spent two days to finish the storytelling. After that, I felt more confident to speak English. I am not afraid of the mistakes I could make when I speak English. I knew I have made a great progress and understood why the teacher asked us to do some activities which were relative to speak English. Practicing step by step. I love drama class. It gives me more confidence. If it’s possible to divide the big class to small class, such as twenty studentces. It will be more effective. (Yun-Hsiang, student journal entry, Braeburn-ESL, 7 June 2009 [sic: see footnote 1, Chapter 5])

In the last quote, Yun-Hsiang explains why the storytelling unit was an especially challenging speaking context. From her writing we see her understanding of the teacher’s pedagogy of building speaking skills through a step-by-step process. Ms. J. aimed to gradually
build their confidence in speaking by first introducing them to tableaux, with which they got used to being in front of an audience without having to speak, but only expressing meaning through non-verbal language; then moving to a role-playing unit and performing as a group using both verbal and non-verbal language; and then moving to the story-telling unit that Yun-Hsiang refers to in this entry, where they were asked to present a story in pairs, directly facing, and making eye contact with, the audience, moving from the collective to individual presentation through this gradual progress. As it was for Yun-Hsiang, for most students in the drama-ESL course the storytelling was an especially “nerve-wracking” experience. But after these multiple ways of performing and speaking in their second language, all students in the drama-ESL class said that they felt they now had tools for presenting a story all by themselves, and that they felt more confident about the presentations they will have to do in front of a class in future high school or post-secondary courses.

Many of the non-ELL students, students for whom English is their home language, or students who have English as a fluent second language (for example because they were born in Canada) also mentioned similar feelings of fear and stage fright. Hailey (a student in Ms. C.’s class, who is a mother of two in her twenties) explained that before this class, she always refused to participate in any activity in school that contained speaking in front of her peers. She explained that she still got nervous so she had not completely overcome her public speaking fear, but despite the nervousness, she could perform. She was very engaged and remembered her lines, her choreography. She was in fact one of the students who performed right in the front row during that performance. Her husband and two kids were a part of the audience that day and she said that for her it was a great accomplishment to be able to not only speak but perform in front of an audience for the first time.
I am still a little nervous but not as much as I was before I took this class. So, it will help me a lot…I remember being in class and a teacher would ask me to do a presentation and I wouldn’t do it. I would just say “no I don’t feel like it”, instead of now, I will probably do it. I am not so afraid anymore.  
(Hailey, student interview, Braeburn At-Risk Program, 14 April 2009)

As I mentioned in Chapter 5 (pp. 128-129), Shannon, another student in Ms. C’s class, said in the post-performance interview that she considers herself to be a shy person in general, and that is why initially she was reserved and was not taking too many risks, for example not volunteering for any solos. But she said later, towards the end of the course, she decided to change this and became more actively involved in the classroom. She said that this experience taught her about the value of “open[ing] up faster and tak[ing] more risks”:

I am naturally a shy person. I am reserved. I am not usually the life of the party. It takes some time for me to get used to someone and open myself up. So I kind of held back initially on what I could have done saying “ok when the production time comes I will do it” but you really always need to practice. So that was my problem…I learned that next time I will open up faster and take more risks.  
(Shannon, student interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 14 April 2009)

The strong finding about drama increasing the sense of self-confidence in speaking in front of an audience was also significantly present in the questionnaires that the students in Mr. R.’s drama course completed (some of his students were ELLs; some were not):

Drama class helps my speaking skills so that I can speak more loudly, not in a harsh tone, but a tone that the audience would like.  
(Teshawn, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009)

Drama helped me with my speaking by allowing me to perform and interact with other students. Drama class has helped me to become less shy because you have to interact with other students. It helped me to feel more comfortable around people because it’s so hands-on.  
(Alex, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009)

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14 As explained in the methodology section, p. 66, Mr. R. is a drama teacher in the Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program. I interviewed him and he agreed to give my questionnaire to his students.
As noted with the other students in Ms. C., Ms. J. and Ms. S.’s courses, Mr. R.’s students, Alex and Teshawn, also described the significance of drama in their speaking competence. Mr. R.’s students also referred to the fact that they overcame, or significantly reduced, their fears about speaking and performing in English in front of others. Slim, a male student who was born in Mississauga and is a speaker of English as a first language, said that drama helped his speaking skills the most. He explained, “before, I was so quiet and reserved.” He went on to write that it helped his speaking because “it helped me be myself while speaking and to be loud. . . I am more comfortable with who I am so now, it’s not so nerve-racking when I perform. . . memorizing my lines was hard at first but I learned new ways of linking them together using imagery to remind myself what to say next” (Slim, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009).

Shanty, a female Afro-Caribbean student born in Jamaica, wrote that she came to Canada at the age of three, went back down to live again in Jamaica, and then came back to Canada six months ago. Shanty said that the drama class helped her speaking because “I didn’t like to speak in a group and drama class helped me to do that. . . It helped me to be keen and speak much clearer and louder." She added that drama taught her “how to stand on stage and how to say ‘yes’ to something you don’t want to do.” Shanty described drama as “an everyday life thing” that helped her to express herself: “I can express myself freely and be myself.” She explained that, because of drama, she feels that in school, she has more voice because drama “made me speak out.” (Shanty, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009).
6.4.3.4 Student-teacher relationships in drama: “I now can raise my hand, ask question to math teacher”

In the above quotes ELLs as well as non-ELLs referred to the opportunities for large amounts of time spent in student-student interactions, where they could practice their speaking skills, build confidence and not be shy to speak and share their ideas in groups. When I asked students if what they experienced in their drama course taught them something they could use in other courses, many students pointed to the value of the student-centered approach in these drama courses that allowed them to have extensive conversations with their peers. They liked having a chance to have extended interactive speaking and listening time, for developing ideas, sharing thoughts and building friendships that lasted even after the class was over. In addition, they also said that they appreciated the very different kind of teacher-student interaction that they had not experienced in other classrooms in Canada or their home countries. As Ellsworth examines pedagogy and student-teacher relationship in her book Teaching Positions, she writes:

Pedagogy as social relationship is very close in. It gets right in there-in your brain, your body, your heart, in your sense of self, of the world, of others, and of possibilities and impossibilities in all those realms. A pedagogical mode of address is where the social construction of knowledge and learning gets deeply personal. It’s a relationship whose subtleties can shape and misshape lives, passions for learning, and broader social dynamics. (1997, p. 6)

For example, as I shared above, Shanty wrote that because of drama, she feels that in school, she has more voice because drama made her “speak out.” Tigris explained that drama helped him build his self-confidence not just by being able to communicate with classmates but also by allowing him to more freely communicate, ask questions, and offer alternative ways of approaching a problem. In the drama class, the teacher’s relationship with the students disrupted the notion of the teacher as all knower for Tigris. In contrast to the teacher as all knower,
Ellsworth (1997) writes “the good teacher is the one who gives what s/he doesn’t have” (p.173). Tigris explains that his relationship with the drama teacher made it possible for him to think about the possibility of communicating his ideas, feelings, questions, oppositions or his propositions of other alternatives to solve a problem with other teachers as well.

You know, in our back home, in our back home, sometimes it’s really hard, sometimes when the teacher says something, then it’s the right thing. You can’t raise your hand and say “No, this is wrong. You made a mistake.” Actually the drama class gave us the confidence to have a good relationship with the teacher. Because you know Ms. J. is really friendly, and is really good teacher. So actually, that gave me the confidence to get close to the teacher, sometimes. Sometimes, yeah, it gave me the ability to communicate with the other students, classmates, other teachers. I now can raise my hand, ask question to math teacher, and say to the math teacher, sometimes when the teacher made a mistake, I raised my hand and say, “OK, no, you make a mistake here.”

(Tigris, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 6 May 2009)

Moham also explained even though before taking this course he didn’t even attempt to have “small talks” in English, now he feels confident speaking and believes that drama helped his social skills not only in his drama course but also in any other course:

Helps social skills, sometimes you have presentations, sometimes you have to speak up. Now, I am the one. Drama helped me 100% with this.

(Moham, student interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 24 April 2009)

6.4.3.5 “Drama helped my speaking skills by not being shy and saying ‘yes’ to life”

When students in Mr. R.’s course referred to how their speaking improved, in addition to skills improvement (in terms of clarity, volume, or overcoming stage fright), many of them also connected to the idea of “saying ‘Yes’ to life, to themselves and to working with others. In order to better understand this notion, I asked Mr. R. about this in my interview with him. Mr. R. explained that for him the most important learning that comes from drama/theatre is not on
“theatrical staging” but learning to “say yes”. By this he explained that he meant taking risks and being open to themselves, to life and working with others and speaking frankly and exploring themselves with a level of honesty:

Well . . . this is sort of my approach to the craft - that a lot of acting, theatre, presenting yourself, has to do with accepting who you are. Accepting your limitations, accepting everything that you are, and saying ‘Yes’ to it, and so that becomes a bit of a catch phrase – but it’s tough. Because we want to judge ourselves all the time, and as we judge ourselves and judge other people we put up barriers, and barriers, I think, serve to lessen our sense of humanity. So in the sense, to me that art, should develop and explore humanity, you have to develop and explore your own. You’re saying Yes to yourself, and saying Yes to the process to buy in. Now, other ways we say No to ourselves is by resisting, by being cynical, by being sceptical, by not wanting to work, by tuning out, by going off into our own little world. I suppose that’s saying Yes to something, but saying Yes to closing yourself off. . . . Using theatre as almost a [way of] exploring what it means to say Yes to yourself… To opening yourself up, to taking a risk…So that theatre is not so much a place where you tend to be somebody else. More of a matter of selective revelation about who you could be, given certain fictional circumstances. I think you saw that with their presentations - is a level of honesty that they were all going for, and that I’ve been fostering – through the process. Whereas other drama teachers might focus more on the voice production, on the theatrical staging, this was much more a matter of – can they create empathy with the character they’re playing? I think that came through with a lot of the students.
(Mr. R., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 15 April 2009)

Mr. R. was very successful in conveying his approach to the students. It came up many times in their questionnaires and journal entries. Teshawn, who described herself as a female, African- American student born in Jamaica who speaks Patois and has been in Canada for 6.5 months, wrote “I learned to always say yes … that when you are on the stage, you own the stage, so just do your best” (Teshawn, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009). Similarly, Mike, who described himself as a male, black student born in Toronto wrote:

Drama class was a fun learning experience where I learned how to say ‘yes’ to myself and others. . . . Drama helped my speaking by making me say ‘yes’ to any all thing put in front of me. . . . I hope to gain a higher form of understanding of myself from drama. (Mike, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 14 2009)
Saying ‘yes’ to himself and gaining a higher form of understanding self were, in fact, very significant for Mike because, to the question that asks about his future dreams and plans, he said, “My future plans are to be able to take care of my family and to understand my life.” For Mike, drama was helping him understand and express himself because he was willing to say ‘yes’ to this opportunity for exploration. Chief, a Toronto-born aboriginal male student (who described his goal in life to be “running a successful mobile auto-detailing business. I would also like being a jewler. I hope to enter college or university. To get to my dream, I need to read crucial books, budgeting, customer service, 4 laws of power, stay determined and focused and I will be there soon…I hope. . .” ) also found that saying yes to self and life and being more open is significant learning for him. Chief wrote:

Drama class is pretty easy at some points if you choose to say ‘yes’ to it. . . . I take drama so that I can perform on stage without stage fright, and overcome that fear. . . . Drama gives me hope to be more open and less shy with people and on-stage. Drama helped my speaking skills by not being shy and saying ‘yes’ to life. (Chief, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009)

When I asked them what their message would be to ELLs as well as non-ELLs in particular who are thinking about taking drama, they said that the drama course is not easy, it’s challenging, but it is worth taking risks and using this opportunity to greatly improve their public speaking and English language communication.
6.4.4 Drama pedagogy and connections between written language (reading and writing) and oral language (listening and speaking) and embodied learning

Reading and writing practices took many forms in the drama classrooms in my three sites. Sometimes students read short stories and folktales, and shared these through story-telling or performed them through tableaux. Other times, they read short scripts and role-played them or they read and worked with a full script and performed them to an audience outside their own classrooms. Sometimes they did research to inform their projects, and therefore read newspaper articles, poems, stories, legal documents or traditional text such as hand-outs provided by their teachers. Sometimes they wrote summaries of stories, or their writing just consisted of point form notes in order to plan and organize their monologues, scripts or performances. Sometimes they wrote journal entries as free writing to function as a springboard and inspire their creative writing, other times they wrote journal entries to reflect on their performances (the final product) or they reflected on their experiences working towards their performances (the process). And sometimes they engaged in the creative and collective process of script-writing.

6.4.4.1 “Coming to this class all the time, it, help[ed] me because now I can read”: Reading engagement through the embodied and multimodal pedagogy of drama

In these classes, what I observed was not segregated teaching of oral language and written language practices but pedagogies where the written language (reading and writing) practices were always connected to the oral language and the embodied language. Hertzberg (2004) stresses that oral language skills are essential components of reading and writing. Students in these classrooms found that the print text came alive by embodying it through drama and the writing became more meaningful and purposeful for them, because they were sharing it...
with their classmates and their teachers through the oral language and the embodied. For example, in his journal entry Arda, a student in the drama-ESL course, wrote about the necessity of not just passively reading or listening but actively “acting” in our lives:

My father was fond of saying: “If you read or listen to some thing you would get %50 message of that but if you not only read or listen to but also act it in your life you would get message 1000%. I couldn’t agree more and that’s why I found drama class is very necessary. In my opinion to get message correctly we shouldn’t only watch but also we need act. (Arda, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, final journal entry 7 June 2009 [sic: see footnote 1, Chapter 5])

Students in these drama courses said that words, especially words and concepts that were culture-specific, made more sense when they acted them out. S. G., a female ELL student in Mr. R.’s drama course who was born in Sierra Leone in West Africa, speaks Kono as her L1, and has been in Canada for four years, wrote that “the drama class is the best class” for her. She explained that she took this drama class because she was interested in acting, and she wanted to know more about experiencing it, and learning about the making of drama: “I take drama because” I like acting and I get to know the making of it and the experience.” As seen in her writing, English literacy skills were a struggle for S. G. In the questionnaire she also explicitly wrote that she was very happy she took this course because it helped her finally read English:

this class help me with my reading because I am not really good in reading but by coming to this class all the time, it, help[ed] me because now I can read. (S. G., student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009)

S.G.’s experience of having struggles with literacy skills is not unique to her, in fact, not having proficient reading and writing skills at high school was not something any of the teachers were surprised by. It has been reported that “almost four in 10 youths aged 15 have insufficient reading skills; while more than two in 10 university graduates, almost five in 10 Canadian adults
and six in 10 immigrants have inadequate literacy” (TD Bank Financial Group, p.2). Wilhelm and Edmiston write that “when students do not learn to read well they will be severely handicapped both in school and life” (1998, p.30). Teachers whom I interviewed said that they do sometimes have not just ELLs but also students who were born in Canada or students who speak English at home but never properly learned how to read, let alone to write, yet were dragged from one grade level to the other. At Braeburn, both Ms. C. and Ms. D. talked about the fear and disconnect most of their students had developed towards traditional reading and writing practices. Ms C. explained that sometimes it is also the alienation some students feel by just the idea of sitting with pen and paper and feeling a great pressure to have to produce writing or make sense of a printed text because of their former negative experiences with these traditional literacy practices. Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) also stress this alienation students experience with traditional L1 literacy practices:

  schooling has focused on decoding text instead of reading for experience and meaning (Gambrell and Heathington 1981); little if anything has been done to help students to read in an engaged experiential fashion that allows for powerful connections and applications to be made between text and life. In fact the typical recitation, questioning, and discussion patterns in schools in the United States have served to reinforce unengaged reader’s passivity and their attitude that meaning is to be received from the text instead of constructed with it (Johnston & Winograd 1983). (p. 32)

Although Wilhelm and Edmiston are making these arguments based on the United States context, these comments are also in valid in Canada. Cummins similarly criticizes this sole focus on decoding in developing reading comprehension with both L1 and L2 learners and argues that “policy-makers and many researchers ignored the fact that for normally achieving and low achieving readers, systematic phonics instruction showed no relationship to reading comprehension beyond Grade 1” (Cummins, 2001, pp. 92-93). Drawing from OECD’s PISA
studies, and based upon his ‘literacy engagement framework’, Cummins explains that reading/literacy engagement is a better predictor of literacy attainment:

Data on reading attainment of 15-year olds in 27 countries showed that “the level of a student’s reading engagement is a better predictor of literacy performance than his or her socioeconomic background, indicating that cultivating a student’s prior interest in reading can help overcome home disadvantages”. (OECD, 2004, as cited in Cummins, 2011a, slide 8)

In explaining the fear and disconnect most of her students had developed towards traditional reading and writing practices, Ms. C. explained how she creates spaces for literacy engagement through her embodied drama practice as:

sometimes if you are just sitting, students who are hands on, kinesthetic learners, can’t come up with something clever from pen and paper perhaps, but they could find the story first in the space, act it out, find the character. They have great instincts usually physically, and so they find that physically and then they can come back to the writing or to the reading.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, 23 February 2009; data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)

Ms. D, who teaches English Language and English Literature at Braeburn high School, also highlighted the importance drama pedagogy in her teaching because of the same reasons that Ms. C mentioned above. She explained that most of her students feel “boxed in when they’re asked to express themselves with pen and paper,” that’s why she uses drama and finds that students can have better understandings of the print texts that she uses (e.g., novels, stories) through drama explorations:

Well, since my experience has been using, sort of extending tasks in the classroom through whole group dramas – that’s what I’ve done, from the literature. I would say that what my experience is that they find out that they’ve actually understood a lot more from the text than they realized. Because they’re approaching it in such a different way, I guess it’s a combination of their imagination and maybe just the, um, what would it be? Just the approach allows them a bit more freedom to just explore, express themselves in a way that they wouldn’t if they were stuck behind a pen and paper. And most of them are so boxed in when they’re asked to express
themselves with pen and paper. So the role playing allows them an opportunity to actually see for themselves that they did actually understand the characters, way more than they thought they could.
(Ms. D., teacher interview, Braeburn, 14 March 2009)

In addition to taking away the pen and paper fear, and understanding words, and feeling engaged because of these embodied practices in drama, students also talked about how their reading fluency improved because they were working on a specific text, not only exploring its meanings on a much deeper level, but now that the text made sense also being able to read it fluently, quickly, “taking eyes off and on a page”. For example, Charlotte, a student in Mr. R’s course for whom English is an additional language, (female, Afro-Caribbean, born in St. Lucia, has been in Canada 4 years, L1 is Patois/French) spoke about how drama helped her reading and speaking simultaneously because not only was she able to feel more comfortable about her speaking, “[she] was able to open up, and not be shy or quiet in class.” She wrote that drama helped her reading skills because:

I was given a script and had to speak out loud to understand what I was saying. Be quick when reading, taking my eyes off and on a page.
(Charlotte, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009).

Here, what Charlotte means by “I was given a script and had to speak out loud speak” should not be misunderstood as just plain ‘reading out loud’. In fact, Booth (1991) makes this distinction very clear as he argues that the repeated reading aloud of a story as a rote exercise does not lead to deeper and stronger interpretation of print. In fact, he adds, the repeated reading aloud of a story as a rote exercise may even decrease appreciation of a story and the words. Yet he suggests that “oral interpretation when done well, can improve all the skills of
comprehension, lead to revelation for the reader, and strengthen the grasp of a particular interpretation on the part of the listener” (Booth, 1991, p.100).

### 6.4.4.2 “We have a muscle memory in our bodies, so when we do things, it shapes the mind to remember things”: Learning and retaining vocabulary through drama

Students explained that drama helped them to understand difficult vocabulary as they were trying to embody the written text. For example, the embodied language available through drama made it possible for them to make sense of abstract words, idiomatic expressions or metaphors. Students in Ms. S.’s class for example explored the metaphor of ‘an open door’ or ‘a closed door’ at a much deeper level. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the difficulty of understanding idiomatic expressions became Addis’ group’s performance as they portrayed how misunderstanding the term ‘money-maker’ (for counterfeiter) caused real-life problems for an ESL learner. Hertzberg’s (2004) research with ELLs showed that they were able to make sense of abstract difficult vocabulary and written jokes (that are not easy for L2 speakers to understand because of their culture-specific meaning) in a story or a novel through dramatic representations.

In Eva Hoffman’s memoir, Lost in Translation, one of the things that Eva, a Polish immigrant in Canada, lost due to the sudden change in her linguistic environment was the registers of wit and irony in her speech. She has difficulty understanding the jokes and making jokes in her second language because understanding jokes demands understanding the culture they belong to:

> For now, when I come across a New Yorker issue, I stare at the drawings of well-heeled people expressing some dissatisfaction with their condition as yet another demonstration of the weirdness all around me. “What’s funny about that?” my mother asks in puzzlement. “I don’t know”, I answer, and we both shrug and shake our heads. And, as the car veers through Vancouver’s neatly shrubberied and sparsely populated streets, I know that, among other faculties, I’ve lost my humor. (Hoffman, 1989, p.119)
Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) state that “drama is a cognitive tool that concretizes the abstract, making it sensory and available” (p.31). As I explained earlier (please see Section 6.2.2, pp. 173-175), Sophie, who depended heavily on her digital dictionary not only for difficult academic vocabulary but also for more frequent everyday vocabulary, appreciated being able to learn vocabulary through her drama teacher’s physicalization of these words. Teshawn, an ELL student in Mr. R.’s drama course for whom English is a second language (she was born in Jamaica, speaks Patois as her first language and has been in Canada for only 6.5 months) wrote: “Drama helped me making sense of what I read and to memorize stuff that I read” (Teshawn, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009). When asked about the impact of drama pedagogy to ELLs, Ms. C. also referred to how drama can help students learn vocabulary, memorize, and retain vocabulary and phrases learned through physicalization and muscle memory:

It widens vocabulary. You’re constantly using words, and asking them to create things in space. They don’t have to, at the beginning, have all the vocabulary. They can do and still be successful. There’s already small successes within there. We have a muscle memory in our bodies, so when we do things, it shapes the mind to remember things… I find ESLers do very well in drama, because you can get away with things, but learn them in their pace. You can do a big physical exploration, and as you go, you’re learning those words. (Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 23 February 2009; data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)

I have a movement based exercise. We have descriptive words, for example: crouch, fall, roll, wiggle. And first they physicalize crouch, fall, roll, wiggle. Then they have to figure out how to put that in context: I’ve had a very bad day, so I’m crouching home, then I fall on my couch, because I’m exhausted, and then the phone rings, so I wiggle up and get it, or whatever. So you’re taking words, you’re doing the action and the words together, to learn the words, but you’re also then creating the context for it, so all these layers help the learning of the language. (Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 23 February 2009; data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)
6.4.4.3 “I guess I can write now”: From free-flow writing to journal writing, to writing-in-role, to monologue writing to collaborative script writing

I didn’t think I would be any good at it because I’m not a top English student. I’m not very bad but I’m just about average. I never thought I could write in artistic forms like just express myself really. But when I started writing in my journal [in drama class] and having, like, the reactions from Ms.S. and my fellow peers saying wow that’s really good, I really liked it. . . . But I wasn’t expecting it because I never tried. It is different and I guess I can write now. I think I have the confidence that I can write and it doesn’t have to be a certain way. Like what people say, like I can step out of that limit. And be like ‘I’m really good at this’. (Bella, focus group interview, Middleview, 23 November 23 2008, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5, this quotation was previously published in Gallagher & Yaman Ntelioglou, 2011)

Wiley (2000) writes that in order to develop as writers, students need to do more than ‘formulaic writing’. In the drama courses, students engaged in creative and expressive forms of writing instead of more traditional, ‘formulaic writing’/formal essays that follow a certain format. Students found this drama course helped improve their writing (even though this was not one of the primary learning goals in these drama courses) because it provided meaningful writing tasks through the reciprocal relationship between text and embodiment. Ms D. who is a language and literacy teacher at Braeburn explained, for example, that drama “personalizes writing for the students, experientially, viscerally”. She explained that this is especially important for the kinds of students at Braeburn because the majority of these students, when they are asked to do traditional literacy work, refuse to engage with it:

As soon as these type of kids see anything that smacks of traditional school work, they’re automatic default position comes into play, which is “I can’t do it.” And I’m speaking for, I would say, the majority.
(Ms. D., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 14 March 2009)

She gave a number of examples of how she used drama in her English courses. For example in her Grade 12 College English, she first showed a movie that told a real story of “how two mountaineers got stuck, and practically died, and they overcome their challenge”. She
explained that after the movie she created the International Mountaineering Association in the classroom, then had two students in role as the two mountaineers (one of them experiences a big moral dilemma because he/she needs to make a decision about cutting the rope on his friend). One student was in role as the prosecutor, some students as the defence lawyers, and then the rest of the students as the jury and she herself was in-role as the news reporter so that she could come in and out anytime and interview them when she felt the drama needed some direction. After this whole class improvisation she asked them to write a personal narrative in role. She explained that “if I was just to say, “write a review of the movie”, it wouldn’t be the same thing.” Ms. D. said that when they are in role “they’re all engaged, well I would say the majority of the class” because they are identifying with that character in a way that they wouldn’t “unless you were really an awesome writer who really can do that stuff.” After watching the movie instead of doing drama, if she were to say “write a 200 word character description”, it would not capture the same level of engagement. Ms. D. gave two other examples where this kind of literacy engagement happened. She said that when she worked on the book *Lord of the Flies* with Grade 9 students, she used drama to engage the students in this text as follows: “I had a team of CNN reporters land, and they had to do some kind of – so I chose different scenes in the book where the reporters would land, so it was at different times. And then the reporters would have to report back but they were interviewing different characters”. Ms. D explained that their writing after these dramatic engagements with the texts was richer because their experiences were “personalized, and then suddenly they completely see whatever the issue is from that character’s perspective, that they wouldn’t be able to if it was objectified in an analysis” (Ms. D., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 14 March 2009).
Booth (2001) writes about the importance of this deepened experience in literacy development:

Students need opportunities to deepen and expand their understanding of complex and multifaceted texts in deep and involving ways. When their reading experiences are extended and supported by their own written and artistic responses and those of their classmates, they can move into interpretation and appreciation, understanding the negotiation that is required in order to participate in the act of reading what others have written. They are learning to consider the complexities involved in the relationship of text and the reader (p.52).

As Bella described above, students liked expressing themselves in these more personalized and less structured, creative ways and she explained that for the first time she felt like a writer. Booth (2001) also stresses this idea of ‘feeling like a writer’ because of the engagement through drama, as he writes “writing inside a drama context, the students begin to think of themselves like writers, controlling the medium in order to find a way to say what they want to say to people they want to reach” (p.102).

Free flow writing was another strategy that Ms. S., Ms. N., and Mr. R. all used often. Some of the students who took Ms. C.’s drama course, in the second quad I was with them, told me that in addition to taking Ms. C.’s drama course which they very much valued, they were also taking Ms. N.’s drama course and all four of them told me that they were enjoying the drama as well as the writing in that course. Because of their enthusiasm, I interviewed Ms. N. and asked about her writing pedagogy. Ms. N., who was herself engaged in the world of theatre as a professional playwright, said she always asks the students to begin writing through free writing/stream of consciousness writing where the aim is to just get the words on the page without worrying about grammar or spelling:

The way this class is structured – actually every drama class I try to do this with. I start with a physical warm-up, cause when they come in they’ve come from math or they’ve come from home, or they’ve come from – wherever – so we do – I come from a yoga practice, too – so we do a traditional yoga. And some meditation if they’re really, really
chatty to get them quiet and focused. And then once their bodies are all warmed up, then we either play a game or go right to free writing. So we do timed writing – ten minutes of just writing, stream of consciousness writing. And then I give them perspectives. So, for example, yesterday we had a gambling addiction workshop – someone came in from the YMCA. So after, we wrote from the perspective of someone who is addicted to gambling. And then from the perspective of the loved one of someone addicted to gambling. Today we went to the bridge outside the school and then we wrote the bridge’s perspective. And then they wrote the perspective of anyone, someone, who’s been on that bridge. So what are they doing on the bridge? It’s stream of consciousness, so they don’t go back and edit, self-edit. Spelling doesn’t count, grammar doesn’t count, at this stage it’s just getting it on the page. And then we’ll take all that source material, and use that to write monologues and scenes, where of course spelling will count, and it has to be very structured. But the beginning, it’s pre-writing, just getting them to write and write and write and write.

(Ms. N., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, May 8 2009)

It is important to also note here that the physical aspects of drama are always integrated in these courses in the form of warm ups, drama games or character explorations and role-play.

For example, Ms. C. explained that before asking students to write from the perspective of the character they are in-role as, she firsts ask them to physically imagine and create the character:

First we do character work...where you move around the space, start developing the character’s physicality... So they start physicalizing their character and learning from that way...So we start developing that character - the character walk, character interactions, [in-role as your character] how would you say hello to a friend in the hall, how would you say hello to your teacher, how would you say hello to your parent - do you have a parent? - do you live alone? Starting to develop that character biography. Then within the scene context, we look at beats and rhythms within a character. Do you talk really fast because really you’re kind of nervous . . . or are you someone who stops, and talks . . . So we look at rhythms within character. We look at the moment before [a specific scene in the script] What just happened before this scene? We might improvise that. So we’re building the context of this placed scene within the context of the play. So that’s how we work on character.

(Ms. C, teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 23 Feb 2009, data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)

Echoing what Ms. D. suggested above, Ms. C. also explained that after doing this kind of physical and dramatic character explorations, writing about these characters becomes much easier for the students. Ms. J. used a similar strategy, which she called “deepening the role-play”, for which she asks her students to think and write about questions such as: “Is your
character married? Is your character in a good relationship? Can your character hear other conversations that are going on? etc. But I say to them, this is not about you. It’s about the character”.

Booth (2001) explains that “writing a result of having been in role, lets students enter a new sphere of attitudes and feelings. As they try for a more complex imaginative understanding of what has happened in their drama, writing often becomes more intense” (p.102). Through these characterizations, students deepen their understandings about the situations/contexts, or texts that they are going to write about through extended engagement. Cummins writes that ‘Literacy Engagement Framework’ (2011b) links the empirical evidence to the construct of literacy engagement (Guthrie, 2004) to the development of reading comprehension, explaining that Guthrie’s construct of engagement incorporates the notion of “affect (enthusiasm and enjoyment of literacy)” as well as “depth of cognitive processing (strategies to deepen comprehension)”. Embodied dramatic explorations incorporated both of these notions (affect and depth of cognitive processing) and helped deepen students’ understandings about the texts, events, and characters they were going to write about, whether they are writing in response to a script that they are reading, as students did in Ms. C.’s course, or in response to a novel in Ms. D’s literature or language course, or in response to other (multimodal) forms of texts such as writing in response to the metaphor of the an open or a closed door, or in response to the actual artefact of the door or a keychain as in Ms. S’s course, or writing based on their own lives, their own past and present experiences and the social economic political realities of the world they are living in. Booth (2001) also writes about these multiple writing possibilities that can take place through drama:

Drama can support writing activities, from reflective journals and letters, to interviews and proclamations. It also provides opportunities for collective writing, in which groups
collaborate on a mutual enterprise—cooperating in collecting data, organizing information, revising and editing—to be used in the subsequent drama work. If they are engaged in the expressive and reflective aspects of drama, living through “here and now” experiences that drama draw upon their own life meanings, then the writing that accompanies the drama and the writing that grows out of it may possess the same characteristics and qualities (p.102).

Students in the drama classes were also then given a chance to do journal writing to reflect on their drama performances or group work process. For example, in the drama-ESL course they were asked to write a two-page journal response at the end of each unit. Many drama researchers have written about the value of writing journal responses as a post-presentation activity. Pioneering drama practitioner Dorothy Heathcote once stated that experience alone without reflection will not lead to learning (Johnson & O’Neill, 1984, p. 12). However, it was not always easy for these students to write successful personal responses unless they were guided in this process. Especially in the drama-ESL course, in their first journal entries for this class, many of the students had a tendency to write a summary or a list of what they did in class first, second, third, etc. as Kelile and Eli wrote below, instead of presenting an analysis of what they had done personally; what their group had done; how they felt; what worked; and what didn’t work:

In our drama class, every day before we started class, we used exercise or warm-up our body to prepare for the next tasks. When we was doing that, we could get readiness. Let me tell you how we worked out on it. Our instructor told us to stand up and make a circle and we make sure when we stand up in a neutral position. After that start stretch our body step by step. Here the steps is: 1) stretch hands to the front and 2) shoulder move up-down, use left & right shoulder. 3) imagine pull small needle from heart to front 4) rotate neck round, down , center, back, left, right.
(Kelile, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 29 April 2009)

It was so interesting for me. Never I think about parts that my body have lots of names in English. Like my hand have names for 9 parts or my head has 24 parts or my eyes have 5 parts, or my foot have 8 parts… I think before about the body parts of the body like my have a head, two hands, two legs and my stomach but how I know that my body have face, mouth, chin, neck, shoulder, arm, upper arm,
elbow, forearm, armpit, back chest, waist, abdomen, bullocks, hip, leg, thigh, knee, calf or our hands have lots of part name like wrist, fingernail, thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger, little finger, palm. (Eli, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 27 April, 2009)

Ms. J. explained that, especially with students’ first couple of entries, she tries to guide the students without restraining them, with a handout containing lists of questions they can reflect on such as: “What did you find the most difficult part in creating tableaux and why? In doing tableaux what do you think your strongest skill is? Is there anything you would change about your performance during the presentation or preparation process?” She guided the students who were having problems with their reflective writing through her comments in their journals such as one of her comments to Kelile’s entry above: “Good but next time write more about how you felt doing specific activities, and why you felt that way. Do not list the ‘steps’ of the activities.” Ms. J. explained that the journal writing gives the students an opportunity to think critically and to foster meta-thinking\textsuperscript{15}, since through reflective writing students take the opportunity to analyze their embodied experience, assumptions, values and their learning throughout this process:

I feel my group’s weaknesses were blocking and transisions…We were concerned about other things that we did not realize we were blocking each other… I was worried that we would not be able to move from one scene to another smoothly because we didn’t spend much time as a group practicing our transision. In fact what I was afraid of came true…My strengths during the tableau were my facial

\textsuperscript{15}Meta-thinking is a specific type of reflection. It is thinking about our thinking. A chance to think about not just ‘what I learned’ but ‘how I learned’. Flavell’s (1976) definition of metathinking / metacognition is helpful in describing this difference: “I am engaging in metacognition if I notice that I am having more trouble learning A than B; if it strikes me that I should double-check C before accepting it as a fact; (...)if I become aware that I am not sure what the experimenter really wants me to do; if I sense I had better make a note of D because I may forget I; if I think to ask someone about E to see if I have it right.” (Flavell, 1976, p. 232).
expression and freezing. (Narges, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 15 May 2009, [sic: see footnote 1, Chapter 5]

On interviewing students, I found that what made this reflective writing process more engaging for them is the prompt written feedback to their journal reflections that they received from their teacher. Ms. J. handed back the journals with her comments within a week and students said they appreciated this written dialogue that took place between them and their teacher and many thought it helped their writing. Tenzin, an ELL from Ms. J.’s drama-ESL course said he appreciated being able to express himself in writing, and learning vocabulary by testing trying new words and receiving Ms. S.’s feedback:

I gained good experience writing journal. When I write the journal I learn new words and how to express my ideas in writing. We submit our journal to the teacher and then made corrections. Than returned to us. I know where the mistake and I learn mistakes which improve my English writing in journal.
(Tenzin, student journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 12 June 2009)

This kind of testing of words, phrases, and grammatical structures through ‘output’ / language production is necessary for successful second language learning (Swain, 1995). Swain writes, “output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended nondeterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production” (1995, p.128). For ELLs, production skills of writing and speaking is more challenging than the receptive skills of listening and reading. In fact all ELLs that I interviewed confirmed this. They all said that they need to improve their speaking and most said that writing was the most challenging language skill for them. The students all agree that the more they practiced writing, whether it be journal writing as a reflective process or script writing, the more they wrote, the more they felt comfortable especially after receiving explicit guidance from their teachers. Susan Gass (2003/2007) wrote that a certain amount of practice is
vital “in order for language to be routinized, that is, to take it from the labored production of early learners to the more fluent production of advanced second language speakers” (p.228).

Ms. J. explained the reflections were helpful for her to learn more about the students and their meta-thinking. She said that through this dialogue in their journal, she has a chance to respond and become aware how the students are feeling in terms of their language learning and overall experience in this course, as well as responding to any questions or difficulties the students might be experiencing during a particular unit.

Other drama teachers also engaged their students in journal writing. Instead of using it as a post-performance reflection, Ms. S. used journal writing as a stream of consciousness writing where students were given various writing prompts such as “an open/closed door is…” or writing about an artefact (multimodal texts) related to the idea of doors. Then students turned parts of their writing that resonated most with them into a monologue. Then using parts of these monologues, they created a collective script which they performed. Ms. S’s students also collectively wrote scripts. Writing took place in many forms, and all of these forms were expressive, creative and personalized and situated in the choices and lives of the students. There were three students who felt drama did not help them with their writing since the kind of writing that happened in drama the course was so different from the more formal writing that they were used to. But most students said they enjoyed this kind of non-traditional creative and expressive writing practices. Students like Bella, with whom I began this section, said that because of drama for the first time they were able to realize that they could write well when they were engaged. This gave them self-confidence and courage not to fear ‘the pen and paper’ writing. Teshawn, from Mr. R.’s class believed that it helped her writing and that it was important for her to learn “how to write a good monologue.” (Student questionnaire, April 14, 2009). Charlotte, in
the same course, liked the creative aspect of working with a script. She wrote “It [drama] helped me with creativity with script work and ideas.” (Student questionnaire, April 14, 2009). This was quite important for her because creativity is something that she wanted to pursue in her education and professional life: “I would like to be a performer, whether it be drama/theatre (arts) anything in that field.”

Ms. J. explained that in addition to the use of new vocabulary, in their script writing, she said she encourages them to use everyday conversational English and use contractions and informal English such as the words ‘gonna’, ‘wanna’ in their script writing because the script often reflects real-life conversations. She believed that this was especially important because sometimes it is difficult for ELLs to understand them in speech, and she noticed that ELLs rarely use them. She explained that “most of the time, the ESL students see the contractions, but when I have them read aloud they do not read the contraction. They fill in the blanks. And I try to encourage them, when they’re doing these scripted role-plays, to try and use the contraction – try and read the way it is written. It is true, what it means, but try and don’t fill it in – just use the contractions.”

Another interesting aspect of doing creative writing and script writing a student said he appreciated was that “script doesn’t always have to be written in proper English” (Jason, student questionnaire, Mr. R.’s class, April 14, 2009). This is significant especially since most students were made quite aware, in traditional literacies, that their non-standard dialects are not recognized and are in fact inferior. For Jason, who is a male aboriginal student, the freedom of being able to integrate his own dialect in his writing was an important way of affirming his identity. Ms. N also referred to this in her interview.
If you were, say, writing a monologue - look at that one – the gambling addict can be anyone – can be a dad, can be an eighty year old woman, so they have to learn how to speak like that person. And the same as studying plays – we read lot of plays and scenes, and I try to bring in a wide variety. So today we looked at Trey Anthony’s *Da Kink in My Hair*, and she’s got lots of patois, and it’s written in Jamaican accents – so they get to explore different ways of speaking. (Ms. N, teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 8 May 2009)

I would like to end this sub-section with one of the most rewarding phenomena in collective script writing through drama pedagogy: the peer and teacher feedback as students write and re-write moving towards a collective goal of co-writing a script that will be performed. Ms. S., Ms. J. and Ms. C. all gave a lot of attention to peer feedback in drama work. In all three classrooms, but more specifically in Ms, S, and Ms, J.’s courses where there was more writing practice, giving and receiving feedback cultivated ownership of the text. As Booth writes, “Because writing may be used within drama and may be read or listened to by others, there is a built-in reason to proofread and edit” (Booth, 2001, p.102). By becoming more aware of an audience, students became more concerned about making themselves more comprehensible to their peers. Immediate and dialogic peer response and multiple drafting becomes possible because of the embodied mode as well as the interactive and dialogic space in drama as I discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, describing Ms. S.’s drama pedagogy (please see Section 5.5.3.2). In the next sub-section I explore the nature of group work, dialogue, cooperation, collaboration and the creation of community through drama pedagogy, which was the prerequisite for receiving the kind of valuable peer feedback for collective script writing.
6.4.4.4 “I explore how the other student think when we work in group team”: The impact of extended dialogue, cooperation and group work in the ‘open space’ of the drama classroom

It is important to underline here that in addition to the power of physicalization that happens in drama work, another very important factor which helps students’ understanding of texts and producing language (written and oral) is the extended student-student interaction, group-work and collaboration that most drama work requires. This work helped ELLs to observe how their non-ELL peers were making sense of certain words, concepts or phrases as students lifted the print mode into the embodied mode.

Collaboration, negotiation of meaning, group work, and peer response have been important aspects of research in education as well as research in literacy. A much discussed aspect of group work and cooperative learning in drama is the idea that when students work together, it leads to a layered, deeper learning. Fatima describes this, “I explore how the other student think when we work in group team.” (Fatima, student journal, June 8, 2009). Through dialogue, collaboration, and embodied explorations, students discover new ways of reading and interpreting other texts, and their own texts, through peer groups. Viewing ‘text’ through poststructuralist and discourse analysis frameworks provides an understand that each person who reads the same text has a different experience of that text. Alberta Manguel in his A Reading Diary: A Year of Favorite Books expresses this powerfully as he writes, “Every book exists in a dream-like condition until the hands that open it and the eyes that pursue it stir the words into awareness” (2000, p. xi). Critical Literacy approaches also address the significance of opening
space for multiple interpretations and viewpoints of the same texts in the classrooms. Gallagher (2003b) writes:

I would suggest that drama education holds firmly onto the pedagogical idea(l) that collective art can be imagined by differently situated individuals within a group when they are involved in a collaborative process (p.5)

In collaboratively and critically reading and writing texts through embodied drama pedagogy, the teachers and the students engage in making sense, in not only “reading the word” but “reading the world” (Freire, 1985), linking words to their worlds and becoming active generators of their own knowledge. Stinson (2004) writes about embodied learning and critical pedagogy connections, drawing from David Purpel’s argument on the necessity of students becoming creators and re-creators of our world through a focus on both creativity and imagination and a critical and sensory approach to education:

The essence of education can be seen as critical, in that its purpose is to help us see, hear, and experience the world more clearly, more completely, and with more understanding…another vital aspect of the educational process is the development of creativity and imagination, which enable us not only to understand but to build, make, create, and recreate our world. (David Purpel, 1989, p. 26-27, as cited in Stinson, 2004, p. 160)

There is no one right answer in drama classrooms and ideas at times are in conflict, yet as Gallagher (2006) writes “rather then managing conflict when it arises in classrooms, teachers and students need to work toward understanding the complexities of group dynamics” (p. 76). Nelly’s journal entry below expresses her struggles during group work and what she made of that challenging experience:
My most memorable experience in this classroom was the role-play performance about the “celebrations”. It was a very big challenge that I described in my Journal #3. In this presentation I had many feelings but in the end I learned a lot from this experience. I learned about working with different people with different backgrounds and gained from everybody and every situation in the classroom and made new friends. It made me open more my mind. And in the end I can say that it was a very very good experience. ☺…
(Ana, final journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 24 April 2009)

Gallagher writes: “The intersubjective experience of making drama stands apart from other disciplines. In exploring this shared experience of making drama, different perspectives on assumed agreement can be productively generated. The eruption of conflict often signals a clash of structures of relevancy between students. The possibility, then, in the arts is to challenge and enlarge the ‘relevant worlds’ of differently situated young people” (Gallagher, 2006, p.76). With comments similar to Nelly’s, two students (Ali and Theepan) brought up the issue of challenges of group work during a focus group. They both began to say that it was at times challenging for them to try to incorporate each group member’s ideas into their performances, but they said they were able to learn to navigate, incorporate or choose not to incorporate others’ suggestions by still maintaining a polite attitude, echoing what many other students said in the individual interviews. The teacher also made a similar comment when I shared with her what the students were saying about the challenges of group work. She said that she believes it is important for students to sometimes work with people with quite different opinions, different ethnic, linguistic, economic backgrounds or different levels of language proficiency since this is something they will need to do in real life anyway.

Despite this almost unanimous feeling of the benefits of group work in spite of its challenges, there were also some moments that did not feel right for some students. The following came up when in a focus group interview I asked Ali and Theepan what they would want future teachers of a similar drama-ESL course to know. The two students said that when
they were asked to get into groups of their own choice for the Culminating Unit, they observed
that there was one student nobody invited to a group. Witnessing this was troubling for these two
students so they both strongly believed the teachers should create the groups so that this kind of
*Othering* and singling out of some students did not happen.

Theepan: Um, the problem was in the culminating exam. Teacher said, OK, everybody have to be – whatever you wanted, you choose. And some group was so strong. Then, actually I went to the very normal group, but some group was very strong. They was all good.

Ali: You know what? I saw that in drama class. Teacher say in the last two drama class, I don’t take the group, you had to take the group.

Burcu: Yeah, you chose your group for the Culminating Unit project.

Ali: Yeah, you had to choose the group. And then many people write, ‘are you coming with me [will you join to my group ]?’ And some people, you know, they silent.

Burcu: So some students were not chosen by any of the groups?

Ali: Yeah, and you know, they go sad. Then, come inside, they say to other students and say ‘be in our group”[whispering]…That’s not good, right. Their value is going – down.

Theepan: I don’t want it like that. Teacher is make the group, that’s good for you… Teacher say “you had to make those group” – I don’t like that because I saw the many people - …getting upset, yeah. So, I don’t like it last part to group. I don’t like that.

(Ali & Theepan, focus group interview, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 22 April 2009)

Gallagher reminds us that we can never take the safety of any classroom space for
granted. She writes “trust is negotiated moment by moment” in our classrooms (2006, p.77).

Despite the best efforts of educators, experiences of isolation do happen, even in drama
classrooms, classrooms which most students normally refer to with feelings of belonging and
connectivity. In fact, almost all students that I interviewed referred to their drama class as a space
they felt connected to because of the friendships they have developed through extensive dialogue
and sharing of what matters to them most. In fact, students such as Sophie felt like her drama class was a refuge from her social isolation in the world outside. As their final entry, Ms. J. liked my suggestion of asking the students “if they were to write a book about your drama-ESL course, what they would make sure to include” with the last group of drama-ESL students that I observed in her course. Pema wrote about the friendships she developed as the first important thing for this entry. Abey, in an interview, also talked about close friendships and feeling close like family in her drama class:

I made lots of friend from different country… In my class I made lots of friend because of our teacher, that she always separate us with different students that we can speak with them in english. From that we are friends, knowing each other. (Pema, final journal entry, Braeburn Drama-ESL, 27 April 2009)

You know the different peoples, other countries, different cultures, you shift your way. In drama you participate with people, in English class, you do your own work. Now [this quad] half of the class is going to the other English class and I just miss them, you know. We spent 3 months [one quad] together, but we were very close. In other class, no!, just do your work. But here [in the drama-ESL course] you exchange phone numbers, talk about home. Yeah, you talk a lot and you become close, like family. (Abey, focus group with Abey and Addis, 22 April 2009)

Gallagher (2007) describes the drama space as “a space unlike others in a typical high school. It is a space that can be more permissive of the distinctive expressions and contributions of young people, a space in which speaking out of turn is the norm” (p.6). The drama classrooms I observed provided a unique type of space for their students not only because of the extended verbal interactions that took place, but also because of the physical space, the kinaesthetic movements and the embodied performances, as re-iterated many times by the students and the teachers in these classrooms. Embodied and multimodal engagement in the drama courses were appreciated by the students. Many students said that in most of their courses they are asked to passively sit, listen to the teacher, which disengaged them from school. For example, Alex wrote
that she usually feels very tired because of all her responsibilities outside of school such as having two kids and that the last thing she wants to do in school is just to sit and listen:

I have two kids so I’m usually very tired . . . I hate to just sit down and listen to teachers talk. If I sit in class while the teacher talks I just feel like going home. (Alex, student questionnaire, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, Mr. R.’s class, 14 April 2009)

Many students like Alex are interested in active embodied participation. Although free minds has been a topic of conversation for a long time, discussions about free moving bodies rarely happen in education outside of early childhood education. Bresler (2004) in fact writes, “a moving body in school is typically regarded as disruptive” (p. 127). Moving is something most students said they do not experience in other classrooms. Ms. J. explained that most of her students come from the kind of schooling where the teacher lectures, the students listen, therefore she explained “right from the very beginning the idea of having them sit in a circle without the desks, and getting on their feet and doing a warm-up. I mean, that is very strange to them.” She explained that she sees “a sense of equality in the circle. In a circle we all see each other. We see each other’s faces and we see each others’ reactions. And we’re all equal, to me. I mean, yes, I’m the benevolent dictator, if you like, as the teacher. But basically, seeing each other and nobody’s hiding, and we’re all there”.

The circle was a practice that all drama teachers talked about and valued. Joseph Lee, in his book Play and Education, talks about the symbolic meaning of the circle as “a shared bond among people” (1915, p.8). He then gives Peter Slade’s contrasting interpretation of the circle’s symbolism: “a circle is what each child is at the centre of: each child has his or her own personal circle.” (p.8). In the teacher focus interview at Middleview this idea of the circle came up again:

Ms. S. : Everyone gets the spotlight at some point, in the circle— if they want to.
Ms. B: You see everybody. Whereas in other classes in rows—school can be a very industrial, kind of alienating experience in that sense—

Ms. L.: But the desk - you can hide behind the desk. I remember in school I used to hide behind my desk. But, like, everyone sees your face – you’re sitting there, you’ve got nothing you can hide behind. And in some classes it’s hard to establish the circle. In some classes students will rebel against the circle, and sit on the ledges or find, like lie down on the floor and refuse to join the circle.

[laughter]

Ms. B: Sometimes it takes, like, a good chunk of time, but it’s always worth it. Well, we’re not starting till we get in a circle. I’m waiting for the circle.

Burcu: I remember my circle experience when I was in Belarie’s drama class, we had to be in a circle but we also had to know our exact place in the circle. We learned the names of our right and left neighbours in the circle that first day. So if somebody was missing, the neighbour will know immediately. And she called it ‘home’. She would say ‘let’s come back home’ after doing some activities for example, she would say “let’s come back home.” I really liked the feeling of being in a circle in that classroom.

(Ms. S., Ms. B., and Ms.L., teacher focus interview, Middleview, 9 May 2009)

In this conversation, circle was a symbol of connection, community, student-centeredness, seeing each other, being open and not hiding behind desks, it gave a sense of belonging. Ms J. further explained that for her the circle was “tribal” –remembering her experience doing work for the Council for Native Ministries for First Nations People. She said “I got to the meetings and it was always a circle. We would go around and say something, everybody being treated equally. There were only two of us that were not native. But it didn’t matter that I wasn’t native, it was a great leveler, equalizer.” The open space was quite important to Ms. C.’s drama class too. She said:

The space is definitely helpful, cause it’s open. The classroom environment is helpful because it’s a place where you’re supposed to express how you feel, that’s part of the course. So I think it’s all these layers, but I think when they’re in the space, they, the mind works in a different way, cause they’re physicalizing things, and they’re tapping into the best part of their brain.

(Ms. C., teacher interview, Braeburn ‘At-Risk’ Program, 23 February, 2009; data from SSHRC USP, see footnote 4, Chapter 5)
6.4.4.5 “When I speak English, I feel different, and difficult…but when I dance I feel the same and I feel confident, like a language”: Embodied communication and creation of social space through dance

Even though I was aware of the importance of an embodied pedagogy that pays attention to the physical body as well as the affordances of an open space, my awareness reached a much deeper level with unanticipated data about dance from the students. I became significantly more aware of the open space and the significance of narratives of physicality, body movement and dance when I talked to a former ELL student of Ms. L., Kitty, who took the drama-ELL course for beginners at Middleview. I had a chance to interview Kitty about her experience as an ELL student who arrived to Canada from China 29 months ago, when she was 18, with no English proficiency. She experienced a lot of language, economic, psychological and social difficulties in Canada. At the time she was 20 and she still needed to complete her Grade 10, 11 and 12 English, language and math classes to be able to start thinking about college or university. Kitty spoke so powerfully about the significance of the physical language of ‘body-knowing’ and dance in her life as an ELL. She explained that through her body language in dance, she felt like for the first time she could use a language that everybody else could understand. She said whenever she opened her mouth in English, she felt she was judged, “and I couldn’t help others and I couldn’t even help myself.” She felt completely useless as a human being. But when she danced, she found that she not only could express herself and feel confident about this, but she could also help others through her dancing. Kitty explained that she volunteered to dance for the Canadian Cancer Society at Sick Kids Hospital. She said she wanted to help these kids and make them feel better through her dancing. She wanted “more people know that we should care about
them”. Only after this body-knowing and this new found language through her dance could she begin to entertain the feeling of “there is hope for me”:

For me like when I speak English, I feel different, and difficult, because I am the kid from another country. I feel like not the same. But when I dance I feel the same and I feel confident, like a language. I can feel confident. I can turn my skill to help other people. Because I always need help, so I know to help other people is so important. So when I help other people I feel happy too.

(Kitty, student interview, Middleview, June 12, 2009)

After this conversation, Kitty invited me to her dance-drama co-op class. One of the other teachers I worked with also informed me about this dance-drama class and encouraged me to see the performances of two other ESL students in this same class:

<table>
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<th>Hi Burcu,</th>
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<td>I just wanted to tell you that 2 of the girls in the dance group performed solo pieces that they had created based on a sound that triggered a memory for them. For one girl, the memory was based on the sound of applause which reminded her of her last night in Iran when friends threw a party for her. She used Turkish music and danced this incredible dance that had Persian dance influences. The second girl danced a piece inspired by the sound of thunder when her plane to Canada when she was moving from Greece, got delayed and there was a lot of anxiety related to family members. She created a dance with Greek influences and music. Both dances were incredible and exactly illustrate your concept of how personal narrative can be released through the body and expressed in ways that are non-linguistic and yet enhance the learning of English. Maybe you can come in and video-tape them and ask the girls to talk about their experience doing it. I think it will blow your mind! Just thought I'd let you know...</td>
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<td>(Ms. S., April 3, 2009)</td>
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Ms. S. was right, the two ELLs students’ dance narratives did blow my mind. I had a focus group with these two students and the teacher who was responsible for the dance choreography for the dance-drama co-op. Merleau-Ponty offers the term “body-knowing” to describe the interconnectedness between body, action, space and consciousness which is neither metaphysical nor only dependent of the mind/the intellect, challenging dualistic notions of body and mind. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) provided an exploration and analysis of movement and space, and explained that the body is the origin of expressive movement and is the source through which we perceive the world. Merleau-Ponty challenged the simplistic notions of space and body, stressing that the body is the author of space and that:

> with regard to our own body, what is true of all perceived things: that the perception of space and the perception of the thing, the spatiality of the thing and its being as a third are not two distinct problems…. Intellectualism clearly sees that the ‘motive of the thing’ and ‘the motive of space’ are interwoven, but reduces the former to the latter. (1945/1962, p. 148)

The dances of the two ELLs illustrated that the material world and the perceived world in fact coexist through the embodied experience that Merleau-Ponty wrote about. The dances also made us aware of the ‘leakage’ between space and time, and the ‘passage of the one into the other’ (Grosz, 2001). Her dance at the present inhabited space and contained lived experiences of past inhabited spaces, illustrating Rogoff’s (2000) notion of ‘multi-inhabitation of multiple co-existing spaces’. In the interview, Steph described her inspiration for the dance as “her memory of thunder” the night she left her country to come to Canada with her mother:

> When I was in Greece. I have stepdad. He raised me basically. After 10 years we had to go to Canada because my mom felt like my education is going to grow better in Canada than in Greece. So my sound memory was thunder, because the night that I left there was thunder so we had a delay. So we couldn’t leave that day. And my step-dad didn’t say bye to me and he just let me and my mom go so that was my whole dance. And the noise was thunder.
Merleau-Ponty explains that the relationship of the subject to his or her world is embodied in the corporeality of this subject and this is the essence of body-knowing. Steph’s dance was not only informed by her memory of thunder, but by all the other sensory experiences that she embodied at that time in a form of intertextuality. The noise of the thunder, an auditory sensation, was connected to a synaesthesia of memory- the memory of the physical space of the airport that signified separation, the memory of time delay; the melancholy of departure from a loved land; the heartbreak of the step-father being left; the heartbreak of Steph and her mother that he did not say goodbye; and maybe somewhere deep down the mixed feelings of fear, worry, hope about life in a new country. The Zeibekiko dance, with patches of modern dance and the fluid, nostalgic music with lyrics in Greek, was interrupted by the brave and audacious periodic repetition of the rhythmic pattern, accompanied by her sharp rhythmic movement, bent over, pounding on the floor with head down, hair touching the floor, representing the thunder was the through-line, the repeated pattern in her dancing. Both Steph’s description and Shahla’s description of their dance included the ‘physical space’, the ‘mental space’ and the ‘social space’ all at the same time (Soja, 1989). Tina explained that her dance was created based on the sound of applause, which reminded her of her last night in Iran right before leaving for Canada (a year ago), when their family and friends threw a party for her:

Before I came to Canada, our friends and family had this huge party for us. It was like a surprise party to say goodbye. Because when you are going to leave the ones you love, you usually cry, right? So they wanted to make like a good memory so like we laughed. That night this music was playing and me and my uncle dancing together. It just brings back memories. I was 15.

(Shahla, focus interview with Steph, Shahla and Ms. A., Middleview, 16 April 2009)

The sound of applause was connected to a synaesthesia of memory- she chose to dance to the exact song-Turkish song- she danced to at that party; the social space that defined her social
space in the past was reflected in the present space along with the physical as well as the mental space of feeling joy because of this party and feeling melancholic because of the soon to be realized departure from these loved ones.

The comments of these three ELL students (Kitty, Shahla and Steph) reminded me of Sophie’s dance experience in Ms. C’s drama course. Sophie, like Kitty, because as an ELL she felt she lacked the language proficiency to express herself in English, dance became a space for her to do it. Both Shahla and Steph said that they failed the OSSLT last year and took it again this year, but they were not sure how they did this time. In a way dance gave these ELLs another language, a mode in which they could express themselves with dignity, where they felt powerful in expressing their feelings and who they are and what they are capable of. For Sophie, in the drama class, the collective singing and dancing was an escape from her isolation. Liona Bresler discusses this creation of connectivity through dance and drama where bodily interactions are central to communication:

The embodied mode was a mode of affordances for Sophie, unlike the limiting and slow progress in her English language proficiency. In fact, the three other ELL students discussed these feelings of social isolation they felt in Canada outside their embodied experiences through dance and/or drama (please see further discussion of this in Chapter 6.3, section 6.3.2). Drama, dance and music afforded these ELLs multiple and embodied forms of expression and discourses
which offered possibilities for more powerful means of self-expression, communication and creation of a community.

I wondered how these often marginalized students would have responded if teachers purposefully incorporated the experience of social isolation in the drama and/or dance curriculum. Although this happened organically in the drama-ESL class, especially in the Culminating Unit where they were asked to perform the struggles and success of an immigrant, it was not the focus of attention in the other courses either implicitly or explicitly.

These four ELL students expressed a deep sense of engagement and connection with schools because of the embodied drama and/or dance opportunities that were offered to them in their school context. However they also recognized that these were rare opportunities. Minette Mans (2004) writes that “when the mind-body dichotomy is overcome and we utilize a thinking body, a whole realm of teaching and learning possibilities opens up to us”. She questions “the reason why…spatial sense remains undervalued and underutilized in education is a mystery. Especially considering the stress placed upon learning by means of visual and auditory senses” (Mans, 2004, p. 90).

In this chapter I have shared student voices based on my two major themes: situated practice and multimodality and embodied learning. The findings in situated practice showed that especially with this group of vulnerable students, situated practice that invites students’ identities and past and present life experiences and future imaginings was something deeply valued by the ELLs.

Multimodal and embodied practices not only helped ELLs language learning but also positively engaged many non-ELLs. Combining multiple modes of representation and meaning-
making with traditional literacy was especially important for students who are most marginalized by traditional literacy practices.
Chapter 7: Contributions to Knowledge, Limitations and Implications

7.1 Contributions to, and Implications for, Research Methodologies

This research contributes to the developing field of multimodal ethnography, which has been increasingly recognized in qualitative scholarship because of a recent move towards an appreciation of the value of non-linguistic modes in research methods. Fusco, drawing on the work of Ristock and Pennell, writes about the significance of “the movement toward using multiple methods in order to collect the multiple truths that operate in everyday life” (Ristock and Pennell, 1996, as cited in Fusco, 2008, p. 163). My study has not only engaged in multimodal data collection, but also relied upon multimodal coding and analysis. As I explained in the methodology chapter (section 4.4.6), unlike most research in this area, this study did not separate out single modalities for analysis, but attempted to capture the synaesthesia and dialogue among different modes by interconnecting/hyperlinking multiple modes of data relevant to one event/moment in the field, during coding in ATLAS.ti software. This meant that the audio data, the video data, the images, the linguistic data and the artefactual data were not coded and analyzed separately (as is the case with most multimodal research), but were linked to one another in the coding and analysis process through ATLAS.ti software. Hyperlinked multimodal coding could then be accessed at any point during the analysis, providing the opportunity to return to the moment in a multisensory way, and also allowing for re-coding as the analysis progressed. Despite the technical complexities of such analysis, this multimodal methodology provided rich and multilayered understanding of the teachers’ pedagogies and the students’ experiences of these pedagogies. At the moment, the available software programs like ATLAS.ti
are imperfect. The need for ever more sophisticated software programs that can hold together multiple kinds of multisensory data is a lesson learned from this study and an implication for future research.

Another way this study contributes to the field of qualitative methodology is with its focus on ongoing co-construction of knowledge with the participants, wherever this was possible. Although not strictly Participatory Action Research (PAR), this research was deeply informed by elements of participatory processes such as making interview and focus group questions and analysis visible to teachers and students, asking them for their ideas about other possible questions that they thought were important to raise, being transparent about my research and sharing my preliminary and on-going analyses with the teacher and some student participants with an interest in the ‘co-creation of knowledge’ with my participants as ‘co-researchers’ (Gallagher, 2008), rather than performing the traditional ‘member check’ that is done to verify the researcher’s own interpretations. Finally, co-presenting some of the results of the research at a conference with one of the teachers allowed for further co-construction of practice-relevant ideas.

In one school, the presence of a research project in the drama class raised the profile of the class, which, according to the teacher, was often overlooked by the administrators in her school. Teachers also said that the fact that a researcher was interested in their classes gave a message to the students that these were classes of significance.

7.2 Contributions to, and Implications for, Education of ELLs, Second Language Education and Multiliteracies Pedagogy

The findings of this research contribute to knowledge in the education of ELLs by stressing the importance of making both educators and students aware that there are strong
connections among drama, language and literacy education. This knowledge needs to be made more explicit by the drama teachers, language teachers, mainstream teachers and guidance teachers in secondary schools, especially those with high numbers of ELLs. This research also asserts that ELLs benefit greatly when drama teachers make more explicit connections between drama and multiple literacies. This awareness is important because the study suggested that ELLs often initially shy away from taking drama courses. However, those ELLs in this study who did take drama, with no exceptions, said that drama helped them feel more confident about their English language proficiency.

This study also contributes to the fields of ELL education and second language education with its theoretical focus on Multiliteracies and multimodalities frameworks, since most of the research within these frameworks usually takes place in L1 contexts. Another pedagogical implication of this study is the students’ perspective on the value of the interpersonal, dialogic communication and the collective work that took place in the three drama courses, however different their individual pedagogies may have been.

This study suggests that ELLs not only appreciated the collective work on multimodal meaning-making and its positive impact on the development of the traditional skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, but they also appreciated the relational aspects of the embodied and multimodal work in drama. ELLs often referred to how the collective and interactive space, created in the three drama classrooms, made them feel that they belonged and were connected (this is especially significant because of the contrast to their feelings of not belonging and not connecting with life outside of their classrooms in their new country). However, the findings of this study make clear the challenges of collaborative work, providing a layered understanding of the dynamics of this kind of dialogic pedagogy that heavily relies on group work. While much
research has examined the challenges of drama’s pedagogies, the ELLs’ voice has not been central in these studies.

7.3 Contributions to, and Implications, for Drama Pedagogy

David Booth writes that, “theatre educates, but often not in the ways we think, and not always within the traditional confines of grand stages. We need to continually remind ourselves of the complex and different contexts that allow us to enter the ‘as if, what if’ world” (Booth & Gallagher, 2003, p. 17). It was not a surprise to discover a wide range of drama pedagogies employed by the different teachers, from a process-oriented approach to a more product-oriented, polished performance approach, since drama/theatre offers a wide range of pedagogical possibilities. Despite the fact that the three principal teachers’ drama classrooms offered pedagogies that were quite different from one another, the study’s findings suggest that participation in these three different classrooms contributed significantly to the linguistic, social and academic performances of the ELLs.

Even though the primary focus of this study was the connections between drama, second language education and literacy education, another strong finding that emerged from the data was the strong connections several ELLs made to embodied meaning-making and representation through dance. For these students, dance, through its affordance of communicating deep feelings and complex understandings non-verbally, offered possibilities for more powerful means of self-expression, communication and creation of community; in one of the students’ words, “When I speak English, I feel different and difficult…but when I dance I feel same and I feel confident, like a language.”
7.4 Contributions to, and Implications for, Educational Policy

7.4.1 Language education policy

The motivation to close the achievement gap goes beyond principles of equality and social justice. The economic costs of school failure are enormous. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has recently published an economic growth projection which estimated that even minimal improvements in the educational performance of socio-economically disadvantaged students would result in huge long-term savings for member countries: “The results suggest that bringing the lowest-performing students in the OECD area – many of whom are socio-economically disadvantaged – at least up to 400 score points on the PISA scale, which corresponds roughly to the lower boundary of the PISA baseline Level 2 of proficiency, could imply an aggregate gain of national income in the order of USD 200 trillion over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010” (OECD, 2010a, p. 26). (Cummins, 2011b, slide 6)

As explained in Chapter 2, ELLs face many challenges in most subject areas, and often fail standardized examinations like the OSSLT. This is especially so when they arrive in Canada in their high school years, because as second language researchers have pointed out, it takes about seven years for these students to catch up to grade-level academic language proficiency (August & Hakuta, 1998; Cummins, 2000). Catching up is very important to ELLs, because they are certainly reported by the OECD to be among the “lowest–performing students.” Supporting ELLs so that they can perform better academically is not only important in terms of equality and social justice, but, as Cummins (2011b) suggests in the above excerpt, is also significant “since the economic costs of school failure are enormous.” Therefore, discovering alternative pedagogies and creating educational policies that aim to better support these high school ELLs has been a critical concern in education. The study described in this dissertation addresses this concern by specifically examining how drama pedagogies might support ELLs with their English language learning.
Cummins (2000) explains below that current educational policy and practice in relation to linguistically and culturally diverse students are mostly based on empirical studies, usually informed by psychology and applied linguistics research, that often do not address the social realities, identities, and coercive power relations of these students:

Educational policy and practice in linguistically diverse contexts may be based on semi-articulated assumptions about the nature of human learning, and second-language learning in particular. Theory and research within the disciplines of psychology and applied linguistic can speak to the validity of these assumptions. These disciplines, however, may contribute little to understanding the social roots of patently false assumptions about language learning and bilingualism and how these assumptions coagulate into coercive discourses designed to exclude bilingual children from educational opportunities. Understanding of these processes requires a focus on societal power relations and how they determine forms of educational organization . . . and influence the mindset of goals and expectations that educators bring into the classroom. (Cummins, 2000, Introduction, p. 2)

The study described in this dissertation addresses the social realities, identities and coercive power relations that impact ELLs. One of the central findings of this study is the significance of situated practice in educating ELLs. Expanding understandings of situated practice, this study documents that, with particular emphasis on the principles of situated practice, drama provides a third space, an in-between space for exploring, questioning, challenging and deconstructing power relations in the lives of students with respect to their multiple subject positions (language, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomics, gender, sexual orientation), often using their own identity texts as a springboard to inform their collective creations. However, Gallagher writes about the significance of “distancing” and “dramatic imagination” as students are working on texts that might sometimes feel ‘too close to home’:

In drama, we attempt – collectively – to frame our lives through art as we come to know the world and our sensuous responses to it…. the dramatic ‘frame’ serves to distance the players from the subject in such a way as to ultimately engage them aesthetically, or offer multiple ways into a story, which may in some ways be ‘too close to home.’ I am interested in this idea of the aesthetic experience for the ways in which it helps to
cultivate sociological questions about representation and the nature of cognitive and embodied dramatic engagement. (2007, p. 161-162, author’s italics)

In my study, these identity negotiations through dramatic imagination deeply engaged ELLs in multiple literacies. Therefore, this study suggests that identity negotiations, scaffolding through the embodied language, and attention to power relations through dramatic imagination should be an important component of English language education. Students would benefit from classrooms where they can creatively explore their existing knowledge, evolving identities and future imaginings through the aesthetic experience of drama pedagogy.

7.4.2 Academic guidance for English Language Learners

From my experience, I think for people that’s going to be new to country, and especially if they’re coming to high school, or like close to high school - cause they don’t know, like at that moment - kids that grow up here, as soon as they’re in Grade 9 they already know what career they want to do, so they already start getting ready for it, right. But me, I didn’t even know about it. I didn’t even start thinking about it at that time. So helping them with that and asking them what they want to do, and then telling them to take the course that they need - that would be so much helpful.

(Mya, student interview, Middleview, 11 January 2009)

In the study, one important call came from students. All of the ELLs, and some of the non-ELL students, spoke out about their need for direction and more guidance in planning for their high school years and for applications to colleges and universities. They were not sure about what courses to take to be accepted into the colleges or universities they hoped to attend. It was not uncommon for ELLs to realize, toward the end of their high school years, that these choices mattered. Interviews with Mya, Sophie, Tigris and most of the other students drew attention to their need for more guidance to understand the system. They all referred to a lack of school support, and/or basic information. Some did not even know that they needed to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test in order to graduate. Most of them failed the test, and
many (for example Mya and Sophie) did not know about the existence of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy *Course*, an alternative to the test for students who have failed it.

Even though some students did not voice these concerns explicitly in the interviews or in the questionnaires, they were sometimes evident in students’ descriptions of their future dreams and hopes. For example, Shanty, from Mr. R.’s drama class, is a female Afro-Caribbean student born in Jamaica who returned to Canada six months before she completed the questionnaire, having been back and forth between Canada and Jamaica for most of her life. She wrote that her dream was to become a social service worker and the following is what she thought was necessary to achieve this: “I like to go to Ryerson University to study philosophy to become a Social Service Worker.”

Tigris, a student in the ESL program at Braeburn, was frustrated with the problem of access to required courses. Here is how he explained his frustration with the guidance office regarding his registration in Grade 10 math for a new quad:

Tigris: Sometimes when you go to the guidance office, they don’t really like you – they don’t sort of help you.

Burcu: Can you give me an example?

Tigris: As example, about the math in this quad. The class has been cancelled. In the beginning, I was supposed to study math in the third period – in this period, right now. The class has been cancelled.

Burcu: Because?

Tigris: Because it’s less than 25 students. I don’t know why. It’s not our fault. Actually we paid for that, and we should – we have the right to try to study. So they cancelled the class. They told us, the class in the first period - because there’s two classes, there’s one in the first period and there’s one in the third period. The third period cancelled, so there’s just the first one. The first one was full, there’s like 50 students. So in that case we had no luck to study…Then they put us on a waiting list, they said after three days, check and see maybe there’s an available place so we can fit you in that class. So actually I got that – I and a some other students got that [a spot] after five days. You know, we missed like five classes. And the teacher was really fast. And so actually we missed like a whole chapter.
So we had to study by ourselves. So that’s one of the problems, there is really no good arrangement. (Tigris, student interview, 6 May 2009)

Clearly, more guidance and support is fundamental for these students, especially those who are newcomers and ELLs, and therefore not very familiar with how the school system works in Canada. It is important for these students to receive more personal, engaged and sustained educational guidance to help them understand how their current studies are related to future prospects.

After reading and hearing some of the student concerns about guidance, I wanted to interview a guidance counsellor. I was not successful in getting access at Braeburn but was able to have a very informative interview with Ms. V., a guidance counsellor at Middleview. In a long and candid interview, I learned that the Middleview guidance department is aware of the needs of their ELLs, but with ratios of between 400 and 500 students per guidance counsellor, they do not get to spend the quality time and sustained interaction that both the students need and the counsellors would like to provide:

As it stands, we just show up – I go to all the ESL classes and look at their credit counselling summaries, and say, yup, you need this, this, this, and after that I can give you more. And you shouldn’t really be taking this. And they pick within five minutes. How could you counsel someone academically in five minutes? It just doesn’t work for me, and I’m not the only one who’s frustrated with this. We’re going to get out and give the kids more information on a school-wide basis. Because what happens is we see the same kids five times in a year saying “I really want to change this.”… It’s all about information. I think the kids in ESL really are thirsty for information. (Ms. V., teacher interview, Middleview, 16 June 2009)

The students’ data and Ms. V.’s interview have both indicated that giving ELLs about the same access to guidance services as the L1 students get is not working. Ms. V. spoke about the counsellors’ frustration, and the students very clearly wrote and spoke about theirs – frustration
that can come from trying to pass a test that you do not feel prepared for; frustration with having only five minutes to help a student plan his or her school year, and the frustration of getting to the end of Grade 12 only to find that you do not have the required courses to either graduate or be admitted to a post-secondary program of your choice. As well as some special in-service education for guidance counselors about the circumstances of ELLs, the students themselves need some sessions, preferably in small groups so that the session leader can make sure each student is engaged, to help them learn what questions to ask and what requirements they should be aware of.

7.4.3 Teacher education in ELL pedagogy

Recent 2007 Ministry guidelines for the first time explicitly state that it is the job of all teachers, and not just the ESL teachers, to support ELLs. In addition, these guidelines require that all schools account for the funding allocated for ELLs, so that school administrators cannot use it for more general purposes. Despite these policy directives, there is still a lack of sufficient guidance and support for ELLs. It is possible that these support services for ELLs would improve if they were protected by law in the same way, for example, as they are for students with disabilities. However, it is important to note here that even students with disabilities do not always receive the support and other accommodations prescribed within their Individual Educational Plans; in a time of cutbacks to education, the ‘trickle down’ of resources to ELLs and all students with special needs is even further eroded.

Jim Cummins, in a May, 2011 keynote address in Fredericton to launch the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE)’s Accord on Research in Education, reminded us of the current state of education for ELLs:
One example is the implicit assumption that teaching ELL students is the job of the ESL teacher. This assumption is built into prominent school leadership frameworks, many teacher education courses, and Principals’ Courses.

In other words, we are saying that we do not expect our school leaders or classroom teachers to have any specific knowledge about ELL students’ academic trajectories or how to provide appropriate instruction for ELL students. (Cummins, 2011a, slide 25)

As a member of the OISE student body, I have become aware of the numbers of teacher candidates who rush to get an additional qualification (AQ) in Special Education as soon as they obtain their Bachelor of Education degree. Perhaps a similar rush for an AQ in ESL is needed. For while the Ontario Ministry of Education has taken an initial step by stating that it is the job of all teachers to support ELLs, a second and powerful step would be to mandate ELL pedagogy in teacher education programs, additional qualifications courses for guidance counselors, and in principal preparation courses, too.

### 7.5 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This was a year-long ethnography, with some follow-up interviews with both students and teachers occurring in the second year. A longer-term ethnography that followed the student participants for at least another year would, no doubt, be instructive and offer education further understanding of the journey of ELLs in learning English and situating themselves socially, linguistically and academically in high school and beyond.

Because drama-ESL classrooms are still rare, and the curriculum is often unique to its own setting, I would have been interested in researching multiple drama-ESL classrooms, drama classrooms, and English language classrooms, ideally with students at different levels of English language proficiency. In their article “Not Without the Art!! The Importance of Teacher Artistry
when Applying Drama as Pedagogy for Additional Language Learning” (2011), Julie Dunn and Madonna Stinson say “when language learning experiences are planned and implemented by teachers who are aware of the nuances of both language learning and drama learning, then the results achieved will be optimised” (p. 630). All three drama teachers who participated in this research had theatre backgrounds, but only one also had a specialization in ESL. Studies that examine drama-ESL classrooms led by teachers with different specializations (ESL only; drama only; or both drama and ESL) would further inform the field.

An important aspect of Multiliteracies pedagogy is the integration of a student’s L1 and L2 in second language education and literacy education. This was not in evidence in the classroom pedagogy at the three sites I worked with. All students were encouraged to use English all the time. Students were often discouraged from using bilingual dictionaries. I would be interested in conducting research in a drama classroom where both students’ L1 and L2 could be used, to learn about the impact this may have on their L2 learning and identity construction.

The larger study to which this study is connected examined how communication happened through digital video of live performances across international sites. My study was a local multi-site ethnography, which took place in one country, Canada. An interesting future direction for examining the use of drama in second language education could be an international, multi-site research project in drama-EAL classes, drama classes, or EFL/ESL/EAL classes that explores the relationship of drama pedagogy to English language learning.

A further interest I have is to explore multimodality by connecting second language pedagogy, drama pedagogy and digital technologies in the teaching of English language learners. Currently, much research on multimodality in literacy education explores digital technologies. However, most of these digital technologies, although they claim to be interactive, do not
provide an interpersonal approach to language learning. Using digital technologies in the context of embodied and relational work in drama, and paying explicit attention to second language learning in this pedagogy, could provide new and innovative pedagogical orientations in teaching that support the language learning of ELLs.

And lastly, a growing field in both drama education and the field of ethnography is looking at the relationship between research participants and their Avatar Second Lives on the screen (Boellstorff, 2008; Flintoff, 2011). Given the findings about situated practice and the importance of identity in this study, one can only imagine how much this question could be opened up by studying the relationship between ELLs, situated identity and a projected, created digital one.

### 7.6 Final Thoughts

This study has systematically drawn from research in second language education, drama education, literacy education, embodied learning, multimodality, Multiliteracies pedagogy, and situated practice and woven them into a multi-site, multimodal ethnography. My hope is that it has offered, in return, some significant ideas to these disparate fields. Each one of these fields of study would benefit from further empirical research in the dynamic spaces of drama classrooms; this work has been a beginning.
I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Kathleen Gallagher, lead investigator of the project, *Urban School Performances: The interplay, through live and digital drama, of local-global knowledge about student engagement*, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2008-2013), as my research was strategically situated as part of this larger study.
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