

**(RE)WRITING THE SCRIPT: HOW IMMIGRANT
TEACHERS (RE) CONSTRUCT IDENTITY IN A
CANADIAN PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOL SETTING**

by

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ABSTRACT

Each year increasing numbers of international students come to Canada in order to learn the English language and the culture of the target language. Since Canada's population is multicultural and multilingual, students are frequently taught by teachers who are immigrants and have themselves learned English as a second language. Internalizing the prevailing discourse of the ESL educational industry, immigrant teachers question whether or not non-native speakers are qualified to teach English, and introduce students to Canadian culture. Socio-cultural theories of education, language and identity guide analysis and interpretation of the stories of seven immigrant teachers interviewed in this study. Their narratives illustrate the ways these individuals have actively responded to the discourses of business and colonialism, and how they (re)construct and make meaning of their identities in the context of a private post-secondary private language school in Vancouver.

DEDICATION

To Mitch, Amy, Brennan and Russell.

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My special thanks go to the teachers whose stories I have attempted to (re)create here in this text; without their participation this could not have been written. My intent has been to tell the stories they shared with me.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction: A Brief Overview

Privately owned English as a Second Language (ESL) schools in Canada, which juggle the often ethically contradictory realms of business and education, exist to meet a consumer need, namely to provide language training to international learners. These schools operate on the assumption that, after a brief stay in Canada – anywhere from one week up to one year –the learners will then return to their home countries with improved communication skills and increased fluency in the target language. To accommodate these goals, the language teaching methodology favored since the 1980's by most second language teachers, and on which most school curricula and text-books are based, is the Communicative Approach. The approach aims to help learners communicate by focusing on fluency not just accuracy; providing opportunity for 'real-life' communication; giving tools, like authentic materials, that allow for unrehearsed performance and help with life-long language learning, as well as intrinsic motivation (Brown: 1994). Thus, the language teaching methodology used by most Canadian private language schools underscores the importance of communication to and among learners and teachers.

To further help learners achieve greater competence in the target language, and to help them 'sound more like native speakers', most Canadian ESL schools encourage learners to speak English as frequently as possible by instituting "English Only" policies within their facilities. In order to support learners in further practicing and using the target language outside the school, students are encouraged to live with host families, and invited to take part in optional extra-curricular activities. An additional learning outcome related to this language immersion approach is the development of competence and fluency in the culture

of the target language. Culture in these programs is not only an implicit part of a language learning curriculum (Duff and Uchida: 1997; Courchène: 1996; Ilieva: 2001), but an explicit component as well.

I have been a part of Canada's ESL industry¹ since 1993; the past eight and a half years of which were spent in one large private language school. I will refer to this school with the pseudonym "Standard English School", in an effort to provide anonymity to study participants and because the school is similar in a variety of ways to many other providers of private English language education programs in Vancouver, Canada. My experience in the school, for the first four years as an ESL teacher and for the last four and a half years in an administrative role as a Director of Studies, was extensive; even taking me away on four separate marketing trips to Mexico, where I represented and described the school and its programs to a wide range of potential students and their parents, agents and universities. Throughout my career at the school, I had the opportunity to come into contact and build relationships with many students, teachers and administrative staff within the school, and also with others outside the school connected with the ESL industry. Those connections provided many opportunities for me to notice and savor the important function which communication and dialogue play in an environment devoted to language and negotiation of meaning.

Standard English School is concerned with communication both inside and outside the classroom. Students come to the school to learn how to communicate in a language which is not their own; English language competence will serve as important "cultural capital" (Bourdieu) for them once they return home. In order to navigate life within the school and in Vancouver, a

¹ The choice of the term "industry" might seem incongruous when used in an educational context. I will provide a more detailed description of Canada's thriving private language school industry in Chapter Two, which will help explain how ESL is very much a profitable business sector in Canada, and is indeed a thriving industry. The private language school sector is a source of direct revenue for school owners and school staff; agents who recruit students; families who provide homestay, as well as other tourist, entertainment and retail outlets.

student must communicate on many levels for a variety of linguistic purposes. The school is populated by a large student body of international students from a wide range of countries, like Japan, Korea, Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, Taiwan, Russia and Saudi Arabia, with varying degrees of English language communicative competence within that student population, ranging from absolute beginner to advanced. All teaching and communication in the school is done through the use of English, and so amidst this diversity there is not surprisingly bound to be some degree of *miscommunication*. That confusion in meaning can be in both the linguistic and the cultural aspects of language, as students learn to interact with a wide range of others within the school.

An additional challenge is that for many students this is the first time that they have ever been away from home, or from their countries of origin. For those students coming from countries of relatively homogenous cultures, the multicultural mix of both Canada and the school can often prove to be a shock; one to which they will need to respond if their stay is to be satisfying. I have observed students who appear confused by or uncomfortable with the classroom behavior of their classmates from other cultures. There are many instances of students who become aware of cultural difference and try to come to some degree of acceptance of that difference. One example is that a Korean student once expressed surprise at what he felt was quite disrespectful behavior towards his 'esteemed' teacher; his Mexican classmates appeared to him to be too familiar and too informal in their interactions with the teacher. He told me that in his classroom in Korea, he would be extremely respectful to his teacher in both language and demeanor, and would not have been as relaxed as the Mexican students appeared to be in his Vancouver classroom.

Another example is that students are often not sure how to respond to the typical private language school practice of students referring to their teacher by the teacher's first name. In order to circumvent this, one student insisted on calling me "Sir" since it was to him the utmost remark of respect, and one

befitting of his teacher, and was an expected title for the classroom; to call his teacher by her first name would be unnatural and highly inappropriate. What a teacher wears, or how a teacher interacts in the classroom is another area where cultural differences are noticed by students, and can cause a degree of stress, for example, a teacher sitting on a desk can seem very impolite to some students. The cultural norms and expectations that students bring with them from their home culture have to be responded to by other students, and by their teachers.

It is in this context regarding student expectations and reactions that I became aware of a dominant discourse that said that only native speakers of English were 'qualified' to teach English in a Canadian private language school setting. This discourse appeared to marginalize teachers who had not been born in Canada and had not learned English as their first language; that is, immigrant teachers who were non-native speakers of English. This discourse so readily articulated by students, possibly as a reaction to the pressure of the new environment, also has its roots in a colonial discourse, which I will describe more fully in the literature review in Chapter Two. The definition of the terms I will use throughout this investigation to describe my participants is that a non-native English speaker (NNES) is someone who did not speak English at home, from birth; and a native speaker of English (NSE) is someone who grew up speaking English from birth at home. It should be noted here that the use of the label "non-native speaker" is problematic; while it provides an easy way to refer to a particular distinguishing feature, the very use of the term feels laden with a discourse of oppression, one which marks the bearers of the label as "other". No such discourse is intended here.

As part of a recent graduate class, I conducted a small scale qualitative research project, with a research objective of investigating a discourse of oppression that appeared to exist between students and NNES teachers in the ESL industry. By stating that non-native English speaking teachers were not

'good enough' to teach them English, students were thus using an oppressive discourse, one that placed the teachers in an inferior position. I wanted to discover how the NNES teachers responded to this discourse. I thus embarked on a series of semi-structured interviews with a small group of international students and a small group of non-native English speaking teachers, hoping to uncover some clear answers which would help me better understand the discourse and therefore provide more tools with which I could support the teachers in their work environment. That research, which I now consider as a pilot study for this larger investigation, revealed more than I anticipated, particularly with regard to the manner in which identities are actively (re)constructed in dialogue. I found that socio-historical definitions of identity as articulated by Holland *et al* in *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998), and informed by M.M. Bakhtin's (1981) construct of dialogue – an active struggle to create meaning – as well as Lev Vygotsky's emphasis on a genetic development of the self via the use of cultural tools (1986) were useful to my research. Holland also outlines the idea of "figured worlds" (1998: 49) as the social spaces in which these identity processes are actively negotiated. These ideas were very important in my investigations and I will outline them in greater detail in Chapter Two.

This section has provided a brief look at the location of the investigation, a private language school in Vancouver, which is a particular site where communication between students and teachers occur. For this study, I want to focus primarily on a small group of NNES teachers, looking at how their interactions and dialogue with students are implicated in their own perceptions of their positions and sense of themselves. How do the teachers understand student concerns about the 'authenticity' of their English language skills? What are the implications of their interactions and dialogues with students for their perceptions of themselves? How does the location where the interactions and dialogue between teachers and students occur affect the active construction of teacher identity? I will also make some references to the four students in the pilot

study which contribute to understanding the teachers' positions and experiences. The student references, though not the central focus of the present study, nevertheless enhance the understanding of the teachers' perspective.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter I will expand more fully on some key aspects of the context in which this investigation takes place, and relevant aspects of my position and location as a teacher and administrator who grew up in England and moved to Canada as an adult. Before I present the voices of the teachers in detail, I want to first 'set the scene', that is provide some context for the study. To do that, I will present my own "*prior script*" (Goodson, in Thiessen, 1998:123) that I bring to the world in which I participate, and also provide a description of the "*figured world*" of the ESL industry in Canada.

1.2.1 A Prior Script

Goodson's notion of 'prior script' is the identity one brings to a new situation, to add onto and actively reshape within a new time, a new set of circumstances, and social practices. Holland refers to this as the "history-in-person.... the sediment from past experiences from which one improvises" (Holland *et al*, 1998: 18). Thus the prior script is recreated to form a new identity, a new script of the self; an identity which in turn is always in process, never completed. These understandings of identity usefully frame the narrative journey to my present position as researcher, teacher and administrator.

After meeting someone for the first time, they eventually ask me where I come from in England, telling me that they 'detect an English accent'. In response, I tell them that I lived in the second largest city, Birmingham, which is in the very middle of the country - in the Midlands. When asked, I know that the questioner is usually trying to locate me in a strange country in relation to a familiar place, London, which ironically is generally a place they most likely have

never visited, but nonetheless serves as a 'recognizable' frame of reference for them. They have a notion of who I am, from where I come from, and they perceive that my nationality is something that makes me different from them.

(Inside, secretly, I think that I am too.)

I have lived in Canada for almost twenty-three years, and, apart from the two years I spent as a child living in Australia with my family, I have actually lived longer in Canada than in the country of my birth. Many people, including myself, if I am honest, are surprised to discover that I have not yet applied for Canadian citizenship; am I deliberately unwilling or unable to let go of my British self? I am an immigrant. I still think of myself as British.

There are no visible signs that I was not born in Canada. When I first came to Canada my British accent was more discernible; the words I used were sometimes strange to Canadian ears; my clothes were different, perhaps a bit more "formal", less casual, and noticeably different in styling; I frequently felt as if I did not conform to or understand certain social practices. I have learned to modulate these outward differences, to blend in and thus appear more Canadian, and so now the only perceptible clue to my difference might be that a stray word is tinged with an accent, or inflected with decidedly un-Canadian word-stress: "Oh *mom!*" my children lament in exasperation, "it's not [yŏ 'gert], it's [yŌ: gert]". I am known to unwittingly choose the occasional word that sounds strange to Canadian ears, or use a phrase that is structured differently. I do now wear jeans more frequently; however I *never* wear jeans with running shoes, since I have been unable (or *unwilling?*) to adopt that particular Canadian practice.

After approximately one year of living in Canada, I realized that not only did I have no history here in Canada, I also had no identity here; I was living in a cultural limbo - I was not Canadian, never an immigrant, and yet could not live

out my British identity. I had no familiar cultural footing; this was my paradoxical world - dislocation and yet belonging. There was no one here who could reminisce with me as I recounted a story from my past; or agreeably finish a sentence for me, and instantly “get it” when I made an oblique reference to some piece of British popular culture; or not look puzzled when I used a British word or idiom; or laugh at a uniquely British joke. Although I looked the same as most people who surrounded me in my white Euro-Canadian world, I was different. While I was not a visible minority, in my world I was the minority, my ‘British-ness’ marked me as “other”, albeit an acceptable other, and *always* never an immigrant.

My past, the prior script (Goodson, 1996), I had unknowingly brought to Canada with me, though it had resonance for me as to who I was, could no longer be read verbatim; some improvisation would be required to help construct a new script for myself. Thus, I began slowly, without realizing it, to construct a Canadian version of myself. I absorbed and responded to the culture around me and created a new place and a new self within it, an identity which I, and more importantly, others could relate to when locating me as a person here within the present context. With each year, and with each new situation, I continued responding to the social and cultural context of my life and I became many things: a wife, a mother, a member of a new family, a daughter in a far away land, a member of various committees, a neighbour, a volunteer, a member of a village, a singer in a group, a teacher, a student, a researcher, an employee, a supervisor, a friend, a member of a church family, a choir member, someone who had a definite place here in Canada. That prior script has been revised and added on to many times and yet still remains not quite Canadian, still different, but always me.

1.2.2 More prior scripts

For the majority of international students who come to Vancouver to attend Standard English School, this trip is frequently the first time that they have ever left their family, their city, and their country. The students come to Canada from many countries and bring with them their own prior scripts comprised of their own set of cultural tools, their heritage, their families and their own life experiences. For many students, it is the first time they have ever met anyone from another culture. During their initial language assessment interview, a question I usually ask students is about their first impression of Canada and Canadians. Students often tell me that they are surprised by the people they see around them in Vancouver. Generally, I find that students have come with a fixed image of how a “Canadian” should look; the multicultural mix of nationalities a student suddenly sees around her is often a shock to her expected pre-formed, usually white European, image. I have been frequently asked questions by students about the “typical” Canadian. As often one of the first representatives of all things Canadian, and their teacher, my explanation and insight carried much weight.

I feel very conscious that I should represent Canada to students with great care, and not generalize with phrases which begin with “*all* Canadians...”. When asked, I like to point out to students that Canada is made up of many people, all immigrants from somewhere once and that the “real” Canadian is a First Nations people. For those reasons, I tell them that they should not be surprised to see a diverse cross-section of cultures and races in Canada and Vancouver.

But then imagine my disappointment when some students encounter one of those immigrants in their classroom and are unable to reconcile their image of a “Canadian” English teacher with the person standing before them? For example, teachers who came to Canada originally from India, the Philippines, Singapore, Brazil, Chile, Hungary and the former Yugoslavia; teachers I had personally hired and supervised, interacted with daily and had found to be

extremely competent professionals. Some students have difficulty accepting the non-white European faces as “Canadian”, their prior script, the image of the “real Canadian” is at odds with what they expected to find and what they actually see. How do the teachers view themselves in this context? What prior scripts did the teachers bring with them from their past and how did those scripts inform their present self in the figured worlds in which they find themselves in Canada, in Vancouver, in Standard English School?

I was thus encouraged to respond, to find out more about this particular group of teachers with whom I had interacted professionally, yet knew very little of either their journeys to Canada or their own ‘prior scripts’. The teachers had each brought with them different individual stories to the Canadian school setting in which they now work. These prior scripts informed their present self in this location; each one was different but had similar underlying themes; those prior scripts will be related more fully in Chapter Three when I will provide a description of each of the participants.

1.2.3 The School Context

The site for this study was a large private English as a Second Language (ESL) school where I work in Vancouver, Canada. The demographic profile of the school’s target customer is a 20-25 year old international student who, driven by the pressure of globalization and the desire to acquire extra cultural capital, is willing to maximize that extra edge over her/his peers by travelling abroad to learn English. Since Standard English School opened in 1993 it has served over 22,000 customers: schools like Standard English School work hard to encourage the potential student into their education-slash-business establishment. Keeping the fine balance between business and education, Standard English School has built a strong curriculum and teaching staff. It prides itself on having a robust marketing department, a well-developed website, attractive marketing materials,

and a focus on providing excellent customer service in an attempt to first persuade and then retain the oft-times fickle consumer who has considerable clout (Abbarno, 1998; Bridges and Jonathan, 2003).

The private language school market in Vancouver is saturated with schools, having increased in number from only six schools in the downtown core in 1993, to now over 170 schools, each jostling to win a piece of the potential ESL market pie (Vancouver Economic Development Commission: 2003). One might ask why students don't simply stay in their home country to learn English, since it would probably be less costly and likely less stressful. One possible reason for travelling to Vancouver to study English might be for a young adult to escape parental control in a socially acceptable way. Journeying to Canada also allows a student to combine work and leisure, with the enticing allure of travel to foreign climes, along with optimizing and extending classroom learning with outside 'real' language learning opportunities in both language and culture. In an English-speaking environment, surrounded by the target language, the student expectation is that teaching will be carried out by native speakers of English, and thus a student would be provided with opportunities to learn not only the language, but also the culture of the language, as personified in the teachers.

ESL teachers come from all walks of life, quite often with other work and life experience before they begin teaching ESL. In order to be hired as an ESL teacher at Standard English School, a teacher must have at least an undergraduate degree and a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) certificate of 100 hours, plus a 20-hour practicum; and some previous teaching experience. All teachers at Standard English School have a three-month probationary period during which time their teaching is observed on two or three occasions by one of the two academic administrators, the Directors of Studies, at the school. At the end of every four-week session in each class, students complete a teacher evaluation form; these are reviewed by both the Directors of Studies who supervise the teaching staff, and also the president of the school. If

there are ever any recurring problems or concerns, these issues are discussed with the teacher. The majority of ESL teachers at Standard English School have worked there for three or more years. The teachers in this study are all immigrants to Canada and have been employed at Standard English School from between one and six years, most of them for more than three years. All have had experience elsewhere in Vancouver; one teacher had been teaching for over thirty years, part of that time in her home country.

Learning English at a school like Standard English School is an attractive option for many students, but what if the experience were not *exactly* as the glossy marketing material promised? What if you were an international student learning English at Standard English School and you found that your teacher was *not* a Canadian and had herself learned English as a second language? How would you feel and how would you react; after all, haven't you *paid* for the "*real* thing", that is a Canadian-born native English speaker? Or what if you were the non-native English speaking (NNES) teacher, who had not learned English from birth, how would you present yourself to your students? How would you respond to a student questioning your English language knowledge or knowledge of the target culture? Having frequently met with students and parents of students who are quite adamant that a NNES teacher is somehow inferior, and therefore not qualified to teach "authentic" English, I wanted to investigate the other side of this argument. Never having asked those who I feel are most impacted, the teachers, I wanted to ask them what their experience of such situations had been. How had they been treated by students; how did it make them feel, and what could I do as an administrator to support them?

This section has given a brief overview to the context, themes and participants in this study. The next section will offer an introduction to theoretical and research literature which has guided my inquiries.

1.3 Related Literature: An Overview

While there is little current research related to immigrant teachers, there are four strands of theory and research that are relevant to this study. The first pertains to the conceptualization of identity as a socio-historical construct. This perspective, articulated by Holland *et al* (1998), has been strongly influenced by the work of Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky (1978, 1986). Holland's socio-historical understanding of identity and agency is constructed: "specific to practices and activities situated in historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed worlds" (Holland *et al*, 1998:7) and helps inform the process of creating and re-creating identity in the 'figured world' (Holland *et al*, 1998:49) of the school. A figured world is, as Holland refers to it, an "as-if" human world (*ibid.*), a place where meaning - identity- is socially constructed, a site for social activity, a place where participants' positions matter (Holland *et al*, 1998: 39). Holland tells us that:

Figured worlds rest upon people's abilities to form and be formed in collectively realized 'as if' realms....People have the propensity to be drawn to, recruited for, and formed in these worlds, and to become active in and passionate about them. People's identities and agency are formed dialectically and dialogically in these 'as if' worlds" (Holland, 1998:49)

A figured world then is a place where one is located in active relationship with others: perhaps a place of work where one is situated as an employee, a colleague; a home where one is positioned as wife or mother.

The second strand of literature pertains to discourse, and particularly discourses of a dominant colonial nature operating in educational settings; what discourses operate in the figured world of ESL? What influence does discourse have on the construction of identity? A third body of literature concerns the place of culture in language teaching and learning (Courchêne:1996; Ilieva: 2001; Lazarton: 2003). How should culture be taught in a second language classroom? Who is qualified to teach the target language culture? Finally, there is a body of

literature that examines the juxtaposition of business and education. All four strands of research have bearing on the questions that are the focus of this research.

1.4 Research Methods

An initial pilot study, in which I interviewed three teachers and four students, was expanded to form this larger, yet relatively small-scale qualitative research project. The research was conducted over four months at Standard English School in Vancouver; pseudonyms for all study participants are used throughout. I interviewed a total of seven teachers, chosen because they were immigrants to Canada. The students who were part of the initial pilot study were chosen because they had been taught by a teacher who was a non-native speaker of English; the data collected from their interviews will not be examined in detail here, but will be referred to where appropriate. However, it must be noted, that the student response in the initial pilot study, although not what I had expected, was useful and does contribute to an understanding of the results of this larger study. I will describe the research methods more fully in Chapter Three.

1.5 Summary

In this chapter the main concerns of the study have been introduced. I began with an explanation of the study's focus on the socio-historical view of identity being constructed actively by participants in a particular figured world; in this case the figured world of a particular private language school in Vancouver: Standard English School. The interrelated themes of the place of culture in second language learning; the dialogue intrinsic in a second language school and the part that that dialogue has on the active (re)creation of identity between both student and teacher were then introduced. Introduced too was the notion

that the juxtaposition of business and education is an example of one kind of discourse that contributes to the construction of self in this realm. I then introduced my own prior script, as well as a brief description of the school context and the participants. Following this, I outlined the four strands of research literature- identity, discourse, culture in second language learning, and business in education – in order to introduce the study's theoretical concerns.

The discussion over the next five chapters is organized as follows. Chapter Two offers insight from research in the areas of identity construction, discourse, the role of culture in second language learning, and the effect of business on education. Chapter Three reviews the theoretical basis for the research methodology used in the investigation, describes the format and the process of the investigation, and then introduces the seven teachers I interviewed for this study, as well as the four students I interviewed as part of my initial pilot study, since their perspectives are relevant to the themes and findings of this investigation. Chapter Four analyses the data from the interviews in relation to the issues of identity, discourse and dialogue. Chapter Five relates the analysis to the research literature, and makes recommendations for further research and for practices in private English language schools.

CHAPTER TWO: AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present an overview of the literature related to the themes of this study. The first section provides a brief introduction to the ideas of Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky (1978, 1986) which provide a framework for the description of identity from a socio-historical perspective which views identity as an active social process located in a particular time and place, theorized by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain as a “figured world” (1998:49). The second section outlines selected research that considers the implications of these theories for language teaching. The third section examines discourse, particularly the discourse of a dominant colonial nature which is prevalent in the English language school industry (Jones: 2001; Holland: 1998; Cook 1999 Braine:2004; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy: 1991). The fourth section looks at the place of culture in second language teaching, and how cultural competency is an important component of second language learning (Courchêne:1996; Liu: 2004; Duff and Uchida: 1997; Ilieva: 2001; Lazarton: 2003). This literature also examines how culture is best taught, and then looks at who is best qualified to teach the cultural knowledge of a second language. The final section outlines the current state of the ESL industry in Canada, and presents a picture of the role that business plays in this industry. This description will help one provide background to the particular figured world of the ESL industry in which the teachers and students find themselves.

2.2 Identity as a Socio-historical construct

The socio-historical perspective rejects the Universalists' notion (Holland, 1998: 20 -23) that the self is essential and static, and instead suggests that individuals - surrounded by and responding to social practices and discourses - are actively engaged in creating themselves, in a particular time and place. Identity is thus viewed as a dynamic, social process which occurs over time and in relationship with others. Researchers like Holland *et al*, (1998), Duff and Uchida (1997, Peirce (1995), Marx (2002), Beynon, Ilieva, Dichupa (2001), and Thiessen and Goodson (1996) take the position that identities never arrive fully formed, but “happen in social practice” and are “unfinished and in process” (Holland *et al*, 1998:vii); for these researchers identity is a form of “practice theory” (Skinner, Pach, A. III and Holland: 1998).

The hypothesis that identity is created in various settings in which we assume various subject positions is important because the teachers as immigrants and non-native speakers of English are frequently placed in a subject position within their work setting by prevailing discourse. The ‘as-if’ realms of “figured worlds” (Holland, 1998: 49) are places where individuals ‘recreate’ themselves in particular times and locations. Figured worlds are those socially and culturally constructed spaces, which “*happen*, as social process and in historical time” (1998:55). It should be noted that this investigation was concerned with only the figured world of the work setting, and the influence of that setting on the teachers’ identities within that particular space. The teachers were not asked any questions about their present life outside of the school setting, although occasionally an individual teacher did refer to it. Of interest was how the teachers respond to and are positioned by discourse within the setting, and how they then “author” (Holland: 1998) themselves in this particular site. Thus, this figured world of the ESL classroom is a focus of the study of identity (re)creation in this investigation, a “practice-based approach to selves” (Skinner *et al*, 1998:8). The teachers have some agency in their response; they have a degree of choice in how they respond to discourse. So while they may be partly

constrained by the positions in which they are placed by discourse, they have the potential to be active in their response and thereby create for themselves a new version of self (Skinner *et al*, 1998: 95) within this figured world.

I will now present a brief overview of some key ideas in M.M. Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky's works in order to provide a framework for the socio-historical perspective of the research literature and of this study.

2.2.1 The Dialogical and Discursive Nature of Language: Bakhtin and Vygotsky's influence

Language is an important social tool, and is a focus in the works of both Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky (1978, 1986). Bakhtin and Vygotsky's socio-historical perspective emphasizes that language is used to communicate with others; reflects and expresses the time and culture of its users; is dynamic and changing, and is dialogical. The fact that the present investigation takes place within a language school concerned with communication is no small coincidence; language plays a key role in the daily practices and relationships between participants. Students have come to this place to learn a language to communicate with others, and so the school environment is one which is rich with words. There is an expectation that all will participate within the figured world, and enter into dialogue with others. The school is a site of an on-going dialogical 'struggle' within its population, as interlocutors interact: student to student; student to teacher; student to administration; teacher to teacher; teacher to administration and self to self. Bonny Norton notes that "it is through language that a person gains access to –or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give learners the opportunities to speak" (2000:5). The school becomes a new figured world in which participants situate themselves in relation to the surroundings and others, and in that process, (re)create a new version of self; a new identity. Who is the student? What version of self will the student bring to the

figured worlds of school and classroom? How will student and teacher relate to each other? What about the teacher's identity? What impact does the teacher's identity have on the figured world of the class?

Bakhtin explores the dialogical nature of language in novelistic discourse in *Discourse in the Novel* (1981). His examination of that discourse reveals that dialogism requires interaction; when addressed there should always be a response, since dialogue is a dynamic process, "an active understanding" (1981:282), in which meaning is never fixed but instead is negotiated between speaker and listener, in a kind of struggle. Bakhtin identifies the utterance as his unit of analysis, and states that meaning is never fixed in dialogue, but instead is fluid, changing in the situation at the very expression of an utterance. The speaker shapes an utterance in anticipation of the listener's response, while the listener has a duty to respond and does so in utterances infused with her/his own meaning. Bakhtin tells us that, words come to us "already populated with the social intentions of others" (1981:300) and those intentions have the power to shape the listener. Thus, for Bakhtin, "language is never unitary" (1981: 288), and meaning is made in active dialogue with the other; it is in this "addressivity" in a particular time and place that meaning is made (Holquist, 2002:48).

In this work, Bakhtin views existence, like language, as a vital process, one in which the "I" is in active relationship with the "other"; the "I" having a responsibility to answer the "other" (Holland 1998), and it is in this "shared event" (Holquist, 2002: 28) that new meaning is created, a new sense of self. Bakhtin suggests that language is inhabited by many languages, and a genre, peculiar to a particular social group, carries as part of its nature the viewpoints, assumptions and experiences of its speakers, since it is a part of a *living* society, not an abstract system. For Bakhtin, language is very much an organic, living process; he tells us that "languages live a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia", and that "discourse lives" (1981: 292). Bakhtin recognises the value of movement and history, and sees both as a

necessary part of the development of language, perceiving language as “something historically real...a process teeming with future and former languages” (1981: 356). The past and present point toward the future, since he says, “discourse lives...beyond itself, in a living impulse towards the object” (1981: 292); an utterance’s emotional-volitional intent towards the future is essential, as is a word’s link with its past. While Bakhtin’s hypothesis is specific to novelistic language, his ideas can be applied to the social context of the school setting of this study, if we consider the kinds of dialogic relationships and interactions that occur there. Bakhtin’s theories about language help understand how language and discourse are linked to the active process of identity (re)creation; one’s present identity within a particular figured world is linked to a previous one, and is created in active relationship, addressivity, with one’s society, and the discourses that exist within it.

The living process that connects language to development is an important idea in Vygotsky’s work; for Vygotsky, language is firmly linked to development. Vygotsky tells us that language begins for others and becomes internalized in inner speech. He also says that language is a tool, a social and cultural sign, and as such is a mediating device for one’s actions and consciousness. In *Thought and Language* (1986) and *Mind in Society* (1978) Vygotsky shows how language is essentially linked to the development of thought: “the child’s intellectual growth is contingent on his mastering the social means of thought, that is, language” (1986: 94). Vygotsky quotes Arnold Gesell who reminds us that:

all present growth hinges on past growth. Growth is an historical complex which reflects at every stage the past which it incorporates (Vygotsky, 1986: 125).

Recognising the connection between past, present and future, Vygotsky tells us that once a child has acquired language:

he now has the ability to direct his attention in a dynamic way. He can view changes in his immediate situation from the point of view of past experiences (1978: 36).

Mental and self-development, achieved through language, are thus seen as an active socio-historical process and, I would add, (re)creation of the self is part of this process.

Language for both Bakhtin and Vygotsky then, is an active social process and for Bakhtin, concerned with “reveal[ing] ever newer ways to mean (1981:346). For Vygotsky language is an integral part of mental development: “all consciousness is connected with the development of the word” (1986:256) and also:

The relation between thought and word is a living process; thought is born through words. A word devoid of thought is a dead thing (1986: 255).

In an ESL school, concerned with language and communication, meaning is negotiated on many levels for many purposes; for example, a student, asking a classmate for information about what places to visit in Vancouver, using an L2 that they are both learning, must work hard to ensure that they reach some kind of understanding. A teacher explaining school policies or a grammar point, for example, to language learners, using the L2, has to ensure that students have understood. In a case where an international student, using the L2, inquires how to purchase medical insurance from a school staff member must also make sure that meaning is made clear between them. As this present study reveals, the language that takes place in this location is certainly never “unitary”; meaning is negotiated constantly in an active, forward moving process. Several discourses co-exist and intersect in this figured world, at times placing the participants in different subject positions.

Responding to the surrounding discourse is part of identity (re)creation. How one responds to ‘authoritative discourses’ (Holland *et al*, 1998)- dominant discourses that are present in a social setting - by either choosing to resist or acquiesce to their influence has the potential to shape the individual, and place the individual in a subject position. The dialogic nature of language demands a

response, and in the response, language is then changed, and so the words become “half-ours, half-someone else’s” (Bakhtin, 1981:345), since the words have come to us “populated with the intentions of others” and taste of the other’s meaning and intentions. Bakhtin and Vygotsky’s theories help understand that identities, like languages, can never be fully formed, and are created in relationship with others, in a social process over time: identity evolves from a past form to move forward to a future, never fully completed form. The teachers in this present study have come to Canada with a prior script, a self fashioned in response to the social context and the discourses within a former social setting. Now in response, *addressivity*, to other participants and other discourses in this particular world, that identity will be (re)created, (re)formed anew. Through a necessarily dialogic process, authoritative discourse can become “internally persuasive discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981:345); that is an authoritative discourse that is “assimilated” and “acknowledged” by the individual into the “everyday rounds of our consciousness” (*ibid*) and thus becomes internalized as self-dialogue, can become part of one’s on-going identity creation. With this “we are reminded how unlikely it is that one’s identities are ever settled, once and for all” (Holland, 1998: 189); identities are an active process of self.

This brief account of Vygotsky and Bakhtin’s ideas will contribute to understanding the ideas found in the research literature described in the next section of this chapter.

2.2.2 Research on the Active Process of Self

As mentioned above, several researchers share a socio-historical influenced “practice-based approach to selves” (Skinner *et al*, 1998:8), and recognise that selves are never fully finished, constantly being recreated in social practice (Holland *et al*, 1998: vii). The accounts in *Selves in Time and Place* (Skinner *et al*: 1998) illustrate how individuals and groups are “fashioned by social, political, and cultural discourses and practices in historically specific times

and places” (1998:3); identities are “constantly reconstituted in dialogue with others” (1998:11). Holland *et al* move towards a vision of the self as an “identity in practice” (1998:271) in *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, which builds on Bakhtin and Vygotsky’s work regarding the dialogical sense of movement in human social history. The importance of human agency, the ability to “author” oneself (Holland, 1998:178), the power of discourse, and positioning are important considerations in Holland’s version of the self, as an “identity-in-practice”.

Individuals have a responsibility to answer (Bakhtin: 1981) and yet also have the power to resist (Pierce: 1995) the surrounding discourse in their particular figured world. Therefore, one has the capacity and power to ‘author’ oneself within the surrounding *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin, 1981: 291), the many social discourses around us. Within the existing social discourses, there are several “possibilities for utterance” (Holland, 1998:171), opportunities for new versions of the self. Holland (1998: Chapter One) gives an example that illustrates this in her description of how a lower-caste woman, Gyanumaya, from Nepal resisted a dominant discourse, and created, ‘authored’ a new identity for herself. Holland’s account relates how the anthropologist Debra Skinner had invited the Nepali woman, Gyanumaya, into her house so that Skinner could interview her. However, going in the house through the door was not possible for Gyanumaya, since she was accustomed to following the dominant discourse which said that a lower caste person should not be in the same physical space as a higher caste person. However, by climbing up the *outside* of the house, Gyanumaya managed to literally navigate a new solution to the dilemma posed by the dominant discourse. Instead of entering their shared inside space, Gyanumaya, entered the house by means of an *outside* route, and was therefore not encroaching on the inside space, or on the constraints of the discourse. Her response was a form of improvisation and could not have been predicted. Her actions serve as an example of an individual actively resisting a dominant discourse. Gyanumaya showed agency in her response to a particular situation

in a specific time and location, and created new meaning in the time and space in which she then found herself. In another time and place, her response might well be different. Gyanumaya tacitly recognised the “constraints” and the “possibilities” (Holland, 1998:171) in the discourse around her, and was able to react in a novel way; Gyanumaya was able to author her identity, and create a new version of herself; a version that defied the dominant discourse instead of conforming to it.

A variety of research studies analyze how individuals undertake a similar creative process in a wide range of social settings. These include adult immigrant women learning English (Peirce:1995); teachers of minority ancestries in mainstream schools (Beynon, Ilieva, Dichupa: 2001, 2004); English teachers in Japan (Duff and Uchida: 1997) and British immigrants exploiting their accents to their advantage in their lives in the United States (Jones: 2001).

Bonny Norton Peirce’s 1995 study of immigrant women echoes Holland’s ideas. Her investigation of immigrant women as language learners examined the “social worlds” in which the immigrant women use their second language. She “drew in particular on Weedon’s (1997) conception of social identity or subjectivity” (1995:14), in which dominant discourses position the individual, and in response, the individual - the subject –struggles against that discourse. It is from this struggle within a particular site that the subject is able to *actively* construct multiple subject positions (1995:15-16); responding to, as well as resisting, dominant discourses and in so doing, authoring a new identity. For that reason, both Peirce and Holland contend that one *must* recognise the “changing quality of a person’s social identity”, if one sees that “subjectivity is multiple, contradictory and a site of struggle” (Peirce,1995:16). Peirce discovered that the language learners in her study actively (re)create their identity, “changing across time and space” (1995:26) in a particular social site, and this discovery thus echoes the socio-historical perspective described above.

It is important to note that the teachers in this present investigation were also second language learners themselves, and most stated that their language learning remains an on-going process. The continuing process also seems to be an important part of their active (re)creation of their identity, which I will discuss later in Chapter Four in the analysis of the findings of the investigation.

Beynon, Ilieva and Dichupa (2001) in their study, *Teachers of Chinese Ancestry: interaction of identities and professional roles*, examine how “teachers of minority ancestry infuse their roles with new dimensions that draw on their identities” – identities which are “multifaceted and fluid” (2001:133). Beynon *et al* were interested to see how the ‘constraints’ of the dominant privileged discourse shaped the teachers’ identities and professional roles. It was found that within their particular figured worlds, the teachers were able to respond to the discourse and practices that surrounded them, and successfully “trace a ‘route’ that establish[ed] them as legitimate professionals” (2001:147). Their response to the authoritative discourses, coupled with facets of their identity, gave the teachers a degree of autonomy. They were able to author new versions of themselves, and thus were part of the active (re)creation of their identity.

How one actively (re)creates identity in a specific location in response to discourses is of particular interest to the present study, and is a perspective adopted by Beynon, Ilieva and Dichupa in their more recent 2004 study, in which the authors again adopt the “sociocultural orientations to culture, authorship, agency and identity” (2004:429) to investigate a group of immigrant teachers in Canada. The authors examine how the teachers, each with their own prior life and professional experience, and set of professional credentials, negotiate and recreate themselves in the discourse of the figured worlds of a Canadian work setting, authoring themselves anew in the Canadian educational context. Their questions of what the teachers’ encounters with the prevailing discourse, and the gate-keeping educational institutions were, and how the teachers (re)created

themselves in response to the discourse are questions that have some bearing on the findings of the present study.

Duff and Uchida (1997) undertook a six-month ethnographic study of four English teachers in Japan, in order to understand the teachers' construction, negotiation, and transformation of their sociocultural identities and practices within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. Their study revealed that both teachers *and* students had a part to play in the process of negotiating and creating identity in the classroom. It is in this "third space" (Bhabha, quoted in Duff & Uchida, 1997:454)- the space where different identities intersect and juxtapose with others- that identities respond to others and then transform through language and mutual *addressivity*. They noted that even the researchers became engaged in this "third space" through the research process (*ibid*: 478), taking part in a process of "collaborative inquiry and self-reflection" (1997:479) with others to reach a new sense of self, being "informed and transformed by the research" (*ibid.*).

In Accent on Privilege: English Identities and Anglophilia in the U.S. (2001), Katherine W. Jones analyzes how thirty-four white English people who had immigrated to the United States "experience and understand their national, racial, class, and gender identities in a foreign context", with particular interest in "how individuals contest, reject, or affirm their identities in everyday interactions" (2001:1). Jones focuses on how "individuals use language [*especially* accent] to tease out the variations in identities" in a variety of social settings in the host country (2001:109). Jones notes that an English accent is frequently looked upon favourably in the United States and affords its users privilege; participants in her

study are seen to exercise agency through how they use their English accents². Jones' participants admit that they frequently emphasize their English accent when it seems advantageous to do so in order to highlight their English identity; their English identity is seen as a "powerful indicator of the kind of person they are", with the implied sense of a positive value and privilege (2001:140). Conversely, they also know when to downplay their English accents, often in order to be understood or accepted by Americans (2001:137). Others refused to adopt an American accent, since they feel that their English accent is part of who they are, and if they were to take on an American accent it would change who they were (2001:139). Ironically, however, despite their belief that their national identity is natural and therefore fixed, the individuals are shown to be involved in an on-going process of negotiation and reconstruction of identity; identity is shown to be fluid and changeable.

Jones sees the process of identity construction as an active process, in which "individuals do *work* to construct their national identities. 'Identity,' therefore, can almost be seen more as a *verb* than as a noun" (2001:7, emphasis added). Jones is able to uncover "data that captured the identity negotiations of those whose marginality attuned them to the question of who they thought they were" (2001:224). The term 'marginality' in the case of this particular group of immigrants is relative; the marginality that white English immigrants in North America experience is that of a strong subject position, as I well know from personal experience, and as several of my immigrant teacher participants note in their interviews.

² It should be noted that in England there is no one "English" accent; there are many regional variants, and within the range of possible English accents, there is a hierarchy of social status ascribed to individual accents. In England a listener might assign particular connotations to an individual accent. For example, a Black Country accent might be associated with a working-class background, and along with that various sociocultural assumptions. The variety of English accents is not differentiated in America, since the British social distinctions are not directly applicable to an American context. In America, an English accent is generally looked upon as an English accent, without the regional accent distinctions and any associated, potentially negative, connotations, and so Jones' participants were not usually subjected to any of the social positioning that their accents might produce if they were in England.

The research literature concerned with identity as an active process of self, outlined above, provides a broad framework for other literature relevant to the themes of this study. The close connection between each of the themes in this present study is reflected in how closely the different strands of research literature are interrelated. Discussions of identity involve discussions of culture and discourse, all part of the social milieu - the figured world –in which the individuals construct their identities.

The following section will look at discourse, and its implications for the construction of teacher identity in a “third space”, a place where cultures, discourses and identities juxtapose, the figured world of the language learning classroom.

2.3 Discourses of Colonialism

A dominant discourse declares that the colonial language stands as the ideal language model. Bakhtin’s conception of authoritative discourse elucidates what is meant in characterizing a particular discourse as ‘dominant’. In that view, an authoritative discourse can potentially become internalized and part of a new internal dialogue. Internal dialogue has the capacity to then shape identity, one’s perception of self and response to others. A colonial discourse informs the immigrant teachers in this study that they are not the holders of the ‘right’ English; theirs is an English which is *only* a second language, and therefore not perceived as ‘good enough’ when compared to a speaker from the dominant, native-speaking, culture. If the immigrant teachers’ response to this authoritative discourse is to believe that their L2 skills are not ‘good enough’ within the L1 setting, then they might well begin to doubt their teaching ability and linguistic competence; their image of themselves as teachers in this setting is affected. Although non-native speakers might think that their L2 skills are lacking, non-native speakers seem unable to pinpoint and articulate specific linguistic features

that support this feeling. Having been exposed repeatedly to the discourse that says their L2 is inferior to L1 speakers, several immigrant teachers appear to believe it; they have internalized a dominant discourse.

Several researchers (Jones: 2001; Brutt-Griffler and Samimy: 1999; Holland: 1998; Braine:2004; Cook 1999; Toohey: 1992; Liu: 1999; Munro: 2003; Munro and Derwing: 1995; Derwing: 2003;) identify the power that dominant society and colonial discourses have over immigrants in English speaking countries like Canada. They explore the ways in which a colonial discourse can marginalize some and privilege others, and how a native English-speaker's version of English has been widely held as the model against which non-native versions of English are compared, and frequently found lacking, by those who subscribe to a colonial discourse view. This particular body of research literature challenges the overwhelming "authority" of a colonial discourse; an authority which causes language learners to internalize the view that they are 'deficient'; whereas the linguistic nuances, pronunciation and rhetorical styles of the colonizers are viewed as ideal.

Brutt-Griffler and Samimy's study (1999) investigates how the discourse of "nativeness" pervades and disenfranchises non-native English speaking teachers; how a colonial discourse "still resonates in the practice and theory of ELT (English Language Training)" (1999:429). The authors attempted to empower a group of non-native English speaking participants as teachers through active participation in a ten-week graduate seminar, structured on Freire's conceptualization of *critical pedagogy* and Weedon's construction of *subjectivity*. Classroom discussion, professional autobiography, and a letter were examples of media used by participants during the seminar. The researchers noticed both an emerging self-awareness of the roles the participants could play as professionals and how they could become agents of change. However, for several participants, an authoritative, colonial discourse still persisted: they

continued to see themselves as less than ideal language models and “continued to express adherence to a belief in the superiority of the NS [native speaker]” (1999:425). These participants were unable or unwilling to disbelieve a powerful authoritative discourse that apparently had been firmly entrenched as part of their internal discourse.

George Braine (2004) examines discourse that defines the native speaker as the ideal model for language, and observes how “a non-native speaker of a language is invariably defined *against* a native speaker of that language” (Braine, 2004:14, emphasis added). Braine highlights the applied linguist, Henry Widdowson’s observation (1994), which points out that native speakers have become the ‘gatekeepers’ of “proper English” and of “proper pedagogy” (Braine, 2004:15). Braine questions Noam Chomsky’s assertion that the native speaker is the “ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech community, who knows its language perfectly” (*ibid*), and asks whether a ‘perfect’ speaker of any language truly exists, or if Chomsky’s ideal is simply an “abstraction with no resemblance to any human being” (*ibid*)? Braine relates how the ideal of the native speaker can be attributed to not only the colonial nature of the English language, but also to the fact that there has been a stronger emphasis in second language learning on spoken language since the 1960’s, especially with the adoption of the Communicative Approach as the commonly preferred second language teaching methodology (*ibid*).

The ideal of the native speaker as the model against which learners should measure themselves is also challenged by Vivian Cook (1999). Cook argues that the second language learner is not a ‘failed’ or deficient native speaker, but is a *multicompetent speaker* who potentially possesses more linguistic and cognitive abilities than a *mere* native speaker (1999:190-194); the multicompetent speaker has “the unique status of standing between two worlds and cultures” (1999:204). Cook explains how both teacher and learner attitudes,

textbooks and learning material, and pedagogical approach should change to embrace this more positive, and ultimately more realistic view of the second language user; multicompetent users can never be native speakers, and they should not be expected to be. Some studies also indicate that ESL students' first languages and cultures are inadequately accounted for in the public school system. Toohey (1992:93) observes:

in very few cases have we recognized students' minority languages as resources upon which to base further instruction. We continue to define students in terms of what they do not know and we continue to ignore their strengths.

Thus, by not acknowledging a second language learner's native language, a dominant society discourse, as perpetuated by the school system, invalidates the learner by refusing to see her/him as a multicompetent speaker, and silently and deliberately labelling her/him as no more than a failed native speaker.

Jun Liu (1999) explores the labels *native speaker* (NS) and *non-native speaker* (NNS) from the perspective of seven non-native English speaking professionals in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) field and examines the discourse that surrounds these labels. From different cultural backgrounds, the participants in Liu's study had learned English at different stages in their lives. Liu noticed how each chose to define themselves differently, as either a non-native or a native speaker of English; this difference in interpretation of self-labelling also arose in the interviews in this present study.

Liu asked the teachers whether it mattered professionally when, how well and where a language teacher had learned the target language, and also what problems the labels of 'native' or 'non-native' speaker might engender for the non-native English speaking teacher. For example, how might the labels impact the hiring process, or what are the pedagogical implications of the labels? Can a non-native teacher be successful in the classroom? Ultimately, the teachers and Liu conclude that professionalism has more bearing on how successful they are

as teachers, or how they are perceived by students, than either nativeness or non-nativeness. The teachers acknowledged that the ultimate measure of success is not how you are defined, but what you do. One's effectiveness as a teacher, one's professionalism, is more important than how whether one is labelled native or non-native speaker. This view is supported by the students who told the non-native teachers that from their student perspective, it is quality of teaching that counts. This comment also reiterates my own personal observations in a private language school setting in Vancouver, and in the interview process for both this study and the initial pilot study. However, this view is not supported by prevailing dominant discourses in the industry.

Colonial and dominant society discourses say that the native speaker is the ideal language model for a language learner. A feature of that ideal language model is accent; accent has the potential to mark a non-native speaker of English as "other". These discourses hold that a native speaker's accent is superior, regardless of the national or regional variety of the accent, when contrasted with the accent of an L2 learner, the holder of a 'foreign' accent who is *not* native. Murray J. Munro (2003) examines negative attitudes towards foreign-accented³ speech in Canada, focusing on complaints to the Human Rights Commission. He discusses *accent stereotyping*, prejudice against a particular group of people which may be activated when one hears speech patterns associated with that group, and so may result in discriminatory behaviour toward those groups or toward foreigners in general (2003:39). Katherine Jones (2001) noted how in America her study participants sometimes hid their English accent when it was likely to be perceived negatively, even though their accent was generally regarded as privileged and favourable by Americans, especially Anglophiles in America. Munro notes that some people may object to foreign-accented speech, if it seems difficult to understand, and adds that "some scholars have historically

³ It is acknowledged that all speech is accented, but the focus here in the English as a Second Language context is the speech of L2 speakers of English, the English of the "Other" who is labeled "foreign", that is "foreign" to the dominant culture. The members of the dominant culture therefore perceive the "Other's" speech as accented, 'foreign' while theirs is the 'right' accent.

viewed accented speech as inherently problematic” (2003:40). He cites how in a 1927 textbook for speech pathologists, foreign-accented speech was included in a list of diseases and disorders, and that the authors “concluded that foreign accent was a type of speech defect” (*ibid.*).

Munro points out that there are a number of books and programs available today that promise to “help ESL learners ‘eradicate’ their accents” (*ibid*) but as he remarks, there is no such proof that such material can “live up to such an outrageous claim” and that there is no reason why accent should be “eliminated” (2003:49). While Munro acknowledges that negative attitudes towards accented speech exist, he suggests that ESL teachers work to “convey positive attitudes in the ESL classroom” towards accented speech (2003:48). However, one might ask what if ESL teachers have a ‘foreign’ accent and find it difficult to escape an authoritative discourse that says such an accent is not desirable? What if teachers feel that their accents marks them as “Other”, and thus portray their English language ability as not “good enough”, and therefore not qualified to teach English?

Tracey Derwing (2003) interviewed one hundred adult immigrants living in Edmonton to investigate what their perceptions of their own pronunciation problems were and the consequences of speaking with a foreign accent. Derwing reports that:

an overwhelming 97% reported that they believed or strongly believed that it is important to pronounce English well. Thus, whether or not the ESL students thought that they themselves had pronunciation difficulties, nearly all of them considered pronunciation to be a critical aspect of communication (2003:555).

However, while almost two-thirds of the participants reported that pronunciation was the reason for their communication problems, they were unable to identify exactly what their pronunciation difficulties were. If any pronunciation features were indicated, participants focused on segmental features, individual sounds,

rather than prosodic features, like stress, intonation and rhythm; however, “numerous studies have suggested that prosody has more importance to overall comprehensibility than segments” (2003:560). Sixty percent of the participants said that they had never been discriminated against because of accent, and yet, fifty-four percent said that if they had better pronunciation, they would then be respected more by native speaking listeners. Derwing notes that if respondents were of a visible minority status, they “reported more discrimination *because of accent* than those in the non-minority group” (2003:561). She cites Lippi-Green (1997) who said that negative reactions are evoked by “accent linked to skin that isn’t white, or which signals a third world homeland” (Lippi-Green, in Derwing, 2003:561).

Munro and Derwing (1995) examined the interrelationships among accent, perceived comprehensibility, and intelligibility in the speech of L2 learners by having native speakers of English listen to and transcribe segments of speech as spoken by ten Mandarin speakers and two native English speakers. After the speech segments were transcribed, the listeners were then asked in a second session to rate the speech segments on a scale of one to nine, one representing no accent and nine representing very strong accent. The listeners were asked to rate the same segments again on a scale of one to nine; one indicating easy to understand and nine indicating impossible to understand. The findings showed that although accents were rated quite severely by the listeners, the non-native speakers’ speech segments were perceived as highly intelligible, and it was concluded that a foreign accent did not interfere with comprehensibility; there was no correlation between severity of accent and low comprehensibility. Munro and Derwing concluded that accent should not be linked to perceived intelligibility, especially since one native speaker’s speech segment was rated overall as the *most* incomprehensible of the segments, although it was not described as accented speech. Munro and Derwing’s findings lead one to ask what causes listeners to perceive foreign-accented speech negatively, if accent does not interfere with comprehensibility as the study demonstrated.

2.4 Culture in the Second Language Classroom

Accent and other discursive elements, such as lexis, non-verbal gestures, and discourse formality are not the only aspects of language learning that can mark one as “Other”; lack of fluency in the *culture* of the target language is another such feature. Culture is implicit in the second language curriculum; learners want to learn both the language and the target culture. The question of who is best “qualified” to teach the target language culture is examined both in research literature and by immigrant teachers themselves (Courchêne, 1996; Ilieva: 2001; Liu, 2004; Lazarton: 2003; Duff and Uchida: 1997). The ESL teachers in this present study question, from their subject position, whether or not they are adequately “qualified” to teach the cultural component of Canadian English because they were not born in Canada. While they might feel that they do have adequate knowledge of the language, often the teachers articulated that they did not have a ‘good enough’ grasp of Canadian culture.

The literature shows that there is a link between culture and identity, since not only is culture an important component of learning a second language, but also “language learning is a complex process of reinventing oneself through a new language” (Ilieva: 2001). If culture is taught at all, the teaching of culture in the second language classroom has often been relegated to the teaching of discrete *facts* (Ilieva: 2001), as if culture were a separate skill to be mastered along with a mastery of other language components like grammar, vocabulary, phonetics and so on.

Some researchers, like Courchêne (1996), problematize the very notion that culture is a unitary commodity and suggests that trying to define the Canadian identity and culture in a multiculturally diverse sociocultural milieu is difficult, and asks whose version of Canadian culture should be taught in the Canadian classroom? Courchêne reminds us that culture is dynamic (1996:6) and that a description of Canadian culture must synthesize the past, present and future, and be built around common rights and freedoms. It should also

acknowledge the marginalization of minority groups, and that “to ask if teachers, native and non-native speaking, can be cultural interpreters is really begging the question; they have been performing this task for almost as long as language teaching has existed” (1996:10).

Roumiana Ilieva (2001) suggests that rather than learning facts, an approach called “cultural exploration” would engage students in a more active dialogical process. Ilieva, speaking from her own experience of observing and reflecting on an L2 culture as an immigrant to Canada, recommends that cultural exploration include techniques of “ethnographic participant observation” followed by “reflective, interpretive and critical classroom discussions on students’ ethnographies” (2001:1). She tells us that culture depends “less on its characteristics, than on the position adopted by the observer vis à vis the observed” (2001:10). Students need to actively view and understand the target culture in relation to their own culture. The process is a search for meaning, and is not intended to “produce a chart of a culture’s characteristics” but rather to “explore different plausible understandings of cultural events and explore themselves in the process of culture learning” (2001: 12-13). Recognising that differences exist and are possible, and that one’s response to those differences is valid is key to Ilieva’s vision. Students will then be better able to “engage in the creation of their own third culture and act more effectively for their own ends in the context of the target culture” (2001:13).

Jun Liu (2004) underwent a process of cultural transformation when he immigrated to the United States from China where he was an English teacher. Liu referred to the “culture shock” he experienced, and found that his inability to navigate an unfamiliar culture “overshadowed” his linguistic abilities (2004:28). Liu, like some participants in Jones (2001) study, sometimes chose to reveal his identity and sometimes to conceal it, depending on the context (2004:29). Liu calls his students’ expectation that their English teacher in the US should be a native speaker, an “understandable assumption” (2004:31). However, he realises

that he won his students' trust and admiration by the quality of his language teaching, not his native or non-native status (2004:34). Liu says that his understanding of his students' experiences reciprocally "empowers them with empathy", and his attempts to remain aware that he is on an on-going "journey of self-cultivation and refinement" (2004:32), coupled with modesty and a willingness to continue to ask questions, enable him to be a successful non-native English-speaking professional.

Lazarton (2003) found that culture was usually taught in an incidental way, in 'teachable moments' that arose naturally during the discourse of the second language classroom. Thus, this 'happenstance' approach meant that opportunities for cultural learning were frequently missed. When Lazarton states that NNES English teachers view themselves as "culturally deficient" (2003: 218), she is echoing what other researchers and the teacher participants in this present study observed: even though they may have been confident in their own countries, teachers- like Jun Liu for example - "found their confidence and self-identity challenged in ESL contexts" (2003:218). However, as Lazarton points out, a native speaker does not know everything (2003:237), and a non-native speaker needs only to be a "facilitator", and be willing, as Liu remarked, to demonstrate an ability to find out unknown cultural information. Like Liu, and several of the teachers in this present study, Lazarton- echoing Ilieva's (2001) emphasis on self-reflection - notes that non-native speakers are more "effective when they build their pedagogies on their non-native identities, rather than when they follow the native speaker norm" (2003: 240).

Patricia Duff and Yuko Uchida (1997), like Lazarton, found teachers did not believe that they taught culture explicitly, yet "whether they are aware of it or not, language teachers are very much involved in the transmission of culture" (1997:476). By engaging in "collaborative inquiry and self-reflection" (1997:479), Duff and Uchida hoped that the teachers would gain valuable insight into their

sociocultural identities. This insight would assist them in working with students to guide them through the complexities of what constitutes cultural knowledge, and how it is connected to one's own sociocultural and linguistic experiences. Duff and Uchida illustrate that the process of examining teachers' "self-image, beliefs about teaching EFL and culture, and role identities in teaching" within their local context, showed that their perceptions were "in flux" (1997:477) in this "third space" of the classroom.

Although there are approximately 1.5 billion speakers of English worldwide, only about 400 million of those English speakers are *native* English speakers. Therefore there are many versions of English in the world, and one must then ask if the culture of a dominant society is the one that should be taught? This is especially difficult in a multicultural country such as Canada, since it is hard to define "*the*" Canadian culture as a discrete subject which can be taught explicitly. Several researchers point to the fact that teachers teach culture in their language classroom, whether they are aware of it or not. Language teachers are "cultural workers" (Duff and Uchida: 1997; Lazarson: 2003). A language teacher thus stands as a facilitator of culture, and should therefore lead students to learn more about not only the target culture, but also how their own culture stands in relation to it (Ilieva: 2001; Lazarson: 2003). The exploration of one's own and the target culture should be engaged in as a collaborative journey between self, classmates, teacher and outsiders in an active dialogic process (Ilieva: 2001; Lazarson: 2003) in the figured world of the Canadian ESL classroom.

2.5 The Business of ESL

A description of the ESL industry in Canada will provide a useful framework for the setting of this present study. I will now describe how business concerns are implicated in education and in the figured world of ESL in particular. The perspective I offer here of the private language school industry is specific to Canada, and Vancouver.

As noted earlier, the discourse that describes a native speaker as the ideal language model is very much a part of the post-colonial ESL industry in Canada; an industry which is for the most part self-regulated. School promotional material frequently refers to the advantages that students will gain learning English in a Canadian context, as opposed to learning in a student's home country or indeed in any other English speaking country. Promotional material tacitly implies that the learning will be from a native speaker. The Canadian accent is commonly described by students and by Canadian schools as more 'neutral', therefore 'preferable' and ergo easier to adopt than either a British, American, Australian or New Zealand variant. Marketing materials and textbooks show images of predominantly white speakers, presumably native speakers; students practice listening to audio tapes filled with the same group of speakers (Cook: 1999) with the model of the ideal language being the native white Anglo-Canadian speaker.

The international student propelled by colonial and post-colonial educational structures in their home countries is often driven by concerns about globalization and the need to compete in an increasingly more individualistic and more competitive knowledge society (Hargreaves: 2003, Taylor: 1991); where colonial governments leave off, marketers and global businesses step up to 'meet the demand'. In this view, the learner is an educational consumer (Abbarno: 1998, Bridges and Jonathan: 2003), while educational establishments, both private and public, have borrowed from the world of business in their attempts to fund programs. Education becomes business (Abbarno: 1998).

The seeming incongruous mix of education and profit is peculiar not only to the private language school industry. School districts, public colleges and universities actively seek out and recruit international students to fill their dwindling educational coffers. The relatively new language training industry, with English as the preferred *lingua franca*, has become a very lucrative business venture around the world, and in Canada, for both the private and public sectors; English is “the most widespread medium of international communication” (Brumfit, 1985). In the past decade there has been considerable growth in the industry, which was estimated worldwide to be over \$7.5 billion US in 2002 (CAPLS: 2003). A need derived from the external social pressure imposed by the modern world, in its efforts to embrace globalization and McDonaldization (Hargreaves, 2003: 46). Charles Taylor’s notion of the modern western preoccupation with the primacy of instrumental reason, and the need to assert one’s individualism might also be fuelling the desire (Taylor, 1991) to gain more skills to make one more marketable in a global economy. The subsequent huge demand for English language training has driven the worldwide English Language Training (ELT) market; ever-increasing numbers of students are travelling around the globe in order to attain another skill, which they hope will equip them to compete in the knowledge society (Hargreaves, 2003) where knowing more than your neighbour counts. The private language school industry in Canada has responded eagerly to this demand, with a proliferation of ESL schools in most metropolitan areas, the majority in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

The Canadian ESL industry receives almost no public or private support, and exists with little cohesion in terms of system structure or regulations. As a result, Canada’s ESL industry is comprised of a patchwork of independent schools working primarily in isolation as private, profit-driven enterprises; jealously, and somewhat fearfully, guarding their business secrets, curriculum and expertise. In this context, the teachers’ desire to be responsive and to provide what students-as-consumers expect, might induce them to believe

discourses of colonialism connected with language and cultural learning described in the earlier sections. Indeed, they may have already internalized these discourses while participating in educational systems in their countries of origin.

2.5.1 Industry self-regulation

The fact that there is very little regulation of the private language school industry in Canada, either at a federal, provincial or local level contributes to the variety of schools from which students must choose; there is much disparity in the operating conditions of schools, including the teacher education required, teacher salary and quality of education offered to students. A group of private language school owners formed an association, The Canadian Association of Private Language Schools (CAPLS), in 1997 to “represent the interests of Canadian private language schools, both at a national and international level”, and currently has seventy-five member schools. The owner of Standard English School is a founding member of CAPLS, and the school operates following CAPLS’ set of standards and ethics of conduct. CAPLS requires that all member schools meet several criteria prior to membership, including a set of minimum teacher hiring requirements. Those standards were implemented as a means to promote Canada as a desirable and safe destination for second language training. School owners are also savvy business people and know that in an effort to maintain the good reputation of Canada as a safe destination for English language study, *any* negative press negatively affects the market. CAPLS wants their industry to be seen as responsible and legitimate in order to ensure its economic viability.

Canada, lagging behind its main industry competitors, the UK and USA who together dominate over 60% of the world ELT market, would like to increase its current 12.5% market share. In order to augment a thriving industry, CAPLS actively lobbies the federal government on various industry-related issues, for

example, CAPLS asserts that Canadian visa regulations would need to be revised and standardised to improve the flow of foreign students into Canada, and urges policy changes which will widen the country-base from which students can come (CAPLS 2003, 2004). CAPLS feels that restrictive government policies unnecessarily penalize the private segment of the industry, and is eager to work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT) and other government agencies, on issues that will help improve, legitimise and ultimately expand the industry (2003). CAPLS wants to protect and further its members' economic interests.

2.5.2 External regulation

The only government regulatory body that until recently had some control over private language schools in British Columbia was the Private Post Secondary Education Commission in BC (PPSEC). PPSEC was created primarily as a means to provide financial protection for students registered in any *member* private post-secondary establishment; PPSEC did not oversee educational standards. PPSEC held a percentage of school revenue in trust in the event that a *member* school should go bankrupt. However, CAPLS and private language school owners exerted pressure on the provincial government to disband PPSEC since they felt that the commission's existence did little to enhance the private language school business environment or the industry. CAPLS members also argued that PPSEC's regulations unfairly punished PPSEC *member* schools, since not all ESL schools actually registered with PPSEC and yet continued to operate without penalty. PPSEC has been replaced by the Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA) which came into existence in November 2004, and provides consumer protection to students who register in training institutions offering *vocational* programs. This therefore exempts most private language schools from having to register, and so the

majority of private language schools are now no longer bound by any governmental regulatory body.

2.5.3 The Business of Education

G. John Abbarno (1998) warns about the seemingly innocuous and purportedly 'socially responsible' corporate sponsorship of various public institutions, particularly the introduction of commercials and corporate sponsorship in schools; an example of a more overt form of economic influence in the educational realm. Abbarno refers to Galbraith's description of the pressure from corporations as having a '*dependence effect*', a first order desire, in which desires are externally induced, a "fabricated desire by business"(1998:4) which persuades one to believe one has a "need" for whatever is advertised.

Bridges and Jonathan (2003) show us the main conditions which have contributed to the marketization of public education in the UK, deliberately expressing their ideas in the language of business to echo the marketplace rhetoric surrounding education. They note that on the "supply side" is the creation of diversity and choice, and on the "demand side", the placing of information and purchasing power in the hands of the "consumers". Private language schools constantly balance their business interests with a sense of 'educational integrity'; especially when responding to student-as-consumer demands. Do the schools respond as a business, offering service to a consumer, or do they respond as an educational establishment? Individual schools must be quick to respond to consumer demands in order not to lose student enrolment to a competitor, who will likely be very willing to provide the service expected.

Marshall's (1995) analysis of *biopower* and *busnpower* details how recent 'reforms' in New Zealand's education attempt to exercise power over the mind – *busnpower* - as Foucault said governments sought control over bodies – *biopower*. This view upholds consumer choice as paramount, and suggests

that consumer choice also “improves” society and the economy. This is relevant to Canadian private language schools. Careful watch over and response to consumer demands ensures a school’s survival: reversing a popular saying, a private language school might say: “they will come, *if* they tell us to build it, and we actually do”. However, as Marshall points out, *busnpower*, as a form of external control, targets the subjectivity of the autonomous individual chooser and the population as a whole. It attempts also to change the culture, for example, by blurring the lines between education and training; promoting skills not knowledge; stressing information and information retrieval rather than knowledge and understanding; and propounding the view that consumers determine the *quality* in education. Structures from the world of business have been built into education, accentuating efficiency and vocational imperatives, and focus on the goal of personal ‘autonomy’ rather than social control. There is indeed a definite ‘blurring’ between the lines of education, training and business in the private language school industry.

According to Marshall’s reasoning, when international students declare that they “need English to get a better job”, one should ask where this perceived need is coming from? Hasn’t this “need” to increase cultural capital has been imposed on them? Marshall refers to Lyotard when he says that since the autonomous chooser has no obligation to others of the community, there becomes no need for dialogue and this will further isolate the individual. Marshall concludes that such an “independent” chooser will be more open to manipulation and easier to ‘pick off’. He feels there is a need to be more vigilant and to “resist a demeaning form of education and its associated demeaning notion of human being” (1995:7). These forces govern the kind of educational practice that occurs in private language schools like Standard English School, and accounts for the discourse that helps shape learning and working environments within a school.

As the literature in this section shows, the close juxtaposition of business and education in the ESL industry in Canada creates a specific climate in which

the teachers in this study work. The public school system shares some of these features, but business considerations are in sharper relief in a school like Standard English School. How the teachers carry out their practice of teaching is always tempered by the consideration of students as educational consumers. If students are dissatisfied with the 'service' they receive, they will readily take their custom, and cash, elsewhere to one of the many other schools waiting to provide exactly what they demand; consumer interests overtaking their learner needs.

2.6 Summary

This chapter reviewed four strands of research literature which are relevant to the themes of this study. First, a short description of Bakhtin, Vygotsky and Holland's principle theories was provided in order to provide a framework for the sociocultural construct of identity (re)creation. Current theories of identity rely upon the dialogic nature of language, and this responsive engagement of subject to discourse, society and others was shown in the review of literature which views identity as an active process of self. This literature is particularly relevant to the figured world of ESL, since language and construction of meaning is a key focus of language learning and teaching. Next, colonial and post-colonial discourse which labels and positions the non-native speaker as "other" – the colonial nature of English –was presented. How this authoritative discourse permeates the language learning environment and impacts the process of identity (re)creation was discussed. Following this, the link between culture and language learning was summarized; specifically which version of culture should be taught in a Canadian classroom, how it should be taught, and who is 'qualified' to teach it. Finally, an overall description of the ESL industry in Canada and the business concerns that govern how it operates was given. In this section it was also noted how business concerns have filtered into several aspects of public education.

The literature presented in this chapter is intended to provide a theoretical context, a figured world, from which to analyse data collected in this investigation. The next chapter will present the methodological tools used in the data collection and briefly introduce the teacher participants of the study, who were interviewed using the three-interview technique (Seidman, 1988). Separately, the teacher interviews are individual life stories which show an emic perspective, that is, their individual perspective; in the process of collecting the data, the researcher and participants actively co-constructed life histories together (Goodson & Sikes: 2001). The students who were interviewed for the initial pilot study will also be briefly introduced as a group, since the student data will be referred to occasionally in the data analysis chapter. The student perspective, though relevant to the findings of this present study, is not the main focus of this investigation. The participants' stories will be discussed in Chapter Four, and the implications for future investigation will then be presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

3.1 Background to the study

The primary focus of this investigation is how identity and meaning are actively constructed by a group of immigrant teachers in a private language school setting in Vancouver. A qualitative approach to research is appropriate to this particular study, since:

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality...they seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:4).

In qualitative research, data is collected by a variety of methods and techniques, such as, observation, interviews, case study, and life story. Once qualitative data is collected, it is interpreted and presented in a variety of forms, perhaps by means of a life history, a narrative, or a first-person account. A researcher is closely involved in interpreting specific human cases; qualitative researchers (re)tell a social story, and thus, qualitative research is an:

..interactive process shaped by [the researcher's] personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:3).

Since a researcher is actively involved in the dialogic process of making meaning and interpreting the data, some might question the reliability and validity of a qualitative research approach; it might be argued that a qualitative researcher's proximity to the data would not encourage objectivity. However, since an important goal of a qualitative research approach is to gain an in-depth understanding of an informant's position, a necessary nearness of researcher to

subject is desirable. A qualitative research approach allows familiarity and understanding of another's viewpoint.

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the perspectives of two groups of participants within the figured world of Standard English School, I undertook a small-scale qualitative study, the pilot study for this current investigation. In the pilot study, three immigrant teachers and four international students were interviewed, using semi-structured interview questions. For this present study an additional four teachers were interviewed, giving a total of seven teachers – one male and six female participants. The teachers all worked at Standard English School, where I was an administrator. They were each given a letter which outlined the nature and scope of the investigation and were given an opportunity to read the letter and raise any questions or concerns about the process before choosing to participate, or not. The students were invited to participate based on their having learned in an immigrant teacher's classroom. They were also invited by letter to participate and provided an opportunity to ask any questions about the process before making a decision to participate. The interviews were conducted at Standard English School, since besides serving as an example of a Canadian private language school, ready access to a familiar location made scheduling interviews easier, and more convenient for the participants. Also respecting the participants' daily schedules and time constraints, and any potential burden or cost for travelling to another location, the school/work site was deemed the most suitable. I was not made aware of any participant discomfort at being interviewed within their work-place setting; interviewing was conducted in a remote, closed room, away from any potential intrusion or obvious distractions.

I considered the already established long-term working relationship that existed with the teachers beneficial to the research process, but recognised that the existing relationship could potentially compromise either the research or the work relationship. One of the participants, Lee, expressed her initial hesitation

and nervousness at participating; her boyfriend had cautioned her that the interview process might jeopardise her job. The three-interview method (Seidman, 1998) was chosen to collect the data, and was the preferred method of data collection for a number of reasons. First, as a way to minimise discomfort generated by either the research process, or the existing administrator-teacher, or administrator-student relationship; it was hoped that the use of the three-interview method would help construct a new relationship within the research context. Once the process was under way, both Lee and, by her account, her boyfriend seemed assured of the purpose of the research, and that the research relationship was intended to be kept separate from the work relationship. I also hoped that by participating in a series of interviews spaced over a period of time, the subjects would have time to reflect in the dialogic process- the length and the timing of the interviews would allow for that.

The students were interviewed using semi-structured interview questions. During the first interviews, I was aware that the students were not as engaged in the process as I thought they might be. All had appeared keen to participate in the process, especially since the interview itself would act as additional speaking practice. While the students were keen to have an opportunity to gain extra speaking practice, and were curious about the situation and the topic, only two of the four students appeared to be fully engaged, providing relatively short-turn answers. I interpreted their reticence to an unwillingness to participate in any more than one interview and so abandoned my plan to use the three-interview method. All four students responded to the questions, but responses were, for the majority of them, relatively brief and not very detailed. The limited student response could be attributed to a combination of factors: the quality and nature of the interview questions; a lack of student investment in the topic; the researcher's inexperience, and perhaps unwillingness on the students' part to reveal too much personal opinion. The English ability of three of the four students was high intermediate or above, so the students' comprehension and ability to communicate did not appear to be reasons for their brief responses.

Despite collecting less student data than originally expected, I believe the student perspective is valuable since students are an important part of the teacher-student relationship. I will refer to relevant details that arose in the student interviews in the discussion of the findings in Chapter Four. Looking back on the process, a student focus group might have helped with both the selection of student participants, and the design of interview questions. An initial focus group might have highlighted a focus in the interview process which I had not considered, and one that was more relevant to the students. Also, a focus group setting would have perhaps been less intimidating than a one-on-one interview, and helped the students feel more at ease, and thus more ready to engage with the topic. The richness of data from the teachers encouraged me to further research their perspective, hence the extension of the pilot study into this larger, yet still relatively small-scale investigation.

For both the pilot study and this present study, the participants were invited to provide any post-interview reflections via email with the researcher if they wished. For the teachers, they were asked at the beginning of the second and third interviews if they had any post-interview thoughts to share since completing the previous interview. Once all the interviews were completed, analysis of the findings of this investigation was based on: interview transcripts; researcher field notes collected during the interviews and analysis based on both of these, and a few pieces of emailed personal correspondence.

Having provided a general background to the investigation process, I will now describe more fully the rationale for choosing the three-interview method to collect the 'life stories' of the teachers.

3.2.1 Research Methodology: Three-Interview Method

The three-interview method (Seidman: 1998) consisted in this project of a series of three 90-minute interviews, spaced three to seven days apart. As mentioned above, the three-interview method helps establish a safe interview site, by allowing time to build a comfortable relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. The timing and spacing of the interviews also allows for uncharacteristic or idiosyncratic days, and helps ensure the internal consistency of what participants say and also permits time for participant reflection on the process. I saw examples of all three of these aspects during the interview process and was glad that I had a series of interviews and data to rely on, and also a wider context in which to view the data.

An important goal of the three-interview process, and one that is strongly related to one of the themes of the study, is how participants understand and make meaning of their experience. The purpose of each interview is different, and together all three allow a fuller, and richer collection of data than is possible in a single session. The purpose of the first interview is to both establish rapport with the participant, and the context of the participant's experience. The second interview "allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs" (Seidman, 1998:11). The second interview is not intended to be used to invite *opinion* about the topic; it expects only details. The third interview is used to give participants the chance to reflect on the meaning of their experience. The third interview allows the participants to explore the details and the context in which their narrative takes place (*ibid*).

The three-interview method has several strengths: the first is that the format of the interview process helps build a rapport between the researcher and the participants, helping foster trust in the research process (Seidman, 1998:15). Second, the method helps ensure validity of data from individuals, and across the

interviews (Seidman, 1998:19). The process also generates a wealth of general and specific data because of the length of each interview and the fact that there are three interviews for each participant. One weakness to using this approach is that the interviewer and the participants have to invest a great deal of time in the process. It was this aspect that might have been behind the students' apparent unwillingness to participate as fully in the interview process as I had initially expected. It was my suspicion that they were unwilling or unable to invest a great deal of time to the interview process which caused me to abandon the method as a means of collecting student data.

Another disadvantage to using this method is that the participant has to be willing to reveal a large amount of information, since it does involve three approximately 90-minute interviews. The least time spent with one teacher subject, Claudio, was approximately forty minutes, in one interview only. I interviewed him once only, since his experience was somewhat different to the other teacher participants, as I will discuss in his brief profile which will follow shortly. The collection and transcription of a wealth of data from three fairly lengthy interviews can prove to be a challenge for the researcher; I spent over three hours with each of the other teacher participants, and so had a wealth of data to transcribe. The interview process itself could prove to be emotionally draining for the interviewees, since it does promote reflection on the meaning of their experience. The three-interview method proved to be very effective in collecting data from the teacher participants; they were able to share a great deal of information with me, some of which they had not reflected on before. Several teachers commented during the interviews and after the process had finished on how they had benefited from the process.

3.2.2 Methodology: Life Stories – Life Histories

The three-interview method is a useful tool for collecting the life-story of a subject. The dialogic process of conducting such interviews with participants allows for the subjects to narrate the 'story' of their lives, or in the case of this present study, one aspect of their life in one particular context, or figured world. A researcher using life stories works from what people say in order to gain a "recognizable impression of how particular lives are lived and expressed in a day-to-day context" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:3). A life story approach recognizes that each part of a life cannot be compartmentalized from the rest, and that there is a crucial and interactive relationship between lives and historical and social contexts; there is a link between the historical past, present and future in an individual's life. A life story supposes that one's prior script informs our present and our future; they are "scripts which we've rehearsed endlessly" (Goodson, in Thiessen *et al*, 1996:5). Life stories also "provide evidence to show how individuals negotiate their identities, and, consequently, experience, create and make sense of the rules and roles of the social worlds in which they live" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:2). The telling of a life story provides the listener with a context, a time and space in which life stories are "embedded" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:18); life stories are "lives interpreted and made textual" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:16). The fact that this present study is concerned very much with how individuals make meaning in the active process of the self makes a life story approach very germane; the process mirrors the nature of the content.

While it was felt that the life story approach is an appropriate tool for the investigation, it is important for a researcher to keep in mind some of the dangers inherent to the process, and some of the criticisms against its use. A critique of the life story approach is that since it relies on the "words" of individuals, it might actually be a record of the participants' "social fictions", rather than an "observed account" of their experience (Warren and Karner, 2005:7). Some critics might argue that data collected in a life story is not objective or scientific enough to be regarded as valid, since after all, it is only someone's *story* (Goodson and Sikes,

2001:14). The power relationship between the researcher and a subject can potentially be problematic; how a researcher chooses to 'give voice' to a subject - implying a colonial and dominant voice - and if indeed the researcher has the right to speak for the subject. It must be noted that the subject does have a degree of power in the participant-researcher relationship, since a participant can choose which information to divulge or omit, or how that information is revealed. A story is told from one particular perspective. The recounting of a life story allows an individual to reflect on meaning (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:4), which could be a source of distress to the participant, since in the telling of a story, old wounds might be uncovered, or new ones exposed. One of the teacher participants, Lee, expressed how she had been affected by the process; how her reflection post-interview had led her to have some self-doubts.

Data collected in a qualitative research interview is analysed by the researcher and presented for others to see. There is a risk in assuming that not only can a researcher "collect" data – collect the essential self of the individual- but also that the researcher has the ability to "know" the subject completely and also has the "right" to speak for others. Michelle Fine warns against the use of the dominant colonial voice in research which portrays and labels the subject as "Other". She reminds us that not only are the researcher and the subject "knottily entangled" (In Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:72), but the researcher must also remember the relationship with the subject, and ensure that the telling of the story be respectful; the researcher should not try to "know the Other, or give voice to the Other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:79). Fine reminds us that the story, the text, should be constructed "collaboratively" to "move against Othering" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:74). Fine believes that ultimately the story has a right to be heard; silenced voices should be given voice, and the researcher has to act as an "intermediary" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 80). Finally, how and in what form does the researcher present the life-story, since 'it can never be possible to tell, capture or present an actual life: any attempt will be mediated by language and

by the interpretative frames through which it is presented or made sense of” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:109).

Goodson and Sikes point out the collaborative and dialogic process of collecting life stories to transform them into a life history, such as is presented here in the text of this thesis. During the interview process, I listened to a great deal of dialogue and active construction of self, of both researcher and subject, take place, and was very much aware of the creation of new meaning, between researcher and individual, and even within the individual: “the power of the script organizing a life story” was very apparent (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:83). The notion that the self and identity are an on-going process is intrinsic to the process of life stories and life histories: “if we view the self and identity as ongoing narrative projects, we begin to see the sheer power of the script in organizing and representing reality, both to the self and others” (*ibid*). Life stories are the “starting point for active collaboration” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:86), and the “beginning of a process of coming to know..... and allow us to locate and interrogate the social world in which they are embedded” (*ibid*). Goodson and Sikes tell us that the “aspiration” of a life story is “to understand the person’s view and account of their life, the story they tell about their life” (2001:87). The “intention” of a life history is “to understand the patterns of social relations, interactions and constructions in which the lives of women and men are embedded” (*ibid*). Thus, the content and the form of this present investigation are tightly connected. A focus of the study is how meaning is (re)constructed; the process for collecting analysing and presenting data- the three-interview method, the life-story and life history approach -is also concerned with the active negotiation of meaning, both in participants and researcher, and in the text itself.

This section has given a justification for the research methodology. The next section will introduce the participants in the study.

3.3 The Participants of the Study

Using the three-interview technique (Seidman, 1998), I interviewed three female teachers for the initial pilot study; for the present investigation, I interviewed an additional four teachers, giving a total of seven teacher participants - six female teachers and one male teacher. The teachers were selected because they were immigrants and had come to Canada from non-English speaking countries. Three of the teacher participants used the label native speaker of English (NSE) when referring to themselves. One had learned English as a second language at the age of eight years old, when his family moved to Canada from Chile. Two others had grown up in countries that used the colonial language, English, for all public discourse, and so spoke English as well as their country's native language.

The teachers came from different countries: *Aurelia* came to Canada from the Philippines, *Joanna* from Brazil and *Lee* from Singapore, *Claudio* from Chile, *Sabina* from the former Yugoslavia, *Janka* from Hungary, and *Jayida* from India. Throughout this study I will refer to participants using pseudonyms in order to ensure privacy. All teacher participants have lived in Canada for four or more years, and all except two came to Canada as adults – Janka came as an adolescent and Claudio as an eight year-old; all have been teaching English in Canada for more than two years. Only three of the participants has taught English in another country – Joanna in her home country, Brazil, Jaydia in Oman, and Claudio in Japan. Table 1 shows a summary of the teacher participants' background details: country of birth, native language, the amount of time lived in Canada, and years spent teaching English. Open-ended, semi-structured questions were used, and teachers were invited to provide any post-interview reflections via email, if they wished.

Teacher Participant Name	Country of Birth	Native Language (L1)	Other languages spoken	Age came to Canada	Number of years in Canada	Number of years teaching English	Number of years teaching English in Canada
Aurelia	The Philippines	Tagalog	English	23	36	7	7
Joanna	Brazil	Portuguese	English Spanish	39	15	32	12
Lee	Singapore	English	Mandarin Malay Singlish Hokkien Cantonese	23	10	3	3
Claudio	Chile	Spanish English		8	29	7	6
Sabina	Yugoslavia (Serbo-Croatia)	Serbian	English German	22	11	11	11
Janka	Hungary	Hungarian	English German Italian	17 1/2	25	2	2
Jayida	India	English Bengali	8 Indian languages Arabic	40	4	9	4

Table 1 Teacher Participant Background Information

As part of the initial pilot study for this present investigation, four international students were interviewed, each one once only, again using semi-structured interview questions. The student participants were selected because

they had been taught by a teacher who was a non-native speaker of English: *Jenny* a twenty-five year old female from Korea, *Lalo* an eighteen year old male from Mexico, *Karim*, a twenty-six year old male from Tunisia and *Cristian*, a twenty-two year old male from the French-speaking part of Switzerland. As mentioned above, it might have been helpful to the investigation if the student interview process had started with a series of focus groups to help better shape the interview questions, and help in the selection of student participants. A greater number of student participants would have helped produce richer student data. Access to the parents of students to hear their perspective would have added another dimension to the research and would provide additional triangulation to the results.

In the following sections, each of the teacher participants is introduced and general personal background is given. The students from the original pilot study will be briefly introduced as a group. The research participants' background information will serve as a basis for a discussion of the themes of this study.

3.3.1 The Four Students

Three of the four students interviewed for the pilot study came to Canada to learn English for a short period of time of two to four months before returning to their home countries. Jenny had recently been granted permanent resident status. All students stated that their reason for learning English, the international language, was in order to "get a good job", but also expressed a desire to learn English for travel purposes; Karim said that he also wanted to learn about Canadian culture, as well as about other people. The multi-racial climate in Vancouver, and at the school, was attractive to the students. All students said that they felt Canadians were mostly "kind" people who were friendly; they also expressed a preference to learning in Canada compared to the United States or

England. They all seemed to have had some knowledge of Canada and Canadians before they arrived: Jenny had been taught by a Canadian teacher in her home country, Korea; the others had been encouraged to come to Canada by friends who had previously studied in Canada. On the whole, the students' prior expectations of Canada seemed to be positive. Lalo expressed surprise at "all the Japanese" in Vancouver, which I interpreted as his blanket term for *all* Asians; he appeared to have mistakenly grouped all Asians into one homogenous category of 'Japanese'.

The students said they felt comfortable learning in a classroom taught by an immigrant to Canada. All said that they would expect that *any* teacher at the school would be trained and would be a good teacher; why would the school hire someone who was not qualified to teach? However, all four students said that if a teacher had pronunciation that was difficult to understand, then that would be a problem; accent, pronunciation and clarity were the only negatives the students expressed regarding a teacher of English. It is interesting to note now that none of them linked any of the negatives with the label non-native English speaker. Were they implying that they were linked, or were they associating those negatives with *any* teacher of English regardless of their place of origin? When asked about the cultural aspect of learning / teaching a language, they all expected that if a teacher were living in Canada, then they would assume that the teacher would be familiar with Canadian culture. This comment was reminiscent of their comment that the school would not hire a teacher who was not qualified. Karim expressed that if someone were to immigrate to Canada, then he would expect that the person would want to embrace the culture, would want to be "integrated", and therefore of course would become and be familiar with Canadian culture.

I will now move on to provide a brief introduction to each of the seven teacher participants in this study.

3.3.2 Aurelia

Aurelia was born in 1945, after the war, in the Philippines in what she said her father called “humble beginnings”. Aurelia said that her and her two siblings’ – a brother and sister - Catholic upbringing was strict; “we were never allowed to date”, and so she would confide in the woman who took care of the family’s laundry about “her loves”. However, Aurelia’s mother was a strong influence on her:

My mom pushed my, never let me sit still. My mom had a lot of ambition for me. My mom was a big influence.

Aurelia’s family’s upper middle class background in relation to many in her home country, afforded her several privileges, like attending a private school. She began to learn English there from Grade One. The family spoke only Tagalog at home, since her mother, a housewife could not speak English, and her father, an engineer, spoke only a little English. Aurelia related that the Philippines had been “delivered from Japan by the Americans” and remembered that when she was growing up everyone wanted to be like the Americans both in looks, with “that long nose and big eyes”, and in language. Speaking English was important to her, and her peers:

English meant you were educated. We had a snobbish attitude towards guys with an accent. We tried to speak English.

Aurelia tried unsuccessfully on two occasions to follow her brother to America where he was living and working, but was refused entry; she said she was “blacklisted”. After university, she had a job in market research at a large pharmaceutical company, and left after only two weeks. She then worked for two years at the Peace Corps., as a secretary, a job her mother had encouraged her to take. A friend then suggested to Aurelia that they both move to Canada and so she moved to Canada in 1969, when she was twenty-three years old. She lived with her cousin for two weeks in Scarborough, before moving to Toronto, where she worked as a medical secretary. Three years later, Aurelia married a Greek immigrant, and they lived in Niagara Falls for five years where she worked in

administrative positions, first at City Hall, then later in the taxation office. Aurelia and her family moved, in 1979, to Vancouver, a place which she now considers her home.

Aurelia worked while her two children were at school, and had considered a job teaching in the public school system, since no teacher certification was required, only a BA. Aurelia felt frustrated by the fact that she would have to take English classes:

..at that time I was too proud. I said, "why should I take English when I have taken all the English that I have? And so I said, "No, I'm not going to do that, I'm just going to take Montessori." Because in Montessori they would accept my BA. But with this one I would have to take some English courses and I would have had to take education, for two or three years.

So instead of pursuing a public school teaching career, she took Montessori training in Ontario, and once in Vancouver she started:

..subbing ECE [Early Childhood Education], then in 1987 I spent 12 years as a Montessori directress, I had an assistant. It was a new school. They believed in the '*absorbent mind*'

However, Aurelia became disillusioned with the Montessori philosophy and ever forward-thinking was taking evening classes to learn how to teach ESL. Her future plan was that when she and her husband retired they would move to Greece, and she would teach English there. Aurelia started teaching ESL in 1998 and has been teaching at Standard English School since 1999. The next step in her plan is to apply to the Master's program in TESL/TEFL at Simon Fraser University.

3.3.3 Joanna

Joanna was born in São Paulo, Brazil and spoke Portuguese at home. She started learning English and French at high school when she was twelve years old because they were compulsory subjects and liked both. Joanna said that she “loved English”, and chose to focus on English rather than French, although she still now occasionally attends French conversation classes. In addition to her twice weekly English classes at high school, she attended a language school three times a week after school. Joanna further practiced her English by watching American movies, listening to popular American music, and writing out the words to Beatles songs. Joanna studied English at university and despite the fact that her grandmother was a teacher, she vowed that she’d *never* teach as she wanted a job that would allow her to travel. She said:

Never! No, I’ll never be a teacher. My grandmother was a teacher. No, I won’t be a teacher. I wanted something where I could travel, and use English, so teaching wouldn’t be the ideal.

In Brazil at that time, no special certification was needed for teaching, and so after university, Joanna decided to begin teaching after all, as an interim job until she got her dream job which would include travel. Joanna’s teaching career in Brazil lasted for seventeen years and besides two relatively short-term jobs she secured after her arrival in Canada, teaching has been her life-long primary occupation; a career that has lasted over thirty-two years.

In 1973, Joanna began teaching Portuguese and then English to elementary aged children in an extremely poor suburb of São Paulo, at quite a distance from her home. It was a job that she found exhausting but rewarding, since the children were excited about learning. Joanna was surprised by how much she loved teaching:

And I liked it so much – I related well to the students, and I don’t know, I really liked it.

Joanna then went to teach at a private high school in an affluent neighbourhood; a job she disliked because the students there were not interested in learning. She taught high school English for eight years altogether, and then decided that she needed a change and looked instead for a teaching position at a private language school; for her, this experience was “wonderful”.

In pursuit of her dream of living in an English-speaking country, Joanna told her husband that she wanted to move to Canada, and though sceptical that they would ever be accepted, her husband tolerated their immigration application, submitted using his name and skills as the male head of the household. When the family, which included three children ages fourteen, twelve and six years, was granted permission to immigrate to Canada, he went but:

..he was scared to death. And I was really excited, and so we came with all *my* courage.

Her husband’s English ability was not as strong as Joanna’s, and he was afraid that he would not find work, however:

..he found a job right a month after [arriving in Canada]. He was, “oh if I don’t find a job, we’re leaving, we’re going back.” And I said. “Oh now that we did all this, we are not going back now”.

We are still here, but he will never say that it was good, that was a right decision [to move to Canada]. He is here ‘just because of *me*’, that’s all he says. I know that he will never – you know men, right? They will never admit that the wife is right.

When they arrived in Canada, in order to support her family, Joanna found work at McDonald’s as a cashier for minimum wages. For her, this was a humiliating and stressful experience, and something she would never have contemplated doing in Brazil, but she felt that at least she was able to provide an income and medical benefits for her family:

I was a cashier. I worked there for a year. Oh! Oh – well, it was a different experience because I would never think

about working in McDonald's in my whole life. Never needed that.

Then because of a friendship she'd developed, Joanna was able to take a better paying and less stressful job as a school crossing guard for the school her children attended. This was again for her another professionally demeaning experience, but one that she said she was willing to tolerate, putting her family's well-being above her own sense of professional and personal pride:

...another *funny* experience....I said, "I don't care. I don't know anybody".

Joanna then found out about and was accepted into a six-month government sponsored program to help those immigrants, who had training and professional work experience before coming to Canada, find a job in their profession. It was through this program that she found her first English teaching position in Vancouver. The training incorporated a teaching practicum and after the practicum, the school, pleased with Joanna's skills and seventeen years of prior teaching experience, immediately gave her substitute teaching work. She was encouraged to send her resume out to other schools and quickly found her own teaching position; that was in 1993. Joanna has now taught in Vancouver for twelve years in two different language schools and at Standard English School for the past five years. She occasionally teaches Portuguese, a language that she feels less comfortable teaching than English, at the University of British Columbia on a part-time contract basis.

3.3.4 Lee

Lee was born into a newly independent Singapore where there was "a big push for English" from Lee Kwan Yew, since English had become the country's official language and also represented a desirable American lifestyle and culture.

After Independence Lee Kuan Yew pushed, had a big push for English, everyone was educated in English, there was lots of propaganda done in English and advertisements, official documents. Before Independence, Malay was the main language, after it was English. English was the main language.

Lee was born to a bi-racial family: her father was from India and her mother was of Chinese descent, from a small village in Singapore. Lee's parents were not able to use their own languages to communicate with each other and instead had to use a neutral second language, Malay. Lee said that her father spoke to his three children - Lee, her sister, Jenny, and her brother, Jai- in English, not Hindi, and her mother spoke to them in Mandarin, a language that Lee is now losing, making communication with her mother increasingly more difficult:

Now I'm facing a language barrier with my mom, losing touch with language. I'm not able to talk about things with her. It's tough.

Lee was taught in English at school in a system based on the British one, and took Mandarin, her mother's native language, as her mandatory second language class, although she found it frustrating and difficult:

I always flunked my second language, it was always a struggle. Teachers were really harsh with me. I'd be reading a passage in the oral exam, and they would stop me and say, "Oh, forget it!"

She was able to talk to her school friends in Singlish, a mixture of Malay and English, and said that what language she spoke depended on which group of friends she was with, and could switch to one of three languages:

It depends. It depended on which group I was with. I can speak three languages: English, Mandarin and Malay – also I can speak dialects of Chinese– Hokkien and Cantonese.

In a country comprised of several cultures, Lee quickly learned that language and culture were actually barriers; being part of a bi-racial family in Singapore

was difficult, and isolated the close-knit family from their peers. Even the family's own relations rejected them. Her father was not welcomed in her mother's village since he was an 'outsider', and the Chinese villagers looked on her mother, one of their own, "almost like a prostitute".

Lee's mixed racial background marked her as different in Singapore; she was always asked "what are you?" by her peers, her teachers and by everyone she met. She related stories of times that she had protected her older sister and younger brother from bullying. Her family had two religious shrines at home, but when she went into the Buddhist classroom during the school's mandatory religious education class, Lee was asked "what are you doing here, aren't you a Hindu?" Lee said that her family faced all manner of discrimination, and it annoyed others that they could never be neatly compartmentalized into a discrete identity box:

We were the first bi-racial family. My mom was treated really badly.... The kids, we were all called names; it was very cruel. We were a tight family. Even my aunt and uncle said things about my dad – that 'dark-skinned man'. We were shunned by our relatives.

She said that coming from a mixed race family, her identity stood as a deliberate flouting of "that matchbox thinking". Applying for jobs was an ordeal. Lee told me she would never be chosen, even if she were one of two otherwise identical candidates, she would not be hired, especially since she had to first submit a photograph for jobs and would be insulted with questions like: "*Do you eat pork?*" - because they thought I was Hindu".

After high school, Lee went to college for two years and then lived in Australia while she obtained a degree in graphic design. Lee found a welcome free speech in Australia, but again experienced discrimination. She reported being deliberately passed over by white male lecturers at university, and being subjected to insults by strangers and peers alike, and still worse by *friends*. After obtaining her degree, she returned to Singapore and stayed for one year out of a

sense of family loyalty, before she left for Canada, her home of almost eleven years, where she feels there are “no more stares – everyone looking at you”.

When she arrived in Canada, alone, Lee managed to connect with a Singaporean community group with whom she still has limited contact. She now relies mainly on her Singaporean boyfriend for her support system feeling isolated from her own family, and says that she has few friends. Lee was able to gain some Canadian work experience, first in a pool-hall coffee shop and then later in a printing firm doing work which she found unchallenging and totally divorced from her graphic design skills: “anyone can print business cards”. As a volunteer at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., she realized that she wanted to help new immigrants who were excluded by a lack of English, and so she applied for and eventually received government funding to help her learn how to teach English. In her first teaching job at Standard English School, where she has taught for three years, she has felt compelled to carry out the “personal quest” she mentioned in all of her interviews – her desire to enable others to gain confidence in speaking English. She said that when she teaches, she always imagines a “classroom filled with my mom”.

3.3.5 Claudio

Claudio, as the only male teacher participant in this study, is also different in that he has lived in Canada for most of his life. He was born in Santiago, Chile, but moved north to Antofagasta when he was one year old. His family left Chile as political exiles twenty-nine years ago, when he was eight years old, to come to Canada. He considers himself more Canadian than Chilean, finding that he feels out of place when he visits Chile. Claudio spoke Spanish from birth, and only learned English when his family came to Canada, when he and his younger sister were placed directly into regular classrooms in Swift Current,

Saskatchewan, where their family first lived. His family gradually moved west and came to live in Vancouver in 1980.

There were no ESL programs at the time his family arrived in Canada, and Claudio said that on reflection, his classroom experience was a scary immersion into both the language and the culture:

The parts that I remember was intimidating, of course (*sic*). They were stressful, you know, because sometimes you know, people are talking, and you think that people are talking about you, but you don't understand what they are saying. You feel that they are talking bad about you. That led to confrontations with other kids.

However, he believes that the forced language immersion was ultimately the most efficient way for him to learn English, since he *had* to “learn English to survive”, and:

amazingly, if I looked at it, had there been ESL schools, I think that, this is my own opinion, I think that the English learning process would have taken longer than it did. Because you're put into the type of environment where you had to learn it - the pressure to learn faster.

Claudio's parents insisted that he and his sister continue to speak Spanish at home: they said,

“Outside of home, you're going to speak enough English. Your friends are going to be English speaking at school, that whole environment. So that you maintain your native language, at home you're only going to speak Spanish”. So that was one of the rules imposed on us. To speak Spanish.

However, having learned English as a second language from an early age, and having lived for most of his life in Canada, Claudio considers both English and Spanish to be his native languages. For this reason, Claudio's contribution to this particular study was limited. He was only interviewed once, since he perceived his experience as that of a *native* speaker of English rather than as a non-native

speaker of English, and a *Canadian*, rather than an immigrant. When I asked him if he felt Canadian, he said:

I do. I do. More than I am Chilean. So yes I do, even when I go back because I have the opportunity to travel back many times; you feel out of place. I feel out of place. You know that that's where your roots are, you know that's where you came from; that's your culture, those are your people, but it has been so many years, that I really feel out of place. That tells me that I am more Canadian than Chilean.

While Claudio would not describe himself as a non-native speaker of English, he feels his own language learning experience gives him empathy for the learning struggles of his students:

I do understand that, I do understand their feelings learning a new language.

Claudio said he always admired and respected teachers, and decided to start teaching ESL in his late twenties. He has had a variety of jobs, including driving, and working as a professional musician, but ESL teaching is the job that he has stayed at the longest, for a total of seven years, and feels it to be the most rewarding. Besides teaching in Canada, Claudio taught English for a year in Japan.

3.3.6 Sabina

Originally from Serbia, the former Yugoslavia, Sabina spoke Serbian at home and school, and learned English at school from eleven years of age. Sabina chose languages as her field of study at high school, learning English and German, and went on to university to major in English Literature and Linguistics, being part of a large faculty in which all instruction was carried out in English.

Sabina attributes the intensive and thorough linguistics training she received at university to her clear pronunciation and fluent English. Her university degree prepared her to either teach or translate. In the former Yugoslavia at that time, no special certification to teach was required, one was considered able to teach one's speciality. Shortly after her university graduation, Sabina's boyfriend applied to immigrate to Canada; in order for her to accompany him, they were married:

A lot of us did get married who came here. So I came rather early, I think, compared to people who also came from Serbia, they were at least five to ten years older. Because [my husband] was older, so he pushed me, so I came right after graduation.

They came to Canada in 1994 to escape the economic and political situation in the former Yugoslavia, and have lived in Vancouver ever since.

Sabina says that her cultural background is very much a part of her life here in Canada. Together with her husband and young son, the family are active members of the large Yugoslavian community in Vancouver; their food, traditions, friends, and home language are Yugoslavian and they make great efforts to keep them alive. Sabina and her husband insist on speaking only Serbian to their six-year old son, who heeds their warning never to mix languages – so much so, that he admonishes his parents if they should ever forget their own rule:

I don't like mixing languages, people tend to do that. And I told him, and he's careful, he doesn't do that. And he sometimes warns me, us - if we mix languages - add a word, "we should not mix languages".

Sabina's parents and in-laws spend as much time with their grandson as possible, both here in Vancouver and in Serbia where he has already spent several summers with them, learning the language and the culture more intimately. Sabina's son, who is currently enrolled in grade one, was designated

as an ESL student in Vancouver and was entitled to five years of ESL instruction. He made use of the extra ESL help for the past two school years, since he had lost a lot of English over the summer before kindergarten. He now reads English at one grade above his grade level and is “de-listed” as an ESL student. He speaks English both at school and with his friends, the children of parents who are also immigrants from Serbia.

On arriving in Canada, Sabina, whose English ability was stronger than her husband’s, saw that there were several advertisements for English teachers in the then relatively new Vancouver ESL industry. She applied immediately for a job at a private language school and was surprised to find that she was hired:

I got a teaching job. So that was an amazing thing, that I got it without any Canadian credentials.

After teaching ESL for two summers, she then went to inquire about public school teaching programs. She was misinformed by an advisor about her eligibility for such a program. Sabina feels that the poor advice she received “changed her life around” and she “really resents that”. She reports that the advisor said:

“Oh, you’re from Yugoslavia? Ohhhhh, it’s really difficult that program, it’s so intensive; it’s *really* hard to get in. You probably don’t have the pre-requisites”.

Since she was informed that she would not be considered as qualified for the program, Sabina chose instead to take a TESOL program, especially since,

I was in a rush to do something fast and to get a... get working faster.

Sabina began teaching at Standard English School in 1996, where she worked full-time for several years; however, the last few years only intermittently depending on other teaching contracts. She did also do some work as a certified translator for a time, but found that it was not very profitable. Sabina has been

teaching ESL in Vancouver since 1994, and as she says, her entire adult working life since graduation:

This is my whole working life, I've spent here.

She knows that now, with her training, and her teaching and life experience she is much more self-confident, both personally and professionally. She is currently enrolled in a Master's Degree program at the University of British Columbia, with a focus on higher education, and plans to eventually teach at a college level.

3.3.7 Janka

Janka was born in Hungary and learned English, which she hated, from grade four, and from grade five, had to learn Russian. She then learned German in high school. When she was sixteen years old, Janka's family, her mother, father and younger brother, left Hungary to go and live in East Germany where they waited "in limbo" for one and a half years until they could reach their intended destination of Canada. Not knowing the language, Janka said that she never fit in to the East German culture and society. Her parents connected with the Hungarian community there and heard of a Catholic boarding school to which Janka was sent. The school environment was very unfamiliar to Janka:

...coming from a communist country, and being sent to a Catholic boarding school was a huge shock!

The school was quite unstructured; the classes taught by nuns who had no teacher training, and eventually the school was closed down. Janka was then placed in a German high school,

after we left that boarding school, we spent the rest of that time while we were there - from the January and till we left in November - in a German high school and that was horrible. I mean nobody speaks to you. You're very segregated.

Knowing that Janka was miserable, her parents held on to her passport to prevent her from running away. However, Janka did manage to escape to Austria to spend a few days with some friends from Hungary.

Janka was seventeen and a half years old when her family finally immigrated to Canada, living first in Calgary, "I thought I was in exile. It felt like Siberia. And it was a very difficult period". She said that her "relationship with Calgary, was 'when can I get *out* of there?', kind of thing". Janka felt that she was the "weird girl with no English", and did not fit into any of the already well-established teenage school cliques. She said she was unable to form friends with her peers, and so made friends with her teachers instead. Janka found university more comfortable, as the university environment was more relaxed, and had a less restrictive system. Janka majored in German and Italian, and used the languages to literally "get out" of Canada. At that time there were no study abroad programs, but Janka searched until she found an American university that offered students the chance to go overseas to study. She went to Italy, the country she finally felt at home in; it was love at first sight. Janka relished the culture, the language and most aspects of Italian society.

Eventually it was time to leave Italy, and Janka returned to a small town in Southern Alberta to work in her parent's supermarket, "they dragged the whole family down there to work". She was followed by her Italian boyfriend whom she eventually married. Her relationship with her husband suffered because of personal issues, but also because he was unable to adapt to Canadian society; their relationship broke up, and he returned to Italy. Janka said she again felt trapped by the small town and lack of cultural stimulation, and decided to try living in Montreal. Janka enjoyed her time there, amidst Montreal's European-like culture, but felt frustrated by the need to learn yet another language, French, in order to participate fully in society and culture; French was necessary for employment. She then returned to Italy, a place she felt a strong affinity for.

Janka married an Italian, but again, could not settle, since she felt Italian society was too homogenous, too closed:

it's a very homogeneous group and you either dress like them, talk like them, laugh at their racist jokes or you are completely out and then you are not accepted.

Janka said that a foreigner though tolerated, especially if she were female, would never be fully accepted, "you are either Italian or you are a foreigner". After three years, in 1992, Janka returned to Canada, this time to settle in Vancouver, where she has lived ever since.

Janka found a job tour-guiding, which satisfied her desire to travel and utilised her language skills. This job was satisfying, but as her two children grew older, Janka realised that she needed a more stable career, with a regular time schedule, and so she explored the possibility of teaching. As a single mother, she was unable to commit to the length and the full-time hours of a teacher training program, and chose instead to take a TESL program, at Vancouver Community College, since the length of the program was shorter and could be taken part-time. Janka finds that teaching ESL fits well into her single parent lifestyle and has been teaching at Standard English School for about a year and a half.

3.3. 8 Jayida

Jayida was born in New Delhi, India, and was born to what she calls a "typical upper middle class family- the bourgeoisie"; her father was a senior government official, and retired as Defence Secretary. Jayida said that she attended:

..an Irish convent school - Roman Catholic - based on the English system. It was girls only, a private missionary

school. It was a status symbol to be at an English school- it was very important to be good in English - the school followed the GCSE pattern, which was useful as you might go to England to study. We were very snobbish - we looked down on anything American.

At home, Jayida's father spoke to his daughters in English, while Jayida's mother and grandmother spoke to them in Bengali. Jayida states that English was the necessary common language of communication, and points out:

Don't forget India has 32 languages and 127 dialects - you had to speak English, it was the common language. Hindi was introduced in Grade 3 - in Kindergarten, you had the ABC - English was very important. Broken English was not tolerable; broken Hindi was.

Jayida has a Master's degree in History, and is very familiar with her country's struggle against oppressors to Independence in 1947. However, Jayida clearly has a lot of respect for the colonial influences in India- the "Raj". She says that her family was:

a typical upper middle class family; the "*bourgeoisie*". We were very status conscious; just like the English, but I respect it. Dad said that we couldn't marry below our social status.

She said that the British school system is superior, as are the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), English literature, the language - anything British was judged infinitely more preferable to her than anything American.

I think we are very proud of the fact that we are, uhm, you know we are English in many ways. For example, if you go to the golf club, if you go to the Calcutta Club, if you go to any of these clubs, they never drink before sunset. There's always scotch whiskey. When it's a Rye, they always say: "Oh. That's so very American. We don't have *that*".

After university, Jayida took product management programs in marketing, and after their completion held a position as product manager at a large pharmaceutical firm. In 1989, Jayida, her husband and young son moved to Oman in the Middle East. Her husband's job in Oman promised a large income

and a privileged lifestyle, complete with a live-in maid, cook and house-cleaner. Not wanting to “vegetate”, Jayida found a job, but a personal incident caused her to leave it. She then joined the Ministry of Information, which was responsible for producing and censoring all media. Jayida became the editor of a full-colour newspaper supplement for the *Oman Observer* intended for women, and took care of writing, lay-out and design, and soliciting advertisers. As demands on her time increased, Jayida’s dissatisfaction with the work environment increased, and she decided to leave, stating “enough was enough”. She then approached the headmaster of her son’s school and as she reports:

I walked into the school where my son went. I said to the headmaster, “I have an MA, could I get a job?” I wanted to teach History – he hired me.

She began teaching English Literature and history. However, she said:

I had an insane desire to prove myself; felt I was vegetating. One day I passed by the British Council and asked if they had any courses to teach English.

So Jayida took a TESL program and was the first non-white English teacher employed by the British Council to teach English in Oman; she started teaching ESL in 1994. Jayida liked the structure and the familiarity of the British Council teaching environment.

Jayida and her husband then made the decision to move to Canada in 2001, partly because they wanted to be geographically closer to one of Jayida’s sisters who lives in Boston, and also because they felt that the Canadian lifestyle would allow them to maximise their time with their son, which for Jayida is an important aspect of their Asian culture. Jayida immediately started teaching at Standard English School, where she still teaches. Not yet a Canadian citizen, Jayida says that she will always feel “like a sore thumb”, since she is “not part of this world”. Jayida feels she has an advantage in an ESL classroom in Vancouver, with her knowledge of the Asian culture.

3.4 Summary

The data collected using the three-interview method provides a brief introduction to the lives of the seven teacher participants of this qualitative research study; this chapter is a summary of individual prior scripts which inform the present understanding of life within the figured world of the Canadian ESL classroom. Although the teachers' individual histories are different, there are several common themes which connect the stories, stemming from either the fact that the teachers learned English as a second language, or because the teachers are immigrants to Canada and are thus marked as "Other" by dominant discourses. Chapter Four explores how the teachers understand and make sense of their experience as immigrant teachers in a Canadian ESL classroom, and discusses some of the themes that resonated throughout their life stories.

CHAPTER FOUR – ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

4.1 Introduction

The data analysis focuses on how individuals actively participate in a dialogic process with others, and with dominant discourses to construct new meanings within a particular context, in an active process of identity-in-practice (Holland: 1998). The seven immigrant teachers, Aurelia, Joanna, Lee, Janka, Claudio, Sabina, and Jayida who participated in this investigation, brought their individual prior scripts to the figured worlds of the ESL classroom and the research interview site. Several teachers made reference to their past experiences in contrast to their current experiences; the contrast of a prior script with the present figured world. Students are an important part of the dialogue in the figured world of ESL, and play a part in the (re)creation of teacher identity. Students likewise enter the school context with their own prior scripts, experiences and expectations; thus, the addressivity (Holquist: 2002) of students to teachers contributes to the active (re)creation of teacher identity. Data collected from four international students who took part in an initial pilot study for this present investigation will be referred to briefly in this chapter to highlight the dialogic process of the (re)creation of teacher identity within this particular context.

Though specific past experiences were different, several common themes resonated through the teachers' accounts and had relevance to how the teachers responded to and interpreted their present experiences. The themes of: 1) the influence of colonial and or dominant society discourses that have the power to oppress and render an individual as "Other", and how those discourses use

power and race to position others; 2) the significance of culture in second language teaching; 3) the role of business in ESL education, apparent in the teachers' present scripts of themselves, and, 4) identity as an active site of struggle and response.

This chapter explores these themes and shows how teachers understand and construct their identities in relation to these themes in this particular figured world. Each theme is intrinsically linked to the other, and is apparent to some degree in the teachers' accounts; sometimes one theme more centrally than another, and sometimes a theme did not surface at all. Of particular interest is how teachers' prior scripts related to their present identity in the figured world of Standard English School. Through an exploration of themes, this chapter will show how the teachers' response can be understood as an active (re)writing of their prior scripts within this particular figured world to (re)create new versions of their selves. The teachers' responses to these themes were of great interest to me. Their responses contributed to my own changing sense of self, by adding on to my own prior script. Finally through my interpretation of the data in light of what the teachers' said, and how I related their stories to the research literature, I will present what I consider to be two new figured worlds, firstly of all this current chapter and ultimately the final chapter of this thesis, in which I will interpret the findings and also present recommendations for future research. I see these final chapters as new figured worlds because together, as researcher and research participants, we have constructed a new figured world; a world in which we collaborate in the (re)telling of the teachers' stories and presenting new versions of ourselves.

4.2. The 'right' language of a colonial discourse and a dominant society discourse

English language instruction is provided at Standard English School. The instruction is provided in a context which is governed by two kinds of discourse related to the English language, and the degree of power that bearers of English have, or do not have: a colonial discourse and a dominant society discourse. Several teachers' past scripts were strongly influenced by a discourse of the colonial language, the version of English that was imposed upon their countries by colonizers- for example, the British Empire in India. A dominant society discourse exists in countries which, while not directly colonized or occupied by Britain, nevertheless view English as a powerful socio-economic tool. Both of these discourses have the potential to marginalize, since English speakers who are not of the colonizing or dominant society are "Other", and somehow less than the colonizers or other global forces of domination.

4.2.1 A colonial discourse

The colonial discourse says that there is one 'acceptable' version of English, usually British English, but often American English, which includes in its linguistic structures the social structures and values of its users. It is the language of colonizers; the language of the oppressor, of a powerful nation or economic force. The users of the colonial discourse are frequently privileged when compared with those who are not. Janka is aware of a mind-set of innate arrogance of native speakers of English, when she wryly observes referring to Canadians:

... if you were born here, you kind of just automatically think the *whole world* speaks English.

An observation Janka made during her time living in Montreal, where she became acquainted with its people, its culture and its recent social history, was of the former power of the English language in Quebec. She noted how in Quebec,

the colonial force of English used to dominate public discourse; all government and legal affairs were conducted in English, the colonial language. She went on to describe how the colonial language had the power to marginalize those who did not possess it:

..it was very clear in their minds [those who spoke only French] that first of all the province itself and all the higher jobs, and anybody who needed anything, was always English. And they [the non-English speaking others] are always just the lower class. ..And would never have a hope in hell to rise up.

Her comment illustrates how the colonial discourse has the capacity to engender in non-native English speakers a feeling of helplessness against a stronger and bigger power, with “no hope in hell” to circumvent it.

Despite the potential of the colonial discourse to oppress some, for three of the teachers – Aurelia in the Philippines, Lee in Singapore, and Jayida in India –the colonial language, for them, was not an unpleasant force; it was a positive part of their lives. While they were growing up, the colonial discourse was highly present in all aspects of their lives; in the public and private realms. It was the language of their schooling and it represented to them a desirable lifestyle and usually one of privilege. Jayida told me that while she was growing up, “it was very important to be good in English”, and that she and her peers were “very snobbish and looked down on anything American”. The language of the British colonizers represented to her peers a desirable lifestyle and culture, and was the version of English they wanted to emulate; an American version of English was inferior. The colonial language gave her power over others. Aurelia and Lee were attracted to what the English language represented to them about a distant and alluring culture, the American culture. Today in their life as ESL teachers in Vancouver, that trace of the colonial English is present to some extent in these three teachers’ language- in their choice of lexis, idioms and style of conversational discourse-and in their attitudes and thinking; it is also evident in their identities – how they respond to the colonial discourse shapes what kind of teachers they are in the figured world of Standard English School.

Aurelia

Aurelia revealed a strong sense of the guiding force of colonialism prevalent in her country during her childhood; she appears to have internalized the authoritative colonial discourse and made it her own. She told me that “it’s always with me”; the voice of colonialism is apparent in her thinking and her vocabulary, for example, in choosing the term “Oriental” when referring to Asians. Aurelia states that Filipinos had an “elitist” attitude to the English language, and referred several times to the Filipino “colonial mentality”, which she attributes to the fact that Filipinos were grateful to the Americans, the bearers of the “right language”, who had “delivered us from Japan”. Aurelia said that:

...that was my generation. We were always under conquerors, always thought they were more beautiful, better.and were always looking up to the Americans. We always felt like they looked nicer, were better dressed, were better looking, light skin - just in general - maybe I was influenced by that? ... people liked to look American – have fair skin and a “nice” nose.

Throughout her interviews, Aurelia referred to how, when she was growing up, a colonial discourse was a marker of social status and education:

English means snobby. The Philippines was very status conscious. English meant you were high-class. No English meant small-town, ignorant.

Although Aurelia seemed then, and still, to accept the “colonial mentality”, she talked about how at school students were punished for speaking Tagalog, the native language of the Philippines. Being the proud and “snobbish” owner of the ‘right’ language, English, ensured that one had “status”, since “in the Philippines, [speaking]English meant you were one of the privileged”, whereas speaking Tagalog marked one as only, or less than, “average”. Aurelia’s ‘privilege’ continues in Canada where she is often asked questions in the staffroom by native English-speaking teachers:

Canadians don’t know how to spell, and don’t know grammar. I’ve noticed some have horrendous spelling and grammar – it gave me an advantage.

She then contrasts that past discourse, one she used to readily internalize, to a newer internal discourse:

Maybe not any more. Now I realize how beautiful Tagalog is; very beautiful.

Aurelia remarked at the beginning of her third interview with me that she had had time to reflect on her past beliefs, her past sense of self and:

..how it is elitist to speak English [in the Philippines] – it's the same for many third world countries. It [the interview] made me reflect on being Filipino and appreciate our own language. English was forced on us- we had to learn English to be accepted, to be recognized. I didn't realize until I came to Canada. Teachers didn't make native Filipinos proud of their language, enforcing language on us.

During her childhood, Aurelia's own language was replaced by the colonial language. Aurelia now notices the contrast between her prior script and her present figured world; where she once accepted what the dominant discourse told her about her native language, she now begins to question it.

Lee

Like Aurelia, Lee, from Singapore, felt glad that English had been "pushed" in her country, and was thankful to have been exposed to English, and through it, the American culture. However, she expresses a contradiction regarding the language she perceives as her first language. She says that it is English, with Mandarin as her second language, but when referring to her colleagues, the Canadian-born teachers, she mentions that they have an advantage over her because *they* "have learned [English] from birth". With this comment Lee indicates to me that she perceives her version of English as not the 'right' one; her English, learned as a first language in Singapore, appears to exclude her from the discourse which validates her as a teacher in Vancouver. In contrast to her perceived exclusion, she recalls that a new teacher, an immigrant

from England, was immediately “embraced” by the teaching staff because she had been born with the ‘right’ language, and also a preferred accent, that of colonial, British English:

..*she* had no problem blending. I've noticed people are more receptive towards her and her background.

Lee also recalls that she felt unaccepted by the teaching staff when she first came to the school; besides a few questions about her accent, no one actually “encouraged further conversation”. She imagines that if she did have the ‘right’ accent, a necessary part of the ‘right’ language then perhaps she’d be more readily accepted and “have less questions [about her identity] being asked” and wouldn’t feel as “if I’m in a fish-bowl”.

For Lee, not having the ‘right’ language means that one does not have the ‘right’ to be a teacher, one is therefore not ‘good enough’ to teach ESL to international students in Vancouver. Lee seems to have internalized that discourse when she says that she was questioned by members of the Vancouver Singaporean community when she first told them that she was an ESL teacher:

I actually felt ashamed to tell them I was an ESL teacher. There was one part I actually felt shame, I don’t know why, maybe because when I first found out, and started calling my friends, people were like, “what? Are you for real?”

She attributes their reaction to:

that whole mentality, that “wow! You must be really good in English in order to teach here.” Like wow!

Lee seems to agree with her friends, who “initially...were stunned”, and clearly believe in a colonial discourse that says if your English is not the ‘right’ language, then it must be inferior, and therefore not good enough to teach English as a second language. Lee even hesitated to tell her parents about her new career teaching English, perhaps wondering if their

reaction would be the same as her friends'. Lee appears to have internalized this particular discourse; so much so that she told me that she is "pounded by internal dialogue, and sometimes it's not healthy" and is constantly asking herself questions and experiencing self-doubt; "there are so many 'why's'." I asked her whose questions they are; if they are hers or someone else's and she told me it was both. She said that she questions:

...sometimes certain things I do, certain paths I took. I ask myself, "Who am I humouring?" You know. It could be something simple like trying to blend into a crowd, when obviously you're *not* one of them, and then I ask myself, "Who am I humouring? Why am I doing this?"

Lee's comment shows her awareness of how she responds to the colonial authoritative discourse which has surrounded her all her life. When she asks herself "who am I humouring", she seems to be recognizing the influence of the colonial and dominant society discourses on her identity and sense of self.

Jayida

For Jayida growing up in a newly independent India, the "legacy" left behind by the British Empire, which included an infrastructure, a language and social practices, was a constant and real part of her life. The influence of the colonizer was, and to a great extent still is, ever-present in her life. Like Aurelia, Jayida's conversational discourse is filled with British-English influenced words, phrases and pronunciation. The influences and remnants of the British Empire "bequeathed" to India and Jayida seem to be an essential part of Jayida's identity. She told me that:

The British Raj will always exist – we are very proud of our knowledge of English.

She said that:

... it was a British historian who said that “India is like a sponge”. It has always absorbed everything from the different people who came and ruled her.

It is ironic that it was a *British* historian who made the comment she referred to, showing India’s close link to its colonial past; something that Jayida told me that “we’ll never get out of”. She told me that “you can’t wipe out two hundred years of history – you can’t erase that”, and while I am unsure if she really wants to, Jayida appears to be quite philosophical and fairly resigned to the fact that:

If it hadn’t been the British, it would have been the Spanish, or it would have been someone else. And we’re *glad* it was the British because at least we have the language to deal with...

Jayida’s resignation to the fact that her country was colonized by the British is mitigated by the notion that at *least* this particular colonizer left behind a ‘favoured’ language. However, that ‘legacy’ is not always appreciated by all people. Although she has fully embraced the colonizer’s language, Jayida is not always accepted as the “ideal” native speaker language model by some students learning English in Vancouver.

I’ve found that the British ‘thing’ works very negatively here. I’ve had a couple of students tell me that I have a British accent and they don’t want to be taught by... I thought that that’s daft. It’s so ridiculous... I don’t say, “*wanna*” and “*gonna*”, but that doesn’t mean my English is incorrect in any way.

For her there is a great deal of injustice and contradiction in the fact that as a native speaker she is not always considered to be the ‘right’ model of English for international ESL students in Vancouver. Ironically, she uses “daft”, a British word, to describe this turn of events.

4.2.2 The dominant society discourse

The colonial aspects of English that were apparent in Aurelia, Lee's and Jayida's interviews did not appear in either Joanna, Sabina or Janka's interviews, however the influence of a dominant discourse was noticeable in their interviews. Joanna, from Brazil, Sabina from the former Yugoslavia and Janka from Hungary, grew up in countries that were influenced by a dominant society discourse that recognized the socio-economic benefits of the English language.

Joanna

American socio-economic structure, lifestyle and popular culture were very attractive to Joanna as she was growing up in Brazil and motivated her to learn English, which she loved. She continues to enjoy learning. However, despite her many years of speaking and teaching English, Joanna has internalized the dominant society discourse that says a non-native speaker is not the bearer of the 'right' language and therefore is considered by some not wholly qualified to teach language. She says that "it is a natural thing that she lacks", but did not elaborate what that 'natural thing' was, and I am not sure that she even really knows. In order to gain more confidence in her English speaking skills and perhaps to gain the "natural thing" she felt she was lacking, Joanna took some speaking classes in Vancouver, but found that she was the best student there:

...so I didn't learn much - I did, but I was way ahead -the teacher said I should be teaching. I wanted a class where everybody could be like me. Even when I took the TESL course, everyone else was still learning.

Joanna reported that native-English speaking teachers often ask her questions about language, a language that the native English speakers had acquired from birth. The fact that she is asked questions is surprising, and a source of pride for Joanna.

She reports:

...many times - they ask, and sometimes I find it weird that they ask, "How come they ask *me* such a question?" It's funny.

She said that she even has to:

...correct people, like my daughter's boyfriend. Like when he uses the wrong grammar and I say, "how can you say that?" And he was *born* here.

The fact that she, a non-native speaker, not born in Canada, is asked questions by native speakers of English puzzles Joanna, since it clearly goes against the dominant society discourse that labels a non-native speaker as a 'deficient' speaker - as an "Other" - and one who should be asking for help. The discourse that points to her language as being that of an "Other" has been internalized, and is troublesome for Joanna, since on the one hand it makes her 'deficient' and yet on the other, she is at an advantage, since she is able to help both students and native English-speakers.

Joanna further illustrates her disbelief in her English language 'authority' when she talked about obtaining her first teaching position in Vancouver, which came apparently much to her surprise:

I could not believe [it]....I was so *lucky*.... I *never* thought that I would be teaching English here [in Canada]... because they don't need English teachers here.

Her words and tone suggest to me that she had come to believe the dominant society discourse and her husband's words, "why should they hire *you*?" and rather than trusting in her own language and teaching skills, she would rather attribute her job offer to sheer luck. She expressed this once more, when she related how while enrolled in the government-funded job-search program, she doubted the directors' assurances that she could find a job teaching English in Vancouver:

“Oh, really? Can I teach?”

“Of course you can. What do you think - only Canadians teaching here?” I thought so. I don’t know - but *English* right? I thought yeah - you could teach something *else*, but teach *English*?

Her words seem to indicate that she believes a dominant society discourse that said English learned as a second or foreign language was inferior. During the practicum portion of the six-month program, the host-school paid for her to attend a TESL conference in Victoria. Again a dominant society discourse was apparent in her reaction to their generosity. She said:

I was so amazed because I was not their teacher, they were paying for all their teachers - I was just an *invader* there.

After her practicum ended, Joanna received a glowing letter of recommendation from the school, and again, she was surprised that she, as an *invader*, should receive one:

The letter of recommendation they gave me from ‘CAN-DO College’ – it was so nice – I have never had in my life such a nice letter. ...I was really, Oh wow! It was amazing. I find myself very, very lucky.

Joanna seems ever humble, almost apologetic that she teaches in Vancouver; she attributes her over twelve years of successful English teaching in Vancouver, on top of her over seventeen years of teaching English in Brazil, to good fortune and others’ generosity.

Claudio

With regards to a dominant society and colonial discourse and how students respond to having a non-native English speaking or an immigrant teacher, Claudio does note though that ultimately, students care most about whether or not their teacher is capable, not what the teacher's original nationality is:

...the first thing that I think a student will notice is if the teacher knows what he or she is doing.

The four students I interviewed also expressed this viewpoint. They all said that it really "doesn't matter" (Cristian) if a teacher had learned English as a second language, as long as the teacher could be understood, and as long as the teacher was a good teacher and had a clear accent:

...if they speak well English or they can teach, why not? (*sic.* Karim).

and:

...*maybe* the teacher would have an accent- *that* would make a difference. (Lalo).

Jenny said:

I don't think original nationality can affect quality as a teacher

and she then went on to comment that:

I am keep on saying about pronunciation. Therefore I think it's good [important].

Claudio's teaching and teacher identity as a *native* speaker of English appear to be unaffected by a colonial or dominant society discourse.

Sabina

Though not directly influenced by a colonial discourse from either Britain or America⁴, Sabina's identity in Vancouver is affected by her response to a dominant society discourse that says non-native speakers of English possess an 'inferior version of English', while native speakers possess the 'right' language. Sabina attributes her clear pronunciation and excellent English skills to the quality and intensity of instruction at her university in Yugoslavia, and the fact that all instruction was conducted in English. She is clearly proud that she has been able to master the 'right' language. When they applied to immigrate to Canada, Sabina's husband was listed as the head of the household on their immigration application, however:

And I actually found work, found my first job, before my husband who was our principal applicant. Again, because I could speak English much better.

Sabina is confident in her language skills and modestly says that because she has "mastered it fairly well", she does not encounter any problems with students doubting her authority as an ESL teacher, and in fact students:

They often even ask me for advice, "How you do that? How can I get to the point?"

Although Sabina had not internalized the dominant society discourse that describes her English, as that learned by a second language learner as an 'inferior' version of English, she recognizes that immigrants are treated differently, as "Others" with respect to their previous employment or educational credentials, or their English ability in countries like Canada. Similarly, Janka told me that her mother had always encouraged her to learn English and yet Janka said her mother never did learn English, and as a consequence "always thought that she was sort of underprivileged". Despite her confidence in her English language skills, Sabina knew that when she came to Canada, her Yugoslavian

⁴ Sabina is from Yugoslavia, a European country that was not directly influenced by British or American colonial discourse, as countries like India or the Philippines were, for example. However, given that it is a European country, it might be assumed that there would likely have been some familiarity with British culture and society. Sabina said that most of her professors in the English faculty at the university she attended did post-graduate study at British universities.

degree, which would have allowed her to either teach English or translate in Yugoslavia, would not be recognized in Canada; hers were credentials of an “Other” gained in a non-English speaking country. She knew that in order to be accepted by the dominant society:

I came knowing I would have to go back to school and get some certification, and [that my Yugoslavian degree] wouldn't be recognized.

In addition, she also knew that the dominant society discourse regards credentials, even those gained in Canada differently, if you are an immigrant:

I think, that the decision I made to get a TESL certificate from a university rather than a community college, was a desire to get the recognition and acceptance as a foreigner from the “higher” authority.

Although she does not view herself as an immigrant teacher, she clearly knows how the dominant society discourse would view her credentials. Sabina had to conform to that discourse and gain credentials that would be looked upon favourably. Her words indicate that she felt as an immigrant she could not afford to compromise and acquire credentials from, as she implies, “*only*” a community college, instead she had to acquire hers from a university to satisfy the higher authority, and the dominant society discourse.

Sabina feels “thankful” that she found work teaching ESL, as soon as she and her husband arrived in Vancouver from Serbia, as she feels that she did not “lose anything”; her adult working life began at the same time as her Canadian peers:

[my husband] pushed me, so I came right after graduation, which is good I think, because I feel almost that I didn't lose much, in terms... I started at the same time as anyone else who graduated in Canada. Even better- without a student loan!

Her teaching experience is entirely in Vancouver and so Sabina does not consider herself:

...an *immigrant* teacher. I actually think that my teaching methodology is probably different from Yugoslavian teachers in Yugoslavia.

In the figured world of Vancouver, Sabina *is* an immigrant, but says that the term:

...‘immigrant’ for me has a negative connotation. Yugoslavia is a country which has had waves of immigration throughout the history, but the majority were ‘gast arbeiter’ or guest workers, which is a term that was used to describe people who would move to the West to make money and come back to Yugoslavia. It was a derogative term in Yugoslavia, as the immigrants or migrants at the time came from lower socio-economic status and had little education.

Sabina considers herself more Yugoslavian than Canadian, and yet she does not consider herself an immigrant, not when viewed through the language and cultural values of her prior script. Instead she sees herself in Vancouver:

....as a *privileged* Yugoslavian, because I do not always have to deal with the negative aspects of being Yugoslavian.

Janka

Janka, an immigrant in Canada, was also an immigrant in Germany where her family first moved while they waited “in limbo” until their immigration application to Canada was approved. On arrival in Canada she felt dislocated, “like an alien”, living first in Calgary, and then on two separate occasions in Italy, first as a university student, then later as an adult who moved to live and work in Italy. In between her stays in Italy, Janka lived for some time in Montreal. In all these locations, Janka was very aware that she was not part of the dominant society culture, she said that she felt:

....alienated growing up in a foreign environment.

In Montreal, French was the language of the dominant society discourse, and was not one of the four languages that Janka had learned; that dominant society discourse meant for Janka, that:

I would still be looked at like - you are not part, you are not one of us.

Eventually, Janka responded by leaving Montreal, since:

I figured out, French was really too hard, and Québécois is harder, and I'm not going to kill myself trying to learn this weird [dominant society's] language.

Exposed to a discourse of an oppressive dominant society discourse in Hungary, Janka related that in order to compete in the world Hungarians knew:

That our own language is good for nothing, so we just have to speak another language.

Janka says that teaching:

..ESL didn't really occur to me, because it's not my native tongue, so I never considered that I would be even given the possibility. That never occurred to me that I should be doing that.

Janka was aware of how she was, and still is, positioned by a dominant society discourse that describes her English as that of an "other", and therefore not 'good enough' to teach English.

4.2.2.1 Accent, race and the dominant society and colonial discourses

Those who subscribe to a dominant society discourse and a colonial discourse presume that foreign-accented speech is not desirable; only native English speakers' accents are suitable models for language learners. Most of the immigrant teachers in this study expressed anxiety about their accent marking them as "Other" within the context of the classroom. Joanna is:

afraid that sometimes I may mispronounce something, and I know that I may have an accent of course. And I thought, "oh

my god, people will notice that".I don't know. Maybe I'm a little bit insecure, I think? Maybe it's my own insecurity.

Aurelia

Aurelia feels the reality of being a non-native speaker of accented English, is intensified by her skin colour. The dominant discourse she internalized told her that white was preferable, and brown skin was not. She referred several times in her interviews to looks, and how white European facial features, like a "long nose" were desirable and that marrying a white person was attractive since it meant, that: "we thought they had better looking children". The "we" in that statement are the brown-skinned Filipino "others", according to the dominant discourse. She married a Greek man and consequently thinks:

my children are more beautiful because there is a mixture there. I think so.

Aurelia knows that accent by itself might be considered acceptable, but accent and skin colour together is not:

I'm a visible minority because of my colour *and* my accent", and that "if I was white (*sic*) and had an accent it would be OK.

She then refers to a male, European, non-native English-speaking teacher, who students:

expect to speak English because he is white.

For Aurelia, the fact that she is brown-skinned is immediate evidence, in her opinion, that she is not Canadian. I was interested to hear Aurelia say that she had "never heard [students] say a Canadian is a white person", although the students I interviewed said that that is the image they have prior to coming to Canada. Students have also listened to the dominant colonial discourse that is perpetuated in their home countries, their English textbooks and school promotional material.

Lee

This 'insecurity' produced by the power of dominant society and colonial discourses is apparent when Lee reports that not having a Canadian accent is problematic, especially when it is heightened by her visible difference, her skin colour. Lee is aware of her visible differences in a predominantly white European environment; her skin colour marks her as "Other" within a dominant society discourse. Lee, like Aurelia, believes that a foreign accent would be acceptable only *if* your skin colour were white. She also commented on the fact that when she started teaching at the school, not only did her skin colour mark her as different, not 'Canadian', but that she felt that she did not look "Canadian" in her dress, and was self-conscious at first because she did not have extra money to buy 'appropriate' clothes. Thus, Lee attaches being 'truly Canadian', that is fully part of the dominant society discourse, to not only wearing the 'right' clothes, having the 'right' skin colour, but also speaking with the 'right' accent:

I look and dress like a Canadian, I live like a Canadian and I speak English...but I have my moments that I wish I had a Canadian accent, like Alice.

Alice is a Canadian of Chinese descent, and Lee feels that while Alice might look like an "Other", she has the 'right' accent, and is therefore more 'acceptable' in the figured world of Standard English School. Lee however is a visible minority with the 'wrong' accent, 'wrong' skin colour, and for a while, even the 'wrong' dress, and therefore, is presumably less acceptable. Towards the end of her final interview, Lee asked me, as a full member of the dominant society:

Can I ask you something? How do you find my confidence in speaking, like, do you think when you speak to me, do you think I struggle? [Do you think,] "Lee's a teacher, and she doesn't speak very well"?

While she questions her speaking ability, and her ability to participate fully in a dominant society discourse, there is a contradiction for Lee. She later remarks, with a mix of pride and surprise, on how Canadian-born teachers frequently comment on how “clear my voice is”, presumably compared to theirs. For one instant, the immigrant, brown-skinned teacher has an edge over the native white resident of the dominant society discourse.

Sabina and Claudio

As white minorities, Sabina and Claudio both comment on accent and how it relates to them as teachers. The linguistics training Sabina received at university was extensive, and helped reduce her accent, and so Sabina says that her accent is hardly ever noticed by students because it is not “strong”. However, she says she is unsure how students would react if it were. Sabina feels that her effectively learned version of English is a ‘correct’ and acceptable version, and is the ‘right’ language. She contrasts her version of English to other non-native speaking teachers when she considers their accent:

...whereas I notice *stronger* accents with some teachers who are great teachers, from other countries, but I guess in that respect for some reason, maybe it was the training we had because we did have pronunciation.

Sabina feels that being teacher who has learned English, and speaks with only a slight accent is a positive thing for her students:

..that that’s something that works to my advantage because they often are impressed as to how I have managed to almost lose it and how they can do it. Like a role model.

In fact, she says that often students:

.... never almost, never notice my accent, but they notice that I look different, don’t *look* Canadian, that’s what they say.

Claudio feels that he has never had his ability as a teacher questioned because he does not have an accent that is viewed negatively by others. He tells his students that:

...although I grew up in Canada, I wasn't actually born here. And that I also know another language. The [students] always think that it's cool, yeah. I always felt the same thing, you know, it's a great asset to be able to, to have a good command of two languages.

Claudio views learning a second language as a very positive thing and for him from his perspective as a *native* English speaker, he has no concerns with English as the colonial language, or the language of the dominant society. He was once an immigrant who was excluded by language, but quickly overcame that, and now has control over it – he teaches English successfully to students that he has empathy for as learners. While he feels that students have more autonomy over and less stress in their learning situation compared to when he had to learn English, he says:

But I do understand that, I do understand their feelings learning a new language.

Claudio considers that he is a Canadian and no longer a stranger to either Canadian culture or the English language, and as such, is not negatively affected by the dominant society discourse, but is able to relate to its influence on someone who is an “Other”.

Janka

Janka's response to a dominant society discourse that says her English is not 'good enough' is also echoed in her feeling that her pronunciation would mark her as “Other”. Of her TESL program which had both native speaking, and non-native English-speaking students, she said:

Of course, pronunciation was my dreaded thing, but I did the best in that [course].

She is concerned that her students might say:

..oh, you know, “she doesn’t, she won’t speak perfectly”, or “she may not know the stuff”...andthey want to learn, they want to have an English from a *pure* thing.

Here, ‘pure’ implies for Janka, a model of native English provided by a dominant society discourse, rather than a lesser version of English from an “Other”; that model would include not only a native familiarity with grammar, vocabulary and idioms, but also have a native English-speaking accent.

Jayida

Jayida as a visible minority voiced a similar perspective as Lee and Janka’s towards accent within a dominant society discourse, that the native-speaker model is embraced and expected by students. Jayida said that students expect a language teacher to have “good pronunciation; they always expect that”, and have put ESL teachers in Canada on:

...a pedestal. They are kind of worshipped; [students believe that] a person who lives in an English country will know *everything* as far as English is concerned.

The fact that students occasionally refuse to accept Jayida’s accent, and refuse her English as not the ‘right’ language, is, she feels, intensified by the fact that she is brown-skinned. Jayida had already told me that students believe “that all Canadians are white”, and that students often say that they “want to learn from a native speaker”; for them, a ‘native speaker’ is someone who is also white. Jayida, realizing that ‘accent’ is not always the issue, but that skin colour is, said that:

a couple of them ..have moved [out of her class].. because they said that “we want to go with someone who has a Canadian *accent*”.the first couple of times, it really upset me. The first time I went home and wept. I was so upset. But I think slowly now it is beginning to upset me less and less

because I think my confidence amongst Caucasian, other Caucasian teachers, is far more.

Jayida and Lee both feel that the negative valuing of their accents is intensified by their skin colour. They both commented that a non-native speaker whose skin was white would be more readily accepted.

4.3 The significance of culture in second language teaching

Since language is a cultural tool (Vygotsky, 1978), language learners usually expect to learn the target culture while learning the language.

Unfamiliarity with the target language culture can cause problems for the language learner. Janka expressed this when she noted that although she could speak Italian well, her unfamiliarity with Italian culture caused difficulties for her while she was living in Italy:

...because I was a foreigner, all those [cultural] things weren't so obvious.

All the teachers referred in their interviews to culture and teaching culture in the language classroom; Joanna and Lee expressed their unease at teaching Canadian culture, while the other teachers did not.

Aurelia

Aurelia did not mention any difficulty with adapting to or teaching Canadian culture, perhaps because she has lived here for over thirty-six years, almost all of her adult life and has raised a family here. She has become:

...kind of "Canadianised" that I am not very obvious because of maybe my attitude and ... Yeah, I think if you blend with - not because you feel that you have to blend, but you have no choice but to blend anyway, you become a Canadian.

Joanna

Joanna has lived in Canada for over fifteen years. She sees that her cultural and linguistic knowledge is that of an English as a second language *learner*, and contrasts her knowledge to her colleague, Lee's, knowledge which has been *acquired* in an English-speaking environment, and must therefore be 'better' than hers, and more desirable. Joanna feels that she is disadvantaged when she compares her language and cultural learning to Lee's:

I think I am more [disadvantaged] than her because for me... it was never - my kids they learned, so for them it's more natural, but for me.. I am always worried that I don't ...

The 'naturalness' that she is referring to seems to be a locally acquired knowledge of the culture in an English-speaking environment, which she as an English as a *foreign* language learner lacks. In her opinion, if her lack of cultural knowledge should be found out, then she will appear to her students as someone who is 'not good enough' to teach English. However:

...the only time [I experienced problems] is when students ask question about expressions, like slang. This might just be because it [the slang] is for younger people – maybe younger people know it better?

Again referring to her status as a language *learner* rather than a native speaker of English:

.....because all I know is what I *learned*. I had to learn, so I think it's more difficult because I know I lack some things, like expressions, slang.

Lee

Lee may have learned English from birth, and may have lived in Canada for over ten years, but she feels uncomfortable and unfamiliar with Canadian culture. While she wants to fit into accepted Canadian cultural practices, for example, dressing like a Canadian, Lee recognizes that maybe she will never be completely North American; some cultural values are just not familiar or palatable enough to her:

Maybe in terms of that I will always be different. I know I'm not. And then maybe in terms of that period, "me, myself, and I", like back in... I'm very loyal. I guess most of the North American people have that kind of mentality, "if anything happens, make sure *I'm safe*". In Asia, where we came from, there's always this honour system, this loyalty.

She said that she feels that North American teachers are too informal and too familiar in their classroom discourse, using expressions and language that she would not feel comfortable using, and attributes this to a difference in culture. Lee also admits to feeling as if she has an inadequate knowledge of Canadian culture, and says that this causes her to feel ill at ease and disadvantaged in the classroom; she would be an inferior representative of Canadian culture to her students:

I feel that I have to justify myself to students. I have to 'prove' to them that I understand slang, I do speak English, I have lived in Vancouver for a while and I've been there.

Like Joanna, Lee's discomfort contributes to her fear of being 'discovered' as a language teacher 'imposter'. Lee recalls a time when she taught a class for a teacher who was sick, and how the lesson was filled with Canadian facts and cultural knowledge:

Remember when I was subbing for Cheri's ... conversation class and she had those Canadian things, and I was very up front with you and I said, "Kim, I don't know" and you helped? I guess at that very moment I thought, "cool." You didn't judge me. I didn't feel judged. At that moment when I told you. It was pretty much all Canadian stuff. And I was glad [that you could help me].

Lee clearly had felt that she would be "judged" as deficient if she admitted a gap in her cultural knowledge.

Lee once struggled with teaching a class at Standard English School, whose content was based on Canadian popular culture. She imagines that

teaching in a public school setting would be similar to that experience, and hence is fearful of pursuing this as a career option:

...remember the whole '*Pop Culture*' thing, that *totally* haunted me and it's just this *thing* about- like teaching in high school and they are all Canadians.. ... Canada-born and educated, and then to hear *me* [the inadequate representative of Canadian culture] up front- it's kind of strange, no?

Lee feels that not only would she not have enough cultural knowledge to teach adequately, but she would also not understand the students enough, since:

..and then it's really hard to obtain mutual respect from someone, Canadian teens here, because they are very different from how we've been brought up....It's different. So I [wouldn't] know what to expect from the [public school] class. From where I came - it's all very strict: school uniform, zero tolerance, your hair has to be short, socks a certain height, skirt. So I have no idea, and I think that itself would create a little bit of fear in me.

She feels that in order to fully adapt to a Canadian lifestyle, she would literally need to bring all of her past life possessions, her diaries and her memories to Canada:

I think maybe it's a psychological thing because I need to go back home to Singapore. And I need to pack my stuff. I need to renounce my citizenship, and just make it... I think I need to do that, because I am actually planning to go back and just bring everything here. So maybe that itself (*sic*) would just be really symbolic for me, and maybe just by doing that, I will be Canadian in a way.

Claudio

Of the seven teachers interviewed, Claudio has the strongest sense of himself as a Canadian, and therefore, of all the interviewees projected the greatest sense of comfort with Canadian culture. He has lived in Canada for most of his life, and says that he is more Canadian than Chilean. Claudio appears to

be the most open with his students about his background, perhaps because he has the least to fear in terms of being challenged about his “authority” to teach English, since he knows that he will not ‘discovered’ as “other” by means of either a noticeable or strong accent, and a lack of Canadian cultural knowledge. He is not governed or troubled by the fear his English is not the ‘right’ one.

Sabina

Sabina is aware of the place that culture plays in an ESL classroom in Vancouver. She knows that students usually come to Vancouver in order to learn both English and aspects of Canadian culture. Not born in Canada, Sabina feels that she might appear as an inadequate cultural informant to students, but states:

... that there *are* things that I don't know and can't tell them.
[But, she doesn't] think that the students are disadvantaged.
It's just one thing. I don't think that it's a major thing.

Janka

Janka had initially resisted the dominant English society discourse in Canada saying that she “wasn't interested to be a part of [its culture]”, but eventually found that she liked the university education system which gave her more freedom; the creativity and richness of the Arts community in Montreal; and the Montreal culture itself. Janka recognizes that some people can not adapt easily to a new culture:

I would not recommend to anybody to immigrate unless their life is in danger, or anything like that. Because there's so many things that you have to deal with. ...you have to decide whether you've got it- what it takes to be an immigrant.

She also knows that it takes time to learn a new culture:

...that's why I think somebody with a five year experience living in a foreign country - you could pick up a lot - but I

think it takes probably, you know, fifteen to twenty [years] to really, really have it, be part of the culture. I would say ten for sure, for sure, and the rest is just working on the details.

Janka feels that she has lived in Canada long enough that her knowledge of Canadian culture is sufficient, and consequently did not express any qualms about representing Canadian culture in her classroom. Her proof of her familiarity with Canadian culture is noted in the fact that she understands:

..ninety-eight percent [of jokes] ... but to reproduce them would still be difficult at times, to really come up with that kind of stuff on my own.

Jayida

Jayida's strong personality and confidence is apparent in her belief that she has a definite responsibility to educate her international students about both Canadian culture *and* her Indian culture. When her students ask her how she managed to learn English so perfectly after living in Canada for only three and a half years, she teaches them about India, its languages and "about the diversity and how we have been colonized". Jayida says that she "has taken a lot of care to get to know the culture here" and so does not feel that she is unqualified to teach Canadian culture; she feels she is able to describe and represent it sufficiently well to her students.

The teachers indicate that they have varying levels of comfort with teaching the cultural aspect of the target language; some of them are very comfortable, and others express discomfort. It is interesting to note, that few of them mentioned specific examples of when they had experienced discomfort. The importance that teachers place on how they are viewed by students has a direct bearing on the role of business in the ESL industry, as will be outlined in

the next section; teachers know that in the figured world of Standard English School, students are educational consumers.

4.4 The role of business in ESL education

Student expectations of the ESL learning environment in Canada are strongly influenced by the business aspect of private language schools; the learner is also a customer, and student response is tempered by that status. The discourse of business in the ESL industry influences the relationship between teacher and student, and also influences the ways that immigrant teachers see themselves, particularly if the teachers, responding to dominant society or colonial discourses, view themselves as less than a native speaker. International students indicated in their interviews that they usually expect to be taught by a 'Canadian' which generally means, for them, a native speaker of English. Beyond this fact, the discourse of business, especially the marketing approaches of the schools, perpetuate the image of the native speaker as the ideal language teacher. Lee points out that school promotional material generally provides a visual and very visible testament to this:

..you notice that they rarely, or you hardly see any Asian teachers [in the promotional material]. No! And just, "a picture speaks a thousand words", you know? And just that itself, I was kind of choked.

Jayida also comments on the industry image that is portrayed to students, an image governed by the discourse of business in ESL. The fact that she, as a South Asian, has:

....never been approached to go on a marketing trip... I don't know whether Asian teachers have ever been sent? I think mostly they have been very obviously Caucasian.... So again, I think that's the kind of image people have, that, "oh well, you are coming to Canada, so you will be taught by

white people". Maybe we [the school] perpetuate that image too. I mean, it's *business*.

The business discourse also alters how teachers respond to students in the classroom, often deferring to business concerns when making educational decisions.

Joanna

Not being a Canadian, being an "Other" can also be problematic for immigrant teachers. If a school says that it will provide both language and cultural knowledge, and if a teacher feels unqualified to teach Canadian culture, then the teacher will have failed as a 'service provider'. Joanna's response to the business discourse of an ESL school which says that students learning English in Canada will learn both the language and the culture causes problems for her. Her stated discomfort with Canadian culture places her identity as a teacher in jeopardy, since if she can not provide students what they want as educational consumers, then she feels she will have failed them. Like several teachers I interviewed, Joanna expressed to me that she never revealed her country of origin to her students:

No, I never tell them. I don't want them to complain – often they might ask if I am from Mexico, from my name. They don't seem to care. They don't usually ask. I would tell them if they asked. I had one student from Brazil, but it didn't seem to bother her.

Her fear of being discovered appears influenced by a dominant society discourse and the discourse of business that says students should learn English from a native English speaking '*Canadian*' teacher. The interviews with the four international students affirmed the fact that students do not seem to "care" where their teacher comes from, as long as teacher is competent. As Karim said:

....as long as she teaches well, it doesn't matter for me where she, or he, is coming from. If Canada accepts immigration, immigrate people, so they have to be integrated, and if they speak well English, or they can teach, why not (*sic*)?

Lee

Lee also comments on the expectation of the students, and the discourse of business, when she talks about the standard private language school practice of providing students, as educational consumers, an opportunity to evaluate their teachers. Lee notes how arbitrary the process can be, and yet knows that it often carries much weight, since the customer, in the figured world of ESL, is always right:

...because it's very surface: if you're having fun, or you don't have fun - it's almost like on the teacher itself. Sometimes it's good to get some kind of feedback, "what am I doing right? What am I doing wrong?" rather than: "the teacher's boring", because it's just not fair, you know.

Lee indicates that perhaps students evaluate their teachers based on their perception as a customer receiving a service, rather than as a student considering educational practice. If this is the case, she seems to be asking whether students are qualified to evaluate teachers, since they seem primarily to "judge" rather than evaluate. She is also aware that the way in which teachers respond to the evaluation process is significant:

A lot if it is about confidence. Self-confidence and how they [the students] perceive you. And especially about students like ours because they are *judging* you all the time, evaluating and judging you constantly; it's all about if they perceive you as confident.

It is apparent that Lee feels that she is at risk of being evaluated – *judged*- by students, who are also educational consumers, and evaluated not on her teaching skills, but on her ability as a non-Canadian, non-white teacher, who happens to have an accent.

Sabina

The discourse of business that places the student as an educational consumer is also behind Sabina's observation regarding the place that culture

plays in an ESL class in Vancouver, and her comfort with representing and presenting Canadian culture in the classroom. Sabina reports that she never feels at a disadvantage amongst her native English-speaking colleagues, but that she feels:

...the disadvantage in the level of *professionalism* in the industry, in terms of who owns the schools and who hires you, and what they know about non-native teachers and our credentials.

The dominant society discourse that views non-native English-speaking teachers as “Other” and the discourse of business are linked in this comment; the desire to have only native English speaking teachers for their students-as-consumers causes some private language school owners to choose *not* to hire non-native teachers, and so practice a form of silent discrimination. Sabina also knows that:

This industry is peculiar because it's business more than education; the challenges of satisfying students.

Sabina's over eleven years in the ESL industry has ensured that she knows how to respond to the discourse of business, and she says that:

I think I've learned to give them what they expect. I think I have.

Like Lee, she also knows that a teacher should respond with “confidence”, since:

A lot of it is about confidence. Self-confidence and how they perceive you. And especially about students like ours [as educational consumers] because they are judging you all the time, evaluating and judging you constantly; it's all about if they perceive you as confident.

The discourse of business also dictates how teachers structure their lessons and interact with students during the lessons. Sabina says that as an ESL teacher “interpersonal skills” are important and that a teacher needs to be:

...funny. I guess energetic, dynamic - it's a lot about relationship and attraction.

She understands that as a student:

..you still expect some sort of engagement; not *passion*, but you want your teachers to at least *appear* that they like what they're doing.

And explains that because of:

... that whole entertainment factor. How much entertainment they want; how much fun and games opposed to study. ..

that sometimes pedagogical and teaching decisions are at times made based on consumer demands:

What you think is - as a professional - what you think is educationally sound and what they want; basically satisfying the clientele, where you have to sacrifice sometimes your values.But I get, you get used to it - so you think of it as dynamic.

Thus, business often takes precedence over education.

Jayida

Jayida is very aware how image and customer perception are important to business success. Jayida once worked as a product manager in the marketing department of a large pharmaceutical firm in India, and also as a magazine editor in Oman, and so has been directly involved in the business sector. Jayida is also aware of the connection of business and education in ESL. In fact, she says that:

...teaching is the best form of marketing. If you don't market yourself, then you're sunk. It helps you understand what other people think – you are selling a product.

The irony from Jayida's market savvy perspectives is that while hers is not the image in the marketplace, she feels the very fact that she is Asian gives her a teaching advantage, since she knows her Asian students-educational clients well.

The teachers are thus aware of and respond to the business discourse that permeates the ESL industry, which as Janka notes, attempts to always give students “their money’s worth”, at whatever the cost to the teachers.

4.5 Identity as an active site of struggle and response

The teachers in this study have come to the figured world of Standard English School with varying prior scripts and here are subjected to several discourses to which they actively respond, and occasionally resist. The figured world of the school is a place where new meaning is (re)constructed in dialogue with others and with prevailing discourse; the teachers’ identities are active sites of struggle and response. For example, the colonial and dominant society of the teachers’ prior scripts also resonate in the life stories of their present selves; the effect of these discourses affects how they view or reconstruct their present identities. In their own countries the teachers were capable and privileged users of a language of status. Here in the figured world of ESL in Vancouver, their version of English, the version of English which had been learned in an English as a *Foreign*⁵ language environment, is frequently contrasted to the English of native speakers of English in an English-speaking environment. In the figured world of ESL in Vancouver, their English becomes the language of the “Other”. Here, they are no longer privileged users of a privileged colonial or dominant society discourse. In this figured world, they compare themselves to native speakers, or worse, fear that students will compare them, with the fearful possibility that they will *potentially* be uncovered as “less” than a native speaker. Their identity as a teacher is influenced and shaped by their response to the colonial and dominant society discourses.

⁵ English as a Foreign Language refers to English which is learned in a non-English speaking environment; English is not the L1. This is contrasted to English as a *Second Language*, in which the language learner learns English in a country where English is the L1.

Aurelia

For Aurelia, “blending in” with the Canadian lifestyle and culture is a positive thing that has helped her. However, despite ‘blending into’ Canadian culture, in her opinion, her skin colour and accent set her apart as distinctly not Canadian. She says that:

I don't look Canadian. I don't sound Canadian. If I looked white, they wouldn't ask me questions, even if I were Polish [with an accent]. Some people are confused.

Aurelia questions her current identity, and seems uncertain which label best describes the ‘dilemma’ of her identity accurately:

Am I Canadian, or Filipino? “I am a Filipino who lives in Canada”.

She is still unsure of how her identity is constructed in this figured world:

I'll always be Filipino I think, but maybe I have become eclectic and I've become a woman of the world, I don't know how I identify myself, I'm just a woman I suppose. I have a little bit of Filipino in me. I look Filipino, so people expect me to be Filipino.

The struggle between her prior script and her current self in the figured world of Standard English School is somewhat disconcerting. With respect to her teaching, Aurelia does recognize with pride the advantages she has as a non-native speaker of English over native English-speaking teachers, and still sees herself as continually learning English:

Perhaps an advantage I have over other teachers is my excitement about language. I feel victorious.

In the Philippines, Aurelia's family background was upper middle class and seems to have been quite privileged compared to other Filipinos. She is aware that life in Canada is different from life in the Philippines; even her children recognized that when they vacationed there. They felt that their Filipino cousins had quite an easy lifestyle. Aurelia's father was concerned when he heard that

his Canadian grandchildren “had” to work and thought it was quite demeaning that Aurelia’s daughter worked as a server in a restaurant.

And I know my father was very upset one day when he found out that my daughter was working as a waitress, because over there waitress is low class. “Oh my poor granddaughter has to work as a waitress.” And they didn’t realize that it’s part of growing up here, to be independent.

Aurelia reports that privilege and status were very important to her peers and in the Philippines in general, and Aurelia says that once in Canada, Filipinos find the Canadian socio-economic lifestyle more equal than they are accustomed to at home, with fewer class distinctions. The same Filipino social structure is not in place in Canada:

..even now the Filipinos are very status conscious. They come here and lose that, because nobody [from their prior script] is here, everybody’s the same [class].

She realizes that if she went back to the Philippines to teach, which she is convinced she never would, she would have to adapt once more to the figured world of her past script:

I probably would have to understand *again* where they’re coming from. I’d have to understand their way of thinking.

Joanna

I asked Joanna if teaching English in a private language school in Vancouver was different from her experience teaching in a private language school in Brazil. She told me that her past experience, her prior script, was very similar to her present figured world:

It was not that different. I don’t feel that different, I feel like I’m.... like déjà vu.

She then went on to say that she had not reflected on either the similarity or the difference of the experiences before; the interview process has caused her to reflect:

It's interesting, I never thought about that. Now that you ask that, I never thought about that, I didn't feel that different. When I first started here I didn't feel that different. I felt like I was comfortable.

For Joanna, her teaching relationship with her students is the same in the figured world of Standard English School, and yet as her interviews revealed, at times her teaching identity is not the same here in Vancouver as it was in Brazil; the internalized discourse causes her to doubt herself. In Vancouver, her teaching identity is at times affected by how she responds to the dominant discourse that marks her as "Other"; she struggles with the internal dialogue that says her language ability, primarily her accent and her cultural knowledge, are not as 'good' as her native English-speaking colleagues, and sometimes even her fellow immigrant teachers in the figured world of Vancouver.

Lee

As a teacher in Vancouver, in the figured world of Standard English School, Lee has constructed a strong teaching identity in the classroom, but it is one she shares primarily and very privately with her students;

I'm sure other teachers wonder what I'm doing in my classroom [when they hear the cheerful classroom commotion from her students].

She remains very quiet, very private and quite distant from most of the other teachers, and forms a strong connection with her students, perhaps feeling a closer empathy to them as those who are excluded by language or identity, as she has been. She admits that:

It's actually hard to be my friend. That's why I don't have a lot of friends.

The 'Lee' that she shows to her colleagues is very unlike the 'Lee' in her classroom, her teaching identity:

[in the staffroom] everybody is so comfortable, and sit together. And I'm all alone there, [sitting] facing the wall, and I feel so sorry for myself.

Lee looks upon her relationship with the school like a family tie, and feels that her loyalty to the school and her professional "portfolio" were "jeopardized" recently with recent staff cut-backs and lay-offs which impacted her with a reduction in her teaching hours to part-time only. She knows that the reduction in hours was a business decision, but she feels it much more intensely:

I feel I lost my rank and how students perceive me.

The professional uncertainty is very scary for Lee; she fears losing an important part of her identity, the Lee that is a teacher. If she lost her job, the figured world and the identity she has constructed at the school might be lost, and then who would she be?

Lee acknowledges a difference in her life and identity in Singapore, her prior script and the one she has now; she recognizes that it is a different person who lives and works in the figured world of Standard English School. As an immigrant in Vancouver:

I face more obstacles than back home, you know. And sometimes it's tough. For one thing for sure, it is a different Lee and being an immigrant. Of course the Lee from Singapore was very naïve, very gullible; I would believe what you would tell me. The Lee here is very tough, and at the same time, superficial in a way, that I'm tough only physically, but not mentally because I have to make a living, I'm on my own here.

Lee sees that her life in Singapore is in contrast to the life she has in Vancouver. While she may still hold onto some of the same values, she does feel that she has drifted apart from her contemporaries and their lifestyles:

..one of the reasons why we drifted was our priorities are totally different and they have families now.

Part of a different figured world, the Lee in Vancouver is different from the one that inhabited the prior script in Singapore:

I have sort of broken off old ties. I have stopped communicating with my friends in Singapore because it's just a totally different world now. All they are aiming for is, Singaporeans are very status conscious

If she were still in Singapore, she would be as judgmental as her friends, with the same "matchbox thinking", and if she hadn't:

..ventured to Canada or Australia, I'd probably be sitting there, just passing judgment [on others].

Lee indicates by her term, 'matchbox thinking', a very narrow-minded and fixed outlook. Surprisingly, the challenges of being an immigrant teacher in Vancouver, even one who has internalized the dominant discourse, are empowering because:

Being a teacher I think I face my fear, most importantly because I actually deal with people, and I get to speak in public. So that is one thing that I'm also very amazed at myself. I normally would stammer and ...but somehow teaching helped me overcome that. I guess being a teacher makes me more sensitive, especially in this line about what to say and what not to say.

The Lee of the prior script, someone who was discriminated against, and afraid to speak out, struggles against prevailing discourse and her prior script to recreate a new identity in this figured world. The identity here is that of a self who is not afraid to speak in front of students in the classroom at Standard English School, which she could not have done in Singapore. Unable though to speak out in front of her peers, part of her prior script remains unchanged in this figured world. Lee told me that she felt that her journey to the present had been:

...like a long ride, like a roller coaster ride. Especially now, to right after I had that interview with you, it's been sort of, it's created a lot of questions in me too, "is this what I really want?" and a lot of questions. Like I say, I'm always being

pounded by internal dialogue, always, and sometimes it's not healthy.

Lee has been able to respond to her surroundings and (re)create a new version of herself.

Claudio

Claudio's family immigrated to Canada from Chile when he was eight years old, however, Claudio does not use the term "immigrant" to describe himself, and he feels that he is a native speaker of both English and Spanish. He has lived in Canada for the majority of his life:

..it has been so many years, that I really feel out of place [when visiting Chile]. That tells me that I am more Canadian than Chilean.

He says that when having to provide information about his national identity, he "would choose both". Claudio's identity in this figured world appears relatively fixed in that he does not appear to be as strongly influenced by dominant society discourses as the other teachers seem to be, perhaps because he has become part of them? He is confident and comfortable both in his identity as a Canadian, and his teaching identity. As a male teacher, his gender might also place him in a stronger subject position than the other *female* participants in this study.

Claudio related that he has heard that other teachers had been challenged by students about their teaching ability, but he did not elaborate on any details. I also felt that did not want be asked. While Claudio's interview data revealed only a little in relation to the themes of this study, his perspective was valuable. I was interested to see how he viewed and chose to describe his identity in terms of whether or not he was an immigrant, or a non-native speaker of English. It was also interesting to see how he tells his students that he has learned another

language without explicitly stating that that other language was English, not one *other* than English, as is implied. Is Claudio more concerned about how he is perceived, and possibly judged by students than his demeanour and his words reveal? Is his identity also influenced by the dominant society or colonial or business discourses? Is there more of a struggle than is outwardly apparent?

Sabina

Sabina said that her self-confidence, her confidence and identity as a teacher had grown in her years of living and working in Canada. When I asked her if she ever disclosed that she was from Yugoslavia before students had the chance to ask her, and she said that she never did, although:

..of course, they always find out - I never hide it from them - when you get to bond more, I tell them where I'm from. Have them guess where I'm from and they usually say Greece.

I asked her how deliberate it was that she kept her ethnic identity hidden from her students, and she told me:

I think for while in the beginning it was deliberate. So that's probably why I continued the same practice. And I've been here a fairly long time. So, no, actually I don't; that's interesting.

Part of the reason behind Sabina's fear of revealing her identity to her students is because she has a Yugoslavian friend who has experienced discrimination since she immigrated to Canada at four years old. The friend now teaches ESL, and warned Sabina when she began teaching:

"I *never* tell them I'm Yugoslavian. I never tell my German students I'm from Yugoslavia. You shouldn't tell them you're Yugoslavian."

Her friend's advice caused Sabina to expect a negative reaction based on her ethnicity, and so that is why she began the practice of keeping her identity

hidden, and has continued that. Her friend's response to discrimination and a dominant society discourse that says immigrants are second-class has been accepted by Sabina and governs this particular aspect of her teaching, despite the fact that for Sabina, she has not experienced any discrimination, and is generally well-accepted by her students.

Janka

Janka, like Lee, also feels that she has lost touch with her previous prior script, her identity as a Hungarian, having long since lost contact with her friends there. The discourses that are prevalent in Canada have more immediate daily relevance to her identity here. Like her friends, she has "been busy with her own life", and also her response to her present figured world:

...it becomes difficult to catch up from the distance. And really, what can you help each other? You can't help each other from a distance, because they don't really understand your predicament anyway. And we don't quite understand theirs either, so....

Janka knows that her struggle to fit in somewhere, struggling against cultures that seemed to imprison her, and discourses that tried to position her as "other", has ended in Vancouver in a place where:

I've sort accepted, come to peace with who I am and what I want to do, and am not so insecure about it any more. Had I been an English speaking person all my life, then I wouldn't have the appreciation for other things, maybe. But maybe not? .. So again, this comes to the fact that living in Canada, I'm learning to appreciate certain advantages that you wouldn't get otherwise.

Janka was encouraged to enroll in a TESL program by a facilitator of a single parent support group she belonged to, who told her:

"you know really it's not an obstacle that it's not your native tongue." And I said, "Really?"

She says that it took “a long time for me to feel secure enough” in her teaching, as she had held “that perception that I was less than” and so was unable to totally resist a dominant society discourse that labeled her English as less than a native speaker’s. Janka does say that she is “definitely grateful that at least I’m given the opportunity” to teach, and acknowledges that not all non-native speakers would have the same chance. Again, like Joanna, it appears as if it is due to the graciousness of a dominant society discourse that has furnished Janka a ‘chance’ to teach.

When I asked Janka if she ever revealed to her students that she was originally from Hungary, she answered in a soft and very subdued voice, quite at odds with her usual animated and vivacious personality:

No, I don't. At the beginning I definitely don't.

Once she feels comfortable with a new group of students, she might reveal that she has language learning “tricks” to show them, since:

“Look, I have studied languages. I will tell you tricks that I certainly wish people had told me when I was learning English.” And they are like, “What!? You learning English?!” And sometimes I just say, “oh when I was learning Italian”, you know, it’s just really kind of - it just depends.

Janka seems to feel that her struggles, the active process of the self, have been valuable. Her prior scripts have had to change in each of the countries and cultures she found herself; now in Vancouver, her identity is that of an ESL teacher, one which she would never have imagined herself being.

Jayida

Jayida’s identity here is also something she seems to struggle with: is she Canadian or Asian? If she is a native speaker of English, which is her version: the ‘right’ language, the language of the colonizer, or a ‘lesser’ version? Jayida

projects a strong confident image to her students. One of the other interviewees commented in one of her interviews about Jayida:

.. she's very visible, but she doesn't make any.... But she rubs it in almost; she rubs it in, and "take it or leave it!" She's got a very strong confidence about the whole thing.

Jayida challenges the fact while that students or Canadians might perceive her as not being a 'Canadian' in terms of lifestyle and outlook, she feels she is. She then presents her own definition of what being 'Canadian' means:

.. a person who lives here, and works here, and pays his taxes, and takes a lot of interest in what is happening in the socio-economic and political view. And beyond that, it doesn't matter what passport they have.... No, I don't feel /ess Canadian because I haven't taken a Canadian passport because I feel I am interested in the betterment of the society, and because I think I contribute to it.

Jayida also considers that since she is very familiar with the Asian culture, she is placed in a position of advantage, compared to Canadian-born teachers. Not only does she know the Canadian culture, but:

I know my own culture and I know my students' cultures because they are so similar to my culture, because we are all from the same Asian continent. And so when I put things across, it's in some perspective and I understand what they are looking for.

On the one hand, Jayida is an Asian who has affinity with her students, and yet on the other hand she is Canadian. However, she then says later:

Even if I have Canadian papers, I will never be a part of this world. I'll always feel like a sore thumb, sticking out being different. I'll always believe that.

During her interviews, Jayida did not explicitly articulate that she felt any "less" than her white, Canadian-born colleagues in the figured world of Standard English School; she did not express any feelings of being an "Other":

my co-workers have never made me feel in any way that I am inferior.

She did say that the only time that she felt at a disadvantage compared with her Canadian-born colleagues was:

...when I think of myself... as an *Asian* teaching English to Asian students who may not, who some of them may not even know in India we speak English.

However, Jayida's words seem to be an expression of her feeling like an "Other"; she is Asian more than she is a *native* English speaking teacher, and Asian might make some people believe that she is *less* than a white Anglo-Canadian. As well, despite her not explicitly stating a feeling of being "Othered", the fact that Jayida feels she has to lie to her students when asked if she has dual Indian-Canadian citizenship, seems to indicate that she does feel 'less' than her Canadian colleagues. Contrary to this, Jayida stated that she often felt at an advantage when compared to the native-born Canadian staff members, who often ask her questions about the English language. She definitely feels superior at times because of this, feeling especially vindicated on occasions when students have chosen to leave her class in search of a "native" speaker teacher, when:

...sometimes when I hear them talk [Canadian-born teachers], and it's so obviously incorrect English, so totally wrong. Then I sometimes think, "oh yes, go to a *native* speaker".

Although Jayida did not provide any specific examples, she seems to feel quite strongly that skin colour is the deciding factor for some employers when faced with hiring immigrant or non-native English speaking teachers to teach in their schools. Despite the fact that she had previously said that she had not faced any discrimination in hiring practices, she then, quite suddenly, commented that:

I do think that I would be discriminated. I don't use my real name, and I don't do it because I am not sure how a person is going to react...So you know, I wonder if I actually go for another job, I should go back to my maiden name or something? They would never know where a [*name*] comes from. I'm sure there's discrimination. I'm sure there is.

Jayida as a visible minority immigrant teacher faces contradictions in how others view her, and how she views herself; her sense of self is a site of struggle. She is confident in her South Asian identity; her response to and struggle against the prevailing discourses show that she knows the reality of some schools' hiring practices, which might prevent her from using her own name.

4.9 Summary

The teachers who participated in this study demonstrated how their struggle with identity (re)creation within the figured world of Standard English School was influenced by various discourses. The first are discourses of the colonial language and the dominant society, which depict the non-native English speaker as an "Other" in the figured world of ESL. These discourses contribute to non-native English speaking teachers questioning not only their speaking ability, but also their effectiveness as teachers. Second, there is a discourse that says that neither a non-native speaker nor an immigrant has a deep enough understanding of the target language culture, to either represent or teach it sufficiently well to students learning English. The third compelling discourse was a discourse of business, which describes the ideal language model as a native speaker of English, and is a discourse which is perpetuated in textbooks, marketing material and curricula. The discourse of business also affects how a non-native English speaking or immigrant teacher responds to students. These prevailing discourses affect how this group of teachers view themselves within the figured world of Standard English School where identity is an active site of struggle and response.

CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study has taken a socio-historically influenced look at how a group of seven immigrant teachers recreates identity in a particular context, the 'figured world' of an ESL school in Vancouver; several of those teachers are also non-native English speakers. The study's goal was an exploration of how this particular group of immigrant teachers viewed themselves in this particular context, (re)created their identities within this context and how their present self contrasted with their previous self; a contrast between a prior script and a present understanding of self. In Chapter Four the findings were arranged according to themes of: colonial and dominant society discourses; the significance of culture in second language teaching; the discourse of business in ESL, and identity as an active site of struggle and response. It should be noted that the information I have reported represents only a selection from the extensive conversations I had with the teacher participants. The teachers' lives are rich and complex; their stories do not fit neatly into the themes I have described, often a particular piece of information did not fit neatly into only one theme, and or had relevance to more than one theme. The teachers' descriptions of their life stories raised many questions which are beyond the scope of this study. The findings will be assessed according to those themes. This chapter is divided into three sections: the findings are related to current research; then some suggestions for further research are given and finally, a post-script.

5.2 Findings in Relation to the Literature

This section relates the findings of this study to the areas of literature discussed in Chapter Two. The findings are related to the discourses of colonial and dominant society discourses; the place of culture in language teaching; the discourse of business, and research on the implications of identity as an active social practice.

5.2.1 A tale of two discourses: a colonial discourse and a dominant society discourse

As the language of business and science, the English language is considered by many to be the *lingua franca* of a globalized world. Of the over 1.6 billion English speakers in the world, only 400 million are native English speakers, and yet a colonial discourse holds sway over the majority of speakers; it is commonly held that there is a 'right' version of the English language that only native speakers use. Several of the teachers in this present study grew up in countries where there was a direct socio-cultural influence of both the language and culture of either Britain or America. Those colonial influences still permeate the teachers' present life stories in their conversational discourse style, their attitudes, or how they perceive themselves as speakers of English. The influence of a colonial discourse is apparent in how the immigrant teachers view their particular versions of English, their identities as teachers in this particular location, and also themselves. For example, some teachers, listening to and believing a colonial discourse which says that one particular version of English is the 'right' language, often feel that their version of English, an English that was learned as a second, and often foreign, language, is less worthy than the English of a native speaker. As the holder of an "inferior" version of English, their identities as teachers of English in Vancouver are then compromised. In the figured world of Standard English School, the immigrant teachers are no longer

the privileged holders of the 'right' language as they were in their home countries, since now in this location they are compared to teachers who are native speakers of English, and suddenly the immigrant teachers become an "Other".

Braine (2004) and Cook (1999) ask similar questions about which version of English is the 'right' one as described by a colonial discourse, and whether or not an L2 user of English is in fact no more than a "failed" native speaker (Cook, 1999), as a dominant society discourse claims. As Braine reports, linguists like Chomsky have perpetuated the ideal of the native speaker as the 'ideal' language model for learners. The discourses which uphold the native speaker of English as the ideal model for language learners perpetuate that view in the majority of textbooks, curricula, classrooms, and marketing material of the private language school industry, both in Canada and also in students' countries of origin. Within those discourses, there are particular "grades" of speakers, which differentiate between individual versions of native speakers; for example, a speaker of Indian English might not be considered by schools owners or students as 'authentic' or as valued as a speaker of British English. However, the students' responses in the pilot study - responses which said that students care most about the quality of instruction they receive in a language learning classroom, rather than which version of English their classroom teacher speaks - contradict this view, and echo Liu's similar (1999) findings. Several teachers in this present study also articulated the same belief, but it was a belief that they seemed to struggle to fully accept, frequently contradicting their own words in later comments. The colonial discourse appears to be a difficult discourse to fully resist; a colonial discourse is thus able to label non-native speakers of English as "Other", and even through the label *non-native* itself.

Teachers who believe that their version of English is inferior are often afraid to reveal their identities to their students, frequently questioning their own ability as teachers, regardless of any actual teaching success they have achieved. This self-doubt is felt more strongly when the non-native teachers

compare themselves to native English-speaking teachers, ironically teachers who often ask the immigrant teachers for help with questions about English language usage and grammar. Immigrant teachers have a sense that they are lacking something in their language ability and lack a 'natural thing', which they can not define, but feel exists and therefore *must* be obvious to students and industry others? Teachers believe not only the discourse, but also their friends and husbands, who ask "why would they hire you?" because, it is implied, "you use an imperfect model of English". The teachers in this study, who routinely encourage students in their ability to use English, do not appear to see *themselves* in the school setting as "multicompetent" speakers (Cook:1999). Instead they appear to define themselves by what "they do not know", rather than by what they know (Toohey, 1992:93).

5.2.2 A colonial discourse, a dominant society discourse, accent and "Other"

Two aspects of discourses which hold the native speaker as the ideal model for language learners are accent and skin colour. Accent and a non-white skin colour are identifiable features that distinguish their holders as immediately recognizable as 'different' from their peers who have a Canadian English accent and / or a white skin colour. 'Different' is often interpreted to mean "Other" or 'inferior', or both, by those who accept dominant society and colonial discourses. Several of the immigrant teachers reported that pronunciation and accent are important indicators of their perceived English language teaching ability and their identity as successful teachers. Jones (2001) found that the participants in her study were sometimes treated negatively because of their British accent, since some listeners perceived a British accent in a negative manner; not all listeners looked upon the British accent favourably. Her respondents also reported that

even among speakers of the same category of English, in this case British-English, there is inconsistency in how particular variants of that accent are perceived. Accent has varying connotations of social status and value attached to it, and listeners respond according to their particular affiliation and subsequent interpretation. As noted above, it was also found in this present study that variants of native English are perceived unequally.

Students frequently declare that they chose to learn English in Canada because of Canada's more 'neutral' accent as compared to other world versions of English, a view encouraged and promoted by the Canadian private language industry and the prevailing discourses, which perpetuate the native speaker model, and especially the *Canadian* version. The 'neutral' Canadian accent is seen as a foil against possible problems of incomprehensibility. Students and teachers frequently assert that a strong accent can create problems for learners in a language classroom; a student might have difficulty understanding a teacher's *accented* discourse. Another perceived problem might be that students desire a "preferred" native English speaking language model to imitate, rather than the English spoken by an immigrant or non-native English speaker.

Several studies look at how accented speech, that is speech that does not conform to the "standard" assigned by a particular society, is viewed by both speaker and listeners (Munro: 2003; Derwing: 2003; and Munro and Derwing:1995). For example, in the 1920's and 30's, after the First World War, in an attempt to galvanize the power and domination of the British Empire, British Broadcasting Corporation ('BBC') English was often seen by many as the "standard" for British English and "served to coordinate the standardization of spoken English at home and overseas"(McCarthy, 1998: 157). Several teachers in this present study felt that their accent was the aspect of their language ability which would cause students to doubt their aptitude as teachers, since it would mark them as "Other" and less than a native speaker: thus believing the discourse that asserts that, "foreign accent [is] a type of speech defect" (Munro,

2003:40). The reason behind the teachers' vulnerability about their accent seems to be that they feel they might not be understood by students, or that their accent would have connotations of inferior linguistic and teaching knowledge.

Derwing's (2003) study supports the teachers' statements that pronunciation, and therefore accent, are important considerations when communicating; accent and pronunciation are important parts of these teachers' identities. The participants in Derwing's study felt that they would receive more respect if they had better pronunciation, that they would be looked upon more favourably. The teachers in this study seem to share the view that they would be perceived less negatively, if they did not have an accent. It is difficult to measure the affective features of language that Derwing, Munro and the teachers in this present study struggle to define. Without ever explicitly articulating it, most of the teachers seemed anxious that their accent would mark them as unqualified to teach, and yet none of the participants provided any specific examples of situations where their pronunciation impeded student comprehension of their classroom discourse. In a study that tested how listeners perceived accented speech, Munro and Derwing (1995) found that "strong accent" was not directly related to incomprehensibility as listeners were able to accurately transcribe speech that had previously been rated as accented. The teachers' perception that their pronunciation is problematic is not supported by either research or evidence from their own classroom experience.

Like Derwing's (2003) participants, the link between accent and skin colour was emphasized by the teachers in this study; a teacher from a visible minority with an accent was more likely to be perceived negatively, than a white person with an accent might be— an observation made by several of the teachers in this study. Several teachers in the study reported the opinion that if a student at Standard English School were to be taught by a teacher with a British or other version of 'foreign' accented speech, the student might complain, *especially* if that teacher happened to also have brown skin. Several teachers made the

comment that a teacher with accented speech would likely not be rejected by students, *if* the teacher's skin colour were white, whereas a brown-skinned teacher with an accent might very well be rejected. Again, it was apparent that even within that assertion, certain grades of acceptability exist within the range of 'acceptable' accents. The teachers believe both a colonial discourse and a dominant society discourse perspective that says accented speech is not desirable for an ESL teacher in Vancouver, especially if that accent is attached to a brown skin. The teachers' firm belief in their 'deficiency' attributed to their accented speech is difficult to dissuade.

5.3 The place of culture in the ESL classroom

Culture is an implicit part of a language curriculum; if the goal of language is to communicate, then language learning should include socio-linguistic aspects of the language to enable learners to successfully use the language to communicate with others, particularly in the L2 setting. Students frequently express that learning the language immersed in its socio-cultural environment is a significant part of their decision to travel to Canada to learn English; they come to Canada to learn both the language and the culture. L2 users have reported feeling uncomfortable in an L2 context because of a lack of cultural familiarity (Liu: 2004; Ilieva: 2001; Hansen: 2004), and so some kind of cultural preparation is desired by learners. Cultural knowledge will lead to L2 users understanding the social structures of daily life and interactions, thus avoiding a "disjuncture between how the everyday world works and [their] knowledge and understanding of it" (Norton, 2000:44).

Several teachers in this study expressed concern about their own knowledge of Canadian culture, and how they feel when faced with the prospect of *having* to teach Canadian culture in their classroom as part of the language curriculum. Almost all of the teachers in this study articulated that they felt

unqualified to adequately represent Canadian culture to their students, either in “incidental” ways (Lazarton: 2003), or explicitly as if it were a discrete and finite topic (Ilieva:2001). Lazarton (2003) and Liu (2003) observe when teachers feel that they do not have a ‘good enough’ grasp of the target culture they find their “confidence and self-identity challenged”. Courchêne (1996) points out that given Canada’s diverse multicultural composition, Canadian culture is not an easily defined ‘commodity’ which can be taught in discrete lessons; a fact that students and perhaps also teachers find difficult to grasp. As researchers have noted, and as language curricula and resources reflect, instead, Canadian culture is often taught in ‘teachable moments’ in a language classroom (Lazarton: 2003).

International language learners in Canada also say that they expect their teachers in Canada to be able to represent and teach the target culture to them; several teachers in this study doubted whether they were really able to do so. Having been placed in a position where they feel that their cultural knowledge is inadequate, by having once learned it themselves and perhaps, in their opinion, not adequately, then the teachers seem to feel that they are not qualified to either represent or teach Canadian culture in the classroom. If they think that this is the case, then their identities will potentially be jeopardized; teachers, who are unable to successfully teach their subject areas, will therefore potentially be deemed not ‘good enough’ to teach by their students - students who are also customers - and by the teachers themselves.

Despite the teachers’ sense of not knowing Canadian culture sufficiently well enough to represent or teach it in the classroom, the teachers in this study have managed to successfully teach in a Canadian context with several years of Canadian teaching experience. Besides two specific incidents which Lee referred to, there were no other examples cited of inadequate or ‘poor’ cultural teaching in their classrooms, or examples from either students or teachers of times when teachers were unable to provide the cultural information that students desired. The teachers’ anxiety is very real to them, but appears to be unfounded in terms

of meeting learner, and moreover student-as-customer, expectations. This supports Duff and Uchida's (1997) observation that whether or not they are aware of it, teachers are "involved in the transmission of culture" (1997:476) in their language classrooms. Perhaps it is as Ilieva (2001) suggests that teaching culture is more a process of "cultural exploration", and so instead of actively teaching culture, a subject they feel unqualified to teach, perhaps these teachers are instead involved in facilitating their students' own learning. Instead, the teachers are unconsciously, and successfully, acting as "cultural workers" (Duff and Uchida, 1997), rather than as they perceive themselves to be, inadequate teachers of cultural facts.

5.4 The discourse of business

Business and education are firmly linked in the Canadian private language school industry. Several researchers (Marshall: 1995; Abbarno: 1998; Bridges and Jonathan: 2003) have discussed the implications of allowing business interests to intrude into the public education arena, and caution against meshing two ethically opposed interests. These researchers argue that what drives business concerns should not be allowed to influence pedagogical decisions. These authors also describe how learners have been assigned the role of educational *consumer*, a consumer that might think they know more than the education providers. Most students enrolled in private language school programs in Canada are very aware of their role as educational-consumer, and are not hesitant to exercise their consumer 'muscle' when demanding educational service.

Teachers are also very aware of the power their students-as-consumers have, and know that it is their responsibility as "service providers" to balance their students-as-consumer demands with language learning opportunities. The ESL industry is influenced by a colonial discourse that says a native speaker is the

ideal language learning model; the teachers in this study are very aware of that discourse which affects how the teachers perceive themselves. The discourse frequently causes immigrant teachers to fear 'discovery' as an 'imposter', as someone *less* than a native speaker; it frequently causes them to compare themselves negatively to native English-speaking teachers.

Connected to this viewpoint, some teachers noted how school promotional material provides a distinct Anglo-European perspective of their teachers. In an industry report and on their website, The Canadian Association of Private Language Schools (CAPLS), an independent association of private language schools in Canada, is eager to actively promote Canada as a desirable destination for language learning (2003). CAPLS promotes Canada to international students, as a place to learn English in an English-speaking environment. This promise tacitly implies that students will be taught by Canadian teachers. As teachers and students reveal, that image of a "Canadian" is usually a teacher of Anglo-European descent. No wonder then that teachers frequently fear 'discovery' as an immigrant to Canada, and seem to fear the humiliation of being judged as "Other" by students and the industry, since they do not see their own faces reflected in either promotional or classroom materials. The business construct of a teacher is not necessarily the one that matches the teachers' own identities in this figured world.

The immigrant teachers in this study are aware of this kind of discourse, and if they do not fit the industry 'profile' often feel that they are going to be judged negatively by students, their colleagues and school owners. None of the teachers interviewed felt that they had ever been overtly discriminated against in the hiring process, although several mentioned that they had heard of school owners who did not generally hire immigrant teachers; however, the teachers did not provide specific examples. Some teachers reported that they knew of people who had been discriminated against in the hiring process, but again no specific examples were given. One teacher said that she does not use her married name

when applying for teaching positions in case her name should prevent schools from choosing whether or not to contact her on the basis of her 'foreign' sounding name, thus being given the label of an "Other". Another teacher felt that because she had been contacted by schools for job interviews, schools that clearly could see that she had a *Latin* name, then this was proof to her that she had *not* been discriminated against in the hiring process. The discourse of business silently states that the native English speaker is the preferred teacher model.

In the figured world of an ESL school in Vancouver, the student is an educational consumer, and, as such, has an effect on how business is conducted, thus living up to the maxim that "the customer is always right". Student expectations and the discourse of business govern how schools and teachers respond to student needs and consumer demands. In this figured world, teachers quickly learn what students-as-customers expect, and respond accordingly. Those expectations might include the student wanting to be 'entertained' in the classroom, as one teacher described the general student request for dynamic, 'fun', activity-based learning; students who travel to Canada to study English frequently combine travel and education, and expect their classrooms to offer a mixture of study and fun. Teacher evaluations are part of the expected practice in private language schools, since students-as-consumers should be provided with an opportunity to evaluate the 'service' they receive, as well as providing feedback on their learning experience. Teachers are aware of how student response is often governed more by their role as educational *consumer* who has a degree of control over quality of service, rather than as a learner (Marshall, 1995). Again, how immigrant teachers respond to this discourse impacts their identity in the classroom.

5.5 Identity as an active site of struggle

Several researchers share the socio-historical view that identities are actively created in a specific time and place; I would extend this further to include Skinner *et al's* view which says that identities are “constantly reconstituted in dialogue with others” (1998:11) and that identity is always “unfinished and in process” (Holland *et al*, 1998: vii). The teachers in this study appear actively engaged in a process of identity creation and (re)creation within the context of the school, a setting in which communication with others is a key focus. The study participants are engaged in dialogue with other teachers, students, sometimes themselves, as well as the discourses that exist in this particular social space. Their response is a ‘struggle’ to make meaning. In active response to the dialogue and discourses present in this particular time and place, the teachers “work” (Jones, 2001:7) to (re)create an identity, both for themselves and for others.

The teachers are aware of the dialogic relationship between themselves and other teachers, and students, and with prevailing discourses. Beynon, Ilieva and Dichupa’s (2004) investigation of how a group of immigrant teachers in Canada responded to the prevailing discourses of their particular figured world of attempting to enter the public educational system as teachers, relates to this aspect of this particular study. Beynon *et al's* study and this particular study are concerned with how individuals respond to the active dialogue which then contributes to an individual’s (re)construction of self. The teachers in this study have come to Canada, and to this particular place, the figured world of Standard English School, with an identity that was created in another time and place, a former ‘prior script’, which is added onto and reshaped in a on-going process of identity (re)creation. The teachers’ identities in terms of themselves as successful L2 users are challenged by colonial and dominant society, and business discourses which present the native speaker as the preferred model for language learners. Teachers’ responses in the classroom are carefully attuned to

what the industry and their students as consumers want, and thus influence their image of themselves.

Several teachers showed the struggle they felt in the contradictions of their position as “Other” in this new figured world, where once they were capable members of a dominant society discourse in their own countries. At home they were users of a “privileged” language, and familiar with their environment and social structures and culture; in Canada they are “alien” and have ‘undesirable’ versions of English. In response to the prevailing discourses, the teachers frequently see themselves as unworthy representatives of culture and language. Yet they face further contradiction and conflict, when they acknowledge that often their language skills are superior to native speakers, or recognize that they perhaps have greater empathy for language learners than native speakers have, and have repeated success as language teachers. The teachers have authored identities of themselves as language teachers in Vancouver, and for most they are identities that would be different from the ones they feel they would have in their country of origin. Several teachers reported that they would not have the same teaching identity, or likely would not teach at all, were they at home.

In their home countries, the teachers in this study were successful users of English, and there had mastery of the ‘right’ language. That feeling of mastery is contrasted to how the teachers feel here, in the context of Standard English School. In this location, they often feel disadvantaged, since here they possess a version of English that is sometimes found, by others and by themselves, to be lacking, and not ‘good enough’. In their response and often active resistance to the discourses, a past identity is changed, and a new version of self is (re)created in a kind of struggle. This is reminiscent of Peirce’s (1995) record of the struggle that immigrant women engaged in against the discourse of their social worlds, and the Canadian teachers of Chinese ancestry interviewed by Beynon, Ilieva, and Dichupa (2001). Like the findings from these two studies, the immigrant teachers in this particular study are seen to both respond to and resist

the dominant discourses, and “trace a ‘route’” (Beynon *et al*, 2001:147) for themselves. The teachers’ ‘route’ is sometimes challenging, but is marked by success. All the teachers continue to receive positive feedback from students for their teaching, and in their words have sometimes had to re-teach topics to students that were originally taught by *native*-speaking English teachers. The immigrant teachers feel that they have a first-hand understanding as language learners of the challenges faced by their students, and so feel that they are better equipped to help their students, than ‘mere’ native speakers are, and also readily provide their students with language learning “tricks” to help learners succeed.

The participants in Katherine Jones’ (2001) study were native speakers of British English – holders of the ‘right’ language - who had immigrated to America. Jones’ study participants related how they actively engaged in a process of identity (re)creation in their new lives in America. They found that in America, Anglophiles frequently put speakers of British English on a pedestal, a position of reverence that was generally unfamiliar in the participants’ past social contexts. They found also that in America the colonial language marked a British person as educated, or cultured, and generally a privileged minority, regardless of one’s original social status or background. As Jones reports, in the figured world of Anglophilia in the United States, ‘English’ denotes a preferred identity. As a result of their response to this discourse, the selves of their prior scripts are reshaped to become new versions of themselves in which they are viewed, in America, as privileged holders of a colonial discourse. Jones’ participants actively used their language to carve out new identities, responding to the discourse that portrayed them in this new light.

The teachers in this study are aware of the power of a colonial and dominant society discourse and how these discourses have the ability to position a minority as “Other”. The British immigrants in Jones’s study belonged to a minority group, but one that was not typically marginalized; the teachers in this study are a minority group in Canada and in the figured world of ESL. A colonial

discourse in America empowered the participants in Jones's study; the participants in this study are not so empowered. When the teachers in this study hear and then respond to these particular discourses, by internalizing them, the teachers' perceptions of self are changed; their identities are (re)formed in the context of this particular space and time in an active process of self. Sometimes Jones's participants resisted the discourse by occasionally hiding their British identity. The teachers in this present study also hide their identity when it suits them, for example, not revealing their country of origin to their students, or even using a different name when applying for a teaching position. By not stating who they are, the teachers recreate new identities, identities that do not include their country of birth, or perhaps their family name.

During the interview process, I was also aware that several of the teachers were involved in another struggle, in that the interview site presented a new figured world in which they viewed themselves. In this figured world of the interview site, several of the teachers experienced a struggle between their concept of their present identities and the researcher-interviewee role, and also a struggle with the contrast between their prior scripts and their present identities as ESL teachers. The boundaries of the interview process, the interview itself and the time between interviews which allowed for personal reflection, became another time and space in which meaning was negotiated. In this space, teachers (re)created different versions of themselves by examining past actions or beliefs, and reviewing them within the new context, the figured world of the interview process; a process which was at times difficult for some of the teachers.

The interview site and the dialogue within it were spaces in which new identities were constructed both for the researcher and the participants. The participants were able to (re)create new versions of themselves as interviewees, who could choose what information to reveal, or not, and the manner in which it was presented. In collaboration with the researcher, a "passionate participant"

(Lincoln, 1991, in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:115), new meaning was (re)created. The researcher was actively involved in constructing new meaning, a new figured world, by recording and later interpreting the teachers' stories, and presenting those stories as text to be read by a wider audience.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

This study was a socio-historical exploration of the identity 'work' (Jones: 2001) carried out by immigrant ESL teachers in a private language school in Vancouver, and examined how the teachers' identities were shaped by the discourse around them in that particular figured world. The number of teacher participants in this study and student participants in the original pilot study in this study was small (teachers n=7; students n=4). The information sought was qualitative rather than quantitative in nature, and so the results reported should not necessarily be widely generalized to include all immigrant teachers. The value of this exploratory research work lies, not in the broad statements it might make about large populations, but in the detail it can provide about socio-historical interactions within a particular social context. One area for future research might include a larger sample group of teachers and students, so that a fuller picture of the both the teacher and student perspective can be gained.

The literature on colonial and dominant society discourses reviewed in this study notes that a specific 'ideal' model for language learning exists, that of the native speaker and that individual status is assigned within that model; certain models of native language speakers are more desirable than others. For the immigrant teachers in this study, this discourse is present in both their past lives and their present, and affects how they view themselves. As 'failed' native speakers, the teachers view themselves as "Other". Teachers expressed several

concerns about their English ability that they found difficult to objectively define; one teacher described it as a “natural thing” that she lacked. Research that sought how that ‘deficiency’ might be articulated by immigrant teachers would perhaps provide administrators with ways to support their staff, by being aware of potential teacher anxiety, and possibly indicate ways to alleviate immigrant teachers’ fears of not being ‘good enough’. In an effort to support immigrant teachers, research that looked at how culture is taught in language classrooms and that examines ways to help immigrant teachers feel more comfortable with how to approach the cultural aspects of language teaching would be useful. This kind of research might lead to developing ways to help immigrant teachers gain that ‘natural thing’ that they report is lacking, or more importantly, point out and affirm the skills the teachers have and the contributions they already make to the world of ESL. Findings suggest that immigrant teachers need positive affirmation of their language ability and also their teaching identities.

One of the reasons behind this research was how I and other administrators in an ESL context could better support immigrant teachers in their work-place setting; research which provided administrators with ways to better support immigrant teachers, and affirm the positive contribution that they make to a private language school setting would be very helpful.

5.7 Conclusion

This study has conducted an exploratory investigation into the work lives of seven immigrant teachers in Vancouver. It focused on how individuals respond to and are affected by discourses within a specific context. The findings indicate that the people interviewed are frequently silenced by dominant discourses in their work setting, and placed in subject positions by that discourse. The study also focused on the way identity is (re)created by each of the teachers in the context of a Vancouver private language school setting, in response to the

discourse. While that self might not be the same as the self of a prior script, individuals manage to 'trace a route' for themselves within this particular figured world; individuals are able to (re)write their individual scripts.

The students in the pilot study reiterated what I had felt from the beginning, that ultimately as long as a teacher effectively attends to key elements in their learning, then the students feel that the teacher contributes to their progress. Both teachers and students recognize that certain elements do contribute to making a teacher a successful English as a Second Language teacher: speaking clearly, knowing the grammar and use of the language, being able to understand one's students' needs, knowing the culture of the language. These elements rather than where a teacher comes from are ultimately what is important to the student. I have observed native English-speaking teachers who have not met all of these criteria and consequently have not been successful in the classroom; failure to meet those criteria is not restricted solely to non-native English speaking teachers. As an administrator I have also spoken with many would-be teachers who think because they *speak* English they can surely teach it, training or no. I know from student evaluations and my own observations of their teaching that the immigrant teachers in this study are all excellent, highly capable teachers, perhaps all the more so because of their sensitivity to their students' needs and expectations as learners.

While the teachers on one level seemed to know that it really does not matter where you are from, ultimately it does matter to them; they are still under the weight of the oppressor's language. It is not 'their' language, it is *only* their second language, ergo by association it *must* be second-class, right? More than that, teachers can feel marked by their skin colour. Roxanna Ng talks about thinking and acting "against the grain" (Ng, 1997:49); making school settings comfortable for teachers like Aurelia, Joanna, Lee, Claudio, Sabina, Janka and Jayida , and places where they can feel and actually be truly treated like equals

by students, colleagues and school administrators. The challenge of how to achieve that is not simple. The short time I spent with these teachers has changed my understanding of their position and mine, and hopefully my future responses to them and other immigrant teachers. I am humbled by their experience, and hope I have done justice to their words, it is impossible to know their situation and feelings exactly: mine is after all only a second-hand account reported here in this new space, the figured world of this document.

5.8 A Post-script, and a Lesson for the Researcher

I entered this research knowing that as a researcher and interviewer I would hold a dominant subject position in the interview site, and that this power would be intensified by being an authority figure in the school's institutional hierarchy. I was the person who supervised and evaluated teachers' work; I was the person who arranged schedules for students, and responded to their requests, or not. The teacher, Lee's, boyfriend cautioned her against participating in the study in case it jeopardized her job. Quickly and somewhat ashamedly, I came to realize through the research process that I was the very embodiment of colonial and dominant discourses, which create and pervade the labels of NNEs: I was the WASP, the holder of the "favoured accent" that both Aurelia and Lee referred to several times. Part-way through the research process I felt paralyzed by my position of WASP-ish dominance, and felt that I had no right to speak for the teachers, those "Others". Michelle Fine (2000) helped me understand that I had no choice but to give their words a space to be heard. In our final interview, Lee told me that she was surprised that I had asked the questions I had, since "no-one else seems to notice". Her words perhaps echoing Roxanna Ng's comment on how we are / I am guilty of taking a 'neutral' or 'objective' stance in the interest of 'fairness' (Ng, 1997:50), and thus, by treating everyone as "the same" we are/ I am in fact perpetuating our / my privileged, white position (*ibid.*),

and at that moment Lee, and the other teachers, seemed to be giving me tacit approval to tell the story which I had been privileged to hear:

It felt like you were speaking on behalf of me. I was actually very touched because I know I don't have that. Up till this day, I know when I want to talk about intimate stuff. I always struggle, grammar-wise - maybe because I know I'm an immigrant? Even now, I know I really want to sit down and just let my thoughts speak for themselves, but I struggle with that. - Lee

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