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(Standard) English as Second Language: Tribulations of Self

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Abstract

In this article, we problematize a common assumption (embodied in everyday practices of schooling) that learning (standard) English as a second language corresponds to acquiring a new code. Rather, by drawing on various literatures (poetry, postmodern writing, and [sociological] phenomenology) and our own lived experience of learning English later in life, we show how acquiring a new language leads to changing experiences of Self and Other. Because some research has shown that speakers of non-standard English experience clashes (symbolic violence) when they confront the standard registers of English at school, we extend our analysis to non-standard English as primary language. We call for a notion of literacy that allows students to negotiate dialects, registers, and with it, their constructions of Self and Other.

You ask me what I mean
by saying I have lost my tongue.
I ask you, what would you do
if you had two tongues in your mouth,
and lost the first one, the mother tongue,
and could not really know the other,
the foreign tongue.
You could not use them both together
even if you thought that way.

(from the poem *Search for my tongue,* Bhatt, 1988, p. 65)

Every year and all over the world, more and more students who first speak languages other than English populate classrooms in urban, suburban, and rural settings (e.g., TESOL, 1999). In the southern US, Spanish is the first language spoken by an increasing number of students. In Montreal recent immigrant children speak their mother tongue at home, English in the streets, and French at school. In the Toronto area, one school district sends letters to the parents in 17 languages. In Vancouver, English is spoken in only 45% of households. These students come from homes and communities with a great diversity in their histories, traditions, worldviews, and educational experiences. In countries where English is at least one official language, such as Canada or the USA, such students frequently end up in English as Second Language (ESL) classes. However, in some cases, even those who believe that English is their mother tongue may find themselves in remedial classes. Thus, recent Anglophone Caribbean immigrant students entering US schools and colleges find themselves increasingly placed into remedial writing or ESL classes (Nero, 1997). Because of their attendance in such classes,

> **tribulation** *n*. [ME *tribulacioun* < Ofr. < Llat. *tribulatio* < *tribulare,* to oppress < Lat. threshing-sledge.] **1.** Great trial, affliction, or distress. **2.** A cause of distress. (Webster's II: New Riverside University Dictionary, 1984)

these students find themselves situated in discourses that contribute to the construction of ESL students as lesser beings and often as academically low performing students even if there subject matter competencies are very high when speaking in their mother tongue (e.g., McKay & Wong, 1996). Apart from the academic discourse which frequently diminishes their cognitive potential, such students also find themselves caught in colonialist and racialized discourses on immigrants, cultural and nationalist discourses, social discourses, and gender discourses (e.g., Schecter & Bayley, 1997). Furthermore, it is not only that being an ESL student leads to particular experiences through a process of labeling, the very change in language entails a change in the way we experience ourselves,

> [Michael:] Technically speaking, I learned a mother tongue, my mother's tongue. But I speak it little, and not well. In daily use, I speak in the third and fourth languages I learned. But when I return to the country of my mother (which they call interestingly enough my fatherland [Vaterland]), I feel much more like a stranger than in places where my second and third languages are spoken.

and in the way we relate to others. Learning a new language and living in a new culture changes how we relate to the Other and to the world; learning a new language therefore changes who we are, how we experience ourselves, and therefore our Selves.

We begin our investigation with the post-modern and post-structuralist presupposition that identity is heterogeneous, fluid, and often contradictory. Identity is a site of continuous struggle, arising from a multiplicity of situations and group memberships, leading to our experience of multiple marginality, and which is therefore a source of monstrosity (Star, 1991). Sociocultural identities and ideologies are not static, deterministic structures and constructs that teachers and students bring to the second language classroom and then take away unchanged at the end of a lesson or course (Duff & Uchida, 1997). In the classroom, social life, Self, Other, beliefs, etc. are continuously and collectively re/constructed and re/transformed.

Although in academic circles, the notion of identity as emerging from interactions and re/attributed to the individual, a fixed conception of identity remains as the non-articulated premise of daily life, including schooling (Thesen, 1997). Thus, foreign language classrooms focus on what is on the other side of the border; teachers teach language and culture (or culture in language), but not language as culture (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Foreign language pedagogy, as literacy pedagogy more generally (e.g., The New London Group, 1996), has been restricted to rule-governed forms of language. However, what we need instead is a radical notion of cultural difference and citizenship that recognizes the essentially contested nature of signs that we use in the construction of Self and Other, social identities, etc. Border pedagogies emphasize that those who are designated and marked as "other" need to re/claim and re/construct lives, work, voices, histories, and visions (of Self and Other). Border pedagogies are therefore part of a broader struggle to change those social and political relations that deny the radical pluralism that characterizes the liberal community (Giroux, 1992; Rorty, 1989).

In this investigation, we chart the terrain of Self as it arises from the experiences of learning (standard) English as a second language. We view research as re/contextualization, a re/weaving of networks of beliefs (Lather, 1991; Rorty, 1991). We therefore run our topic through different filters, the understanding and hermeneutic,

> VOICE OVER: Our project is one of unfolding, disclosing the tensions, difficulties, alienation, subjugation, violence, and joys of beginning to speak a second language, moving into another language or to remain on the outside.

experience of our own Selfs, and reading the experience of others. We begin with a (postmodern?) reading of several texts that deal with the changes in stories and identities. Our trajectory then takes us to different forms of relationships experienced by speakers of a new tongue and to the change in the experience of Self. We end by extending our reflections to individuals with non-standard English as a mother tongue and call for a more radical notion of literacy.

Our investigation enacts a hermeneutic phenomenology that discloses and therefore unfolds and recovers meaning (Ricœur, 1991). This process is constituted by two complementary and dialectic moments: explanation and understanding. In order to construct formal explanations, we enact a critical, analytical moment. Explanation develops understanding in an analytic way, and is grounded in the histories of the relevant disciplines with which we are familiar. However, any explanation is always enveloped (preceded, accompanied, and concluded) by understanding that arises from our practical engagement in the world. Understanding testifies to the experience of *Mitsein,* being-together-with (Heidegger, 1977), that is, the experience of being as co-belonging to a world that precedes all objectifying and all opposition between Self and Other, object and subject. Our understanding arises from the experience of having learned several languages, and navigating our current world in a tongue other than that of our mothers. But any such understanding can be developed further only in an analytical fashion.

In this article, we not only resist the notion of a constant Self, but also the notion that there can be singular ways of writing any one of these Selves. Our re/weaving of unfolding networks of significance is a form of writing according to *restance* (Derrida, 1988), rest and resistance: while inescapably *resting* in language, we *resist* the creation of one master narrative, the language of the other, for the other, from the other. We therefore follow the writing (wrighting? w/ri(gh)ting?) strategies of others concerned with the historically constituted monolithic and hegemonic

> [VOICE OVER:] It/Id happens [. . .] by means of ruptures and disruptions of the code in one's manner of writing, teaching, practicing, or trafficking in language or the instruments of logic and rhetoric, as by means of what are called actions intervening in or through the most recognizable form of the [literary] apparatuses. (Derrida, 1995b, p. 57)

nature of the scholarly literature (e.g., Ashmore, 1989; Derrida, 1986; Roth & McRobbie, in press); our writing stresses reflexivity, intertextuality, plurivocity, and heterogeneity in the very topology of the text which brings about a greater depth of field and therefore encourages multiple readings. (Post-modern poets and literary authors have employed for some time disruptive and subversive tactics in morphology, syntax, and meaning to write against the homo-hegemony of monolingualism [Wah, 1998].) Our text is not only about (second) language and Self, but constitutes a poetic of Self and (second) language.

Poetics of Language and Self

Inside languages there is a terror, soft, discreet, or glaring. (Derrida, 1998, p. 23)

Derrida seems to speak to Bhatt's lines earlier cited, "You could not use them [first and second language] both together." There is a terror, soft and discreet in the experience of loosing one's first tongue and never really knowing the other, the foreign tongue. Further, if our experiences are tied to language, this soft and discreet terror inside languages certainly leads to tribulations of Self.

Language, culture, Self, Other, and world are the results of historically contingent evolutions, mutually dependent in the way they constrain each other (Rorty, 1989). Language, as our primary means of representation, plays a central role in the ways we constitute language, culture, Self, Other, and world; that is, the constitution and Self and meaning are mutually-constitutive and therefore imply each other (Ricœur, 1991). However, although educators know that cultures differ, with necessary repercussions because of the mutually constitutive networks of significance, languages are often treated as codes that can be easily (and even mechanically, as the proliferation of pocket translators appears to indicate) translated into one another. Having moved into a different culture and language, we know, understand, and have experienced the relationship between languages differently. As we reflected on the topic of the relationship between language and Self, we remembered the poem *Search for My Tongue* (Bhatt, 1988) based on the poetess' experience of speaking and writing in Gujarati and English (and German).

When I look up
I think
(aakash, suraj)
and then: sky, sun.
Don't tell me it's the same, I know
better. To think of the sky
is to think of dark clouds bringing snow,
the first snow is always on Thanksgiving.

And yet, the humid June air,
the stormiest sky in Connecticut
can never be
(aakash)

Although a dictionaries may translate "aakash" into "sky" and "suraj" into "sun," the aakash of Ahmedabad can never be the sky of Connecticut, or the "Himmel" of Bremen (Germany) where Bhatt subsequently lived. The language of our internal monologues is not being some context independent language, but a function of the people, things, and situation that populate our monologues (see Figure 1). We, the authors, cannot hear our

mothers in English and we do not (or rarely) speak to our mothers in English. Speaking to our mothers in a tongue other than their's opens wounds, brings to our awareness the fundamental alienation implicit in all language use.

> VOICE OVER: No poem without accident, no poem that does not open itself like a wound, but no poem that is not also just as wounding. You will call a poem a silent incantation, the aphonic wound that, of you, from you, I want to learn by heart. (Derrida, 1995b, p. 297)

Our experiences, the experiences we use to constitute the stories in response to "Who are you?" are difficult to tell in a language context other than that in which they occurred.

> I learned about the Holocaust… first in Yiddish… a language I knew very well, a language whose words and syntax, whose very sound, captured, for me, more feeling and more personal knowing than my language today ever can. While I have often translated the English language and American events to my parents, I have never been able, satisfactorily, to interpret Yiddish—its words and its very knowing of the world—to the Americans in my life. (Neumann, 1998, p. 428)

Anna Neumann suggested that her father, hearing himself talk about the atrocities of Auschwitz, must have somehow known that he could not capture in the new language the experience of what has been. He could hear himself say words that portrayed only something different than what he knew what was inscribed in his body. In his accounts, which she heard in the halting English of her father's later years, Anna Neumann experienced fewer images and even fewer feelings than the first tellings did in the Yiddish of her childhood. For example, the word "thirst" in Anna Neumann's America of today means one thing, but in the other context, in another place and in another time, draws on an entirely different experience what thirst is in the human body and therefore constitutes a very different understanding of "thirst." But the issues are not that simple (see Figure 1). Rather, translation involves a dialectic that arises because "In a sense, nothing is untranslatable; but *in another sense,* everything is untranslatable; translation is another name for the impossible" (Derrida, 1998, p. 56-57). Even within a language, within English, Gujarati, Yiddish, and Derrida's French, there exist multiple languages which resist translation, translation into another such English, Gujarati, Yiddish, and French.

[Michael:] Atrocities are unspeakable. Growing up in postwar Germany, I still remember the burned-out shells of houses that have fallen under the bombs on the last days of the war. I remember how the images of bulldozers pushing the remains of concentration camp victims into trenches constricted and still constrict my chest. My memories are associated with the resonance of the German language, the language of the purpetrators. Mixed with the haunting and dissonant sounds of Gavin Bryars' (1995) *The Last Days* and Steve Reich's *Different Trains* (. . .Lots of cattle wagons there/ They were loaded with people/ They shaved us/ They tatooed a number on our arm/ Flames going up to the sky—it was smoking. [Reich, 1988]) which I associate with the camps and the trains that transported mostly Jews to Auschwitz (and Dachau, Maria Theresien Thal, etc.). Ever since, even the idea of war (even "holy wars" such as Desert Storm) terrified me. My new language, not my mother's tongue, has a sanitized ring (e.g., in the movie *Schindler's List*), incapable of evoking or transmitting the horror. Atrocities continue to happen: Cambodia, Cosovo, Rwanda. . . "wherever I go/ there are trains burning through my fingers" (Bhatt, 1988, p. 54), different trains but the same atrocities. Humankind seems incapable to learn from the testimonies.

Figure 1. Memories, Derrida's archive of the Self, are tied to the particular of the language and culture in which they are experienced.

Anna Neumann's father, her memories of her father, his biography, are closely linked to the Yiddish language in which she had heard him talk about the experience to family members and friends. Although she hardly speaks the language anymore, images of her father, mother and uncle talking about *the* experience

> *And my mother in the kitchen,*
> *my mother singing:*
> *(mon mor megher shungay, ooday choilay dikdigontair panay)*
> *I can't hear my mother in English.*
> (Bhatt, 1988, p. 68)

are intimately tied to Yiddish. Sujata Bhatt too, cannot hear her mother in English, her new and acquired language, different from her mother's tongue. In Bhatt's (being speaker of three languages) experience, "there are at least three/ languages between us" herself and the addressee of *The Undertow* (p. 89-90). Why are the languages between us? How can the language be between the Self and the Other? These languages which are separate from us, between us, alienate us are both different from ourselves and intercede between Self and Other. The apparent continuity in our individual experiences, as bodies that trace out trajectories in an a priori given (Kantian) time and space belies the notion of alienation of Self from self entailed by the change into another language. Yet this alienation does not only arise from the other, second language for "there is a type of 'originary' alienation that institutes every language as a language of the other: the impossible property of a language" (Derrida,

1998, p. 63). This originary alienation arises from the phenomenological insight that language always already presupposes the Other. Language always exists asymmetrically, always predating our existence and therefore from the other and kept by the other; and simultaneously, it is always destined for the other and therefore returning to the other.

Under the illusion that all language is translatable, languages have become transparent, we seem to inhabit a world rendered immediately by the nomological distinctions we make with words. In such a vision, any language would then be subsumable into a metalanguage, a monolanguage. A fish in the water no longer notices the water in which it swims. But, as Derrida points out, even if we only ever have one language, it could never be one with itself—reflecting the incompleteness of any formal (representational) system which the mathematician Gödel had established in the domain of elementary number theory (e.g., Hofstadter, 1979).

> But how does one orient this writing, this impossible appropriation of the forbidding-forbidden language, this inscription of self in the forbidden language—forbidden for me, to me, but also *by* me? (Derrida, 1998, p. 33)

How does one orient a text of (and about) Self in proximity to another language and not simply in it? Derrida suggests that the orientation of such a text cannot come from the space and time of a mother tongue because “we only ever speak one language” (p. 7). With his mother’s tongue, Derrida had no language for *grievance*, a word that, in English, connotes complaint without accusation, suffering, and mourning. Anna Neumann does her mourning in another language, not in her mother’s tongue, which never really had been her mother tongue given that she had come to America as a young child.

Learning English as a second language is therefore not simply a matter of replacing one code by another, one transparent window for the Self onto the world replaced by another. As Bhatt reminds us, “you could not use them both together/ even if you thought that way” and, “because we could not really know the other,” we could never replace the first one. Moving into a second language is also deeply uprooting, Self-transforming, and therefore always a threat to the experience of identity. As Derrida noted, there is a terror inside languages, soft and discreet. Here, then, we confront the dialectic of sameness and selfhood, for despite moving into the other language, beginning to grow another tongue, or domesticating the one that we have into turning and bending to produce the new sounds. On the one hand, we experience a continuity of a narrative held together by the lived continuity of a material body (though when we look back, re-read our biography inscribed in the stories that we use to identify ourselves we certainly notice the change). On the other, we experience, especially when returning into the language community, changes that, of course, may also be maturational.

Self and Other in (out of) Praxis

Phenomenology of Self and Other

Modernity's humanist conception of Self as unified, static, determinate source of will and action has been seriously questioned over the past three decades. In many debates on mono- and multiculturalism, mono- and multilingualism, nationality and citizenship, the modern concept of identity—identity (*idem*tity?) as transparent to itself—is always dogmatically presupposed (Derrida, 1998). But can we speak of selfhood before speaking of the identity of the subject? Selfhood cannot be reduced to the capacity to utter "I." Rather, being able to say "I" is always preceded by understanding ourselves as Self and using signs, which are always from the realm of other than Self. The Modern sense of a constant Self arises from a conflation of idem-identity (Lat. *idem*, same)—the (structural) sameness of bodies across time, even in slight modifications (individuals become more stately, have some form of illness changing their outer appearance, etc.)—with that of ipse-identity (Lat. *ipse*, self) which describes selfhood (Ricœur, 1990). Idem-identity therefore constitutes what we experience as continuities of our action systems, whereas ipse-identity has to be routinely created and

> **identity** *n.* (Lat., *identitas* < Lat. *idem*, the same < *id*, it). **1.** The collective aspects of the characteristics by which a thing is distinctly recognizable or known. **2.** The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group. **3.** The quality or condition of being the same as something else. **4.** The distinct personality of an individual regarded as a continuing entity: INDIVIDUALITY. (Webster's II: New Riverside University Dictionary, 1984)

sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual. Thus, ipse-identity ("self-identity" in Giddens) does not consist of distinctive traits, but "is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography" (Giddens, 1991, p. 53). Ipse-identity therefore puts into play the dialectic of *self* and the *other than self*, a dialectic complementary to that of selfhood and sameness. It is this ipse-identity that emerges from the Self-Other dialectic, and therefore leads to our experience of multiple memberships, marginalities, and identities. As long as we constrain our inquiry within the horizon of idem-identity, the otherness of the other than self

> [VOICE OVER:] As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism. *L'un se garde de l'autre.* The One guards against/keeps some of the other. It protects *itself* from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherness or self-difference (the difference from within oneself) which makes it One. The "One differing, deferring from itself." The One as the Other. (Derrida, 1995a, p. 78)

offers nothing original (Ricœur, 1990). From the outset the dialectic implicit in "oneself as another" suggests that the "selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that we cannot think one without thinking the other, or instead (in terms of a Hegelian discourse), one passes into the other" (p. 14, our translation). The Other is therefore not merely the counterpart of the Same, but contributes to the intimate constitution of the sense. On a properly phenomenological level, the multiple and heterogeneous ways in which the other than Self affects the very understanding of ourselves as Selfs marks the difference between a Cartesian ego that posits itself and the Self that recognizes itself as arising from its interactions. This has implications for the person who utters "I":

> This *I* would have *formed* itself, then, at the site of a *situation* that cannot be found, a site always referring elsewhere, to something other, to another language, to the other in general. It would have *located* [*situé*] itself in a *nonlocatable* [*insituable*] experience of *language* in the broad sense of the word. (Derrida, 1998, p. 29)

Ultimately, and fundamentally, the constitution of Self and Other arises from central role of language in our lives.

Historically, three traditions have constituted the central role of language in the constitution of Self. These three traditions arise from (a) Wittgenstein's analysis of language and the linguistic horizon of the world; (b) the phenomenological project in the hermeneutic nature of understanding being-in-the-world (e.g., Gadamer and Ricœur); and (c) the Foucauldian insistence on the role and politics of discourse on the constitution of what the world is like (Ibáñez, 1994).

> [Michael:] I am marked. Not by ethnicity, gender, physical handicap etc. But I speak no language without accent. (Every time I think I've forgotten,/ I think I've lost the mother tongue,/ it blossoms out of my mouth./ Bhatt, 1988, p. 66) *I* do not hear my accent, but the *Other* does. The *Other* attributes what I do to my "German heritage." Although I have attempted to resist and refuse this categorization, my tongue, part of my Self, gives me away. Never mind that my writing in English is more imaginative, poetic, and scholarly than my German ever was. For the *Other*, I am not Canadian, I remain (the Other wants me to be) German.

Participating in linguistic exchanges also means participating in collective memories which are constituted and nourished by the language we use, the proverbs, myths, songs, writings, and stories (Ibáñez, 1994; Middleton & Edwards, 1990). It is because of these memories, myths, songs, stories, and other practices that learning a second language, speaking like the Other in the new country does not come easy. The first tongue seems to come back, grow back, as soon we think we had spit it out: "Every time I think I've

forgotten,/ I think I've lost the mother tongue,/ it blossoms out of my mouth" (Bhatt, 1988, p. 66 [*Search for my Tongue*]). As Michael's experience shows, there are networks of practices and beliefs that resist such reweaving. The social world, therefore, should not be understood as a multiplicity of situations in which 'ego' faces 'alter,' but one in which each person is equally implicated in the active process of organizing predictable social interaction. Rather, the orderliness of day-to-day life is an achievement which social actors achieve in a routine way. Though this orderliness is constant, it is continuously threatened by the slightest glance, voice inflection, bodily and facial expression, etc. (Giddens, 1991). Because language, intrinsically public and shared, constitutes the medium in which we objectify self and other, self-consciousness has no primacy over the consciousness of others. Intersubjectivity is the primary phenomenon from which subjectivity is derived (Heidegger, 1977; Lyotard, 1991).

Languages differ in the way they constitute the relation between speakers. Linguistic practices that indicate the relationship to Other are further stabilized by other (ritualistic) practices—such as bowing the head or the upper body are further indications of the respect Germans and Japanese, respectively, show for the Other. ESL students as well as American expatriates (e.g., Wiseman & Shuter, 1994) therefore experience themselves at a loss in the new language because of difficulties to mark social locations. Moving from Japanese to English or vice versa therefore also means losing one's old sense of the relationship between Self and (different) Others.

> [Hitomi:] In the Japanese culture, being polite and showing respect to the others is an important attitude in most social contexts. In contrast, people in the North American culture are much more casual: people do not seem to expect so much in terms of politeness or respectful attitude. For example, at university here (North America) most of the professors allow or encourage their students to call them by first names.

In the following case study, we provide a more detailed analysis of one aspect in which Japanese allows speakers to construct their relation of Self to Other.

Changing Self: From Japanese to English

Discursive psychological and phenomenological approaches to identity, individuality, and Self suggest that to have a sense of one's personal individuality means to have a place in various manifolds, to be quadruply situated (e.g., Harré & Gillett, 1994). Thus, a person's experience of Self depends on her sense of being situated in physical space, existing at a moment in unfolding time, having responsibility (mutual obligations and commitments) as agent, and taking a social place (in a manifold of persons, ordered by age, reputation, status, etc.). Because different cultures and languages provide different resources (emphases and expressive means) for defining and locating along the four manifolds, it is not surprising that learning English as second language should bring with it

a changing sense of identity. Here, we analyze shifting locations in various manifolds for English and Japanese speakers.

Japanese language and culture provide for a most elaborate indexical system for marking personhood in Self-Other relationships. The discursive resources of Japanese are such that two Japanese persons, using pronouns and verb inflections, can differentiate nearly 260 social relations (Harré & Gillett, 1994; Kashima & Kashima, 1998). English, on the other hand, has one of the most reduced systems to express relationships. For example, English speakers index the first- and second-person-singular as "I" and "you," respectively. Japanese speakers, on the other hand, have many different pronouns to index first- and second-person-singular. Thus, first-person pronouns include "watakushi," "watashi," "boku," and "ore"; second-person pronouns include "anata," "kimi," and "omae." The choice of the pronoun in a particular situation expresses the relative social location of speaker and interlocutor. In a very formal or official situation a man may use "watakushi" or "watashi" to index himself, whereas he may use "boku" or "ore" on a casual or friendly occasion (Kashima & Kashima, 1998). Japanese provides speakers with additional resources for distinguishing social locations. For example, verb inflections and verb choice also mark the Self-Other relationship. English and Japanese are then radically different systems for constituting Self and Other. Appropriating one or the other as a second language therefore implies not just the acquisition of a new context-independent code, but learning to constitute oneself in terms of social location.

Japanese use *keigo*, polite forms or honorifics to distinguish addresses and other subjects by using various levels of politesse and respect. (Japanese also includes additional forms of communication which speakers have to observe including *ningensei* [human beingness], *tatemae* [surface communication], *honne* [communication of true intentions], and *haragei* [gut communication].) Politesse and respect are not expressed as in French and German simply through the use of the formal second-person pronouns "vous" and "Sie," but involves the choice of verbs, inflections, and the differentiation of phrasing. Until they get to know each other, Japanese usually talk "in a polite manner," that is, by using a polite-form of expressions. If the interlocutor is older than the speaker and/or superior in social category, the politesse and respect need to be expressed. Even after becoming friends, Japanese may still maintain a certain level of politeness in their speech style. *Keigo* involves three types of differentiation: being simply polite, being humble, and showing respect for the Other. Thus, the Japanese verb *iu* (to say) would have to be changed depending

> [Voice over:] The nature of *keigo* begins with two premises: the self should be humbly treated; the other should be respected. These two premises should be viewed as the two sides of a single coin: By humbling the self, one raises the position of the other; by showing respect for the other, one places oneself in a position lower than that of the other. This single idea operates through the use of *sonkei* (respect) forms for the other and *kenjo* (humble) forms for the self. (Goldstein & Tamura, 1975, p. 134)

on the level of politeness and respect that is to be expressed by the speaker (or agent in the text): ii-masu (to say, polite), mousu (to say, humble), and ossharu (to say, respectful). Further inflections in the use of *iu* depending on the level of respect and politeness can be found in Table 1.

> [Hitomi:] For example, when I refer to something my friend Marichiko said, I would express "She said so" in the form of:[1]
> kanojo-ha so ii-mashita.
> she so said.
> If I want to refer to something I said but to someone recognized as "superior" in social standing, I would have to use the humble form of "I said so. . .":
> watakushi-ga so moushi-mashita. . .
> I so said. . .
> Finally, to indicate that my professor had said something while at the same time expressing a respect for the professor, I would express "The professor said so" as:
> sensei-ha so ossha-rare-mashita.
> The teacher so said.

In this way, Japanese do not only express who is saying something, but also adjust the verb to the occasion and the level of respect and politeness relative to the protagonists in the sentence. Japanese provides its speakers with many more and very different

Table 1

Forms of *iu* ("to say") depending on the level of politeness and respect between speaker and listener (or protagonist and counterpart)

Level	Form ("To say") (Dictionary)	Level	Form ("to say") (Polite)
Plain	iu	Polite + plain	ii-masu
Humble	mousu	Polite + humble	moushi-masu
	moushi-ageru		moushi-age-masu
Respect	ossharu	Polite + respect	osshai-masu
	osshara-reru		ossha-rare-masu

[1] In these examples, "ha" and "ga" are particles that mark a word as the subject.

discursive resources than English to locate themselves in the manifolds of responsibility and social space (politeness, respect). Thus, when Japanese speakers learn English as a second language, they lose ways of enacting other practices characteristic of the different manifolds of their lifeworld.

> [Hitomi:] When I was still new to the university in Canada, I was very conscious of the level of politeness my English expressed whenever I talked to the professors (who are very respected in Japan). I sought to show politeness through the use of *keigo* and therefore felt awkward on every occasion I talked to a professor, because English does not have an equivalent to *keigo*. So I felt that the best way to deal with this situation was to address professors with their title, although my Canadian peers would use the first name, and despite professors' invitations to use their first names. For me, it is difficult to do so, even though I speak English. But by addressing a professor as "Dr. so-and-so," I am in a risky situation for other, North American students may think that I am a "brown-noser." It is still intimidating to me to address professors by their first name, since it violates my social code and system of social practices. Despite my five-year stay in Canada, I would still feel disrespectful were I to call professors by their first names.

Current curricular practices do not account for such changes when students come into ESL programs. Rather, the underlying assumptions in multi-ethnic programs appears to be that language is simply a code and that everything else including transfers to the second language. For example, one textbook on how to teach in a multi-ethnic classroom suggests that "Students transfer not only their first-language skills in literacy but their perceptions of themselves as learners, their coping strategies for how to learn, and their skills at socializing" (Meyers, 1993, p. 6). Such claims are not born out by research involving ESL students (e.g., McKay & Wong, 1996). As our analysis and the excerpt from Hitomi's notes show, the new language which embodies a considerable amount of the North-American cultural practices does not allow a transfer of Japanese skills in socializing. Furthermore, because the new language does not allow for a "correct" (by Japanese standards) positioning, the relationship between these speakers and their interlocutor changes, bringing about concomitant changes in the interaction-dependent construction of Self and Other. This shift handicaps ESL students, forces them to become someone different.

Discourses and (Symbolic) Violence

> *Literacy pedagogy … has been a carefully restricted project—restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language*. (The New London Group, 1996, p. 61)

Every time a language learner speaks, she does not only exchange information with the Other, but, equally importantly, she is constantly re/organizing her sense of Self, Other, and the relationship between Self and Other (Norton, 1997). Learning a new language may therefore turn up the soft, discreet, and glaring terror residing inside language. Learning a new language and coming from a different cultural background, finding oneself in ESL classes, are but more "visible" cases. Much more invisible and insidious, but nevertheless equally violent are those cases where students, speaking another such English, have to learn the standard forms of this language. Here, we understand language in Derrida's (1998, p. 8) sense of an "incompossible" contradictory and antinomous law:

1. We only ever speak one language—or rather, one idiom only.
2. We never speak only one language—or rather, there is no pure idiom.

Whether the original linguistic location of students is non-standard English or another language, they are confronted not only with a different code but also with a different way of constructing Self and Other. Students will experience the new linguistic settings if they have no opportunities for negotiating between their original and their new setting (Lemke, 1990).

These languages are not really dialects but more like differently and relatively coded and formalized discourses ("Discourses" [Gee, 1990]) that draw on their family resemblance with natural languages, ordinary language, or mundane idiom (Derrida, 1995b). Because language, dialect, register, and voice are used as identity markers, coming to the classroom each with its own hegemonic monolanguage, subjects many students (other than the speakers of urban, upper-middle class, university-educated "good" English) to symbolic violence as daily experience (Lemke, 1990). Today, catastrophic conflicts about identities seem to be ever ready to flare up. It has been suggested that the only hope to deal with these conflicts is if students learn

> to negotiate regional, ethnic, or class-based dialects; variations in register that occur according to social context; hybrid cross-cultural discourses; the code switching often to be found with a text among different languages, dialects, or registers; different visual and iconic meanings; and variations in the gestural relationships among people, language, and material objects. (The New London Group, 1996, p. 69)

Negotiation does not simply involve translating, for as Derrida's (1998) French, English also offers *relentless* resistance to translation, translation into all language, including another such English—including the multitude of registers of English and dialects of "Bad English" (Lemke, 1990). This is particular salient in the differences between the discourses students experience in their everyday life outside schools and the ones they face in segmented periods (alienating). Symbolic violence exerted by the unquestioned imposition of different Discourses *is* the experience of going to school, where children are

asked to abandon, eradicate their language for those correct ones. Their dialects and registers are no longer commensurable with the homo-hegemony of "Good English" and its deployment in academic discourse. The experiential and intra-linguistic resources that students bring with them are no longer valued: students' pre- and extra-school discourses are denigrated as "misconceptions" and "alternative frameworks" that have to be eradicated by means of "conceptual change." Thus, the "force of impact," "force of a basketball that smashed the back board," and

> VOICE OVER: Today, on this earth of humans, certain people must yield to the homo-hegemony of dominant languages. They must learn the language of the masters, of capital and machines; they must lose their idiom in order to survive or live better. (Derrida, 1998, p. 30)

"the force of an argument" are no longer the "forces" of physics. The homo-hegemony of "canonical physics discourse," the one marked and re-marked, marked as graded, is the one students are to speak and write. Sub/culture is not a monolithic and stable entity, but a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous networks where different languages and dialects, biographies and histories, and voices and Discourses intermingle in a dialectic relationships of power and privilege.

To resist the symbolic violence of the monolingual other, students as poets and bilingual writers engage in "code-switching" (cf. Wah, 1998). Code-switching is the movement between two languages, or between different expressive systems (e.g., drawings), often as intentional insertion of foreign or colloquial terms and phrases into the master language. McKay and Wong (1996) describe how one of their students employs drawings and Chinese characters to express himself in a sophisticated and intricate way, understandable to his Chinese-speaking peers but not to his ESL teacher. In this way, his move represents the power to own expressive means, but not be owned by the dominant language. Sujata Bhatt (as many other cross-cultural and cross-language poets) crosses codes frequently and thereby generates a new "contact language." These contact languages emphasize how "subjects are constituted in and by their relations among colonizers and colonized, not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt, 1992, p. 6-7). However, whereas cross-coding can be a powerful strategy for poets and writers, it is not a legitimate form of expression for ESL students.

> [Giroux:] Neoconservatives consistently attempt to maintain imperial control over the Other through categories of discourse developed in repressive totalities and exclusions.[2]

[2] This conversation is based on excerpts from Giroux, 1992 (p. 23, 33) and Derrida, 1998 (pp. 39-40).

> [Derrida:] I agree. The monolingualism imposed by the other operates by relying upon that foundation, here, through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous.
>
> [Giroux:] So, as part of a project of voice and difference, a theory of border pedagogy needs to address the question of how representations and practices that name, marginalize, and define difference as the devalued Other are actively learned, internalized, challenged, and transformed.
>
> [Derrida:] We cannot and must not loose sight of this obscure common power, this colonial impulse which will have begun by insinuating itself into, overrunning without delay, what they call, by an expression worn enough to give up the ghost, "the relationship to the other"! or "openness to the other"!
>
> [Giroux:] It is therefore imperative that such pedagogy acknowledge and critically interrogate how the colonizing of differences by dominant groups is expressed and sustained through representations in which the humanity of the Other is either ideologically disparaged or ruthlessly denied.

To escape from the potentially colonializing effects of learning a new language, we draw from Giroux and Derrida's conversation that we are in need of a new "pedagogy of multiliteracies" designed for a social future constitutes a radical change (e.g., The New London Group, 1996). We no longer need forms of schooling that have the function of developing subjects amenable to work in regimented Fordian (industrial) workplaces by disciplining and skilling ("disciplining") people in equally Fordian educational institutions. These forms of schooling resulted in homogenizing differences in lifeworlds. Rather, "to be relevant, learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectivities—interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes—students bring to learning" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 72). A curriculum based on a pedagogy of multiliteracies therefore needs to draw on difference as a resource, draw on different identities (and their registers, dialects, and first languages) in order to support learning. In such redesigned schools, there is no longer a place for the alienating experiences of speakers of English as a second language, who see their highly developed inter-curricular competencies (displayed concurrently with their mother tongue) wiped off the map when they become ESL students as immigrants to the Americas (e.g., McKay & Wong, 1996). There is no longer a place for systematically disadvantaging speakers of another such English (e.g., African Americans, First Nations people, etc.).

Where could we possibly begin a renewal of teaching for a new literacy? Giroux (1992) suggests that for such a project, we need to consider the world as text so that literacy means engaging the full range of what we can find in the library, art gallery, and the street. One example of an educator begins with children's language, experience, and

culture is Angie Barton (1998a, 1998b) who enacts science with children in homeless shelters. Other studies also show that if students' existing cultural practices of signifying become the ground in which new forms of signifying are rooted, substantial learning can be observed (e.g., Cole, 1998). The learning trajectories children describe are always rooted in their own experiences and language, thereby avoiding the symbolic violence these same children lived in school science. Such efforts then lead us to pedagogical practice in which

> literacy means making one's [S]elf present as part of a moral and political project that links the production of meaning to the possibility for human agency, democratic community, and transformative social action. (Giroux, 1992, p. 245)

But meaning and Self are closely linked to narrativity because we understand and constitute our Selfs through narrative formats (Ricœur, 1990; Rosaldo, 1989). Our biographies are constituted, interpreted, and reconstituted through narrative. These narratives form the autobiographical archive which, by incorporating knowledge deployed in reference to it, augments itself, engrosses itself:

> But in the same stroke [the archive] loses the absolute and meta-textual authority it might claim to have. One will never be able to objectivize it with no remainder. The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future. (Derrida, 1995a, p. 68)

As our discussion of Neumann's (1998) essay showed, Self (ipse-identity) is bound up with the fragile nature of the individual's biography, in the form of an ongoing narrative. Self lies in the capacity of keeping this narrative going. Our narrative autobiographies, and therefore our Selfs, incorporate both our original language and culture. But they are also under continuous transformation. In as far as narratives are tied to the use of language, they cannot be dissociated from the languages we use to understand our experience. It is evident that clashes will occur when the narratives of analyst and protagonists do not fit, embody alternative epistemologies—street culture, high culture.

Here, we focused on (standard) English as a second language only, though belonging to a different race, being part of a "visible minority," adds additional layers to the construction of identity, Self, and Others. But Self is also tied to other practices so that a change of practices also brings with it a change in the way ipse-identity is constructed in relations to Other, and by the self re/weaving Self:

> I not only hear my friends put down the Chinks (and the Japs, and the Wops, and the Spikes, and the Douks) but comic books and movies confirm that the Chinese are yellow (meaning cowardly), not-to-be-trusted, heathens, devils, slant-eyed, dirty, and talk incomprehensible gobblydee-gook. Thus gook n. *Slang* 1 A dirty, sludgy, or slimy substance. 2. An Oriental. An offensive term used derogatorily.

> Even now a half-Ukrainian-half-Japanese daughter of a friend of mine calls anyone, white or not, who doesn't fit, a Geek. Even her father, who, we all know is really a Nip. [Wah, 1998]

That is, the interactions between dominant (white) and minority cultural communities (other) are still often confrontational (Lippard, 1990). Not only schools, but as a society, we need to be more attentive to experiences and needs of students and other individuals as they move into (standard) English as second language and culture. Even within what seems one and the same culture and language community, there are tensions. For example, the (discursive, relational, lifestyle [smoking]) practices of working class *burnouts* differ from those of largely middle class *jocks* and are actively used to constitute different Selfs (Eckert, 1989). Because school culture (in its discourses, values, age segregation) is in many ways antithetical it institutes a systematic and all-pervasive form of symbolic violence to the *burnouts* who, in turn, define themselves, antithetically, as "other." Appropriate research programs and pedagogies therefore cannot stop short by focusing on language and literacy alone, but need to account for other, multiple and heterogeneous contributors to the construction of identity.

As for research programs that take seriously the changing ways in which our Selves are constituted when we learn a new discourse, we learned a lot from the ethnomethodological project (e.g., Jayyusi, 1991; Lee, 1991). We are therefore concerned with analytically examining the ways that conduct, belief, Self, and judgment are organized, produced, and made intelligible in interactions (as accounts, descriptions) and how these are embedded in other social practices. Furthermore, we treat culture as a phenomenon embedded in language-in-use, on the grounds that society's members encounter culture that way. This leads to a rejection of culture as an abstract and transcendental object. Rather, culture is treated as an organization which can be recovered from the daily, routine, and mundane ways people talk and act in settings.

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