# A STORY OF TEXTS, CULTURE(S), CULTURAL TOOL NORMALIZATION, AND ADULT ESL LEARNING AND TEACHING

by

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# Abstract

This study explores engagements with texts as tools for cultural topic activities in two adult ESL classrooms as well as engagements with culture(s) in and outside the two classrooms. It introduces the notion of cultural tool normalization to conceptualize processes of cultural reproduction within engagements with culture(s). The study draws on classroom observations and interviews with 2 teachers and 41 students and employs sociocultural, poststructural, psychoanalytical and critical discourse analysis perspectives in analyses of the data.

The study examined whether monologic or dialogic text features made a difference in possibilities for students' negotiation of the texts' cultural meanings. The analyses point to a complicated picture of the interaction between texts and their users, to occasions when students' knowledge and views could be ignored as well as powerfully evoked when both monologic and dialogic classroom texts were interacted with.

The analyses suggest that the acculturation model of cultural instruction, which entails learning about dominant forms of culture, seemed to dominate the research sites. Further, in enquiring into the students' (dis)identifications with the cultural discourses thrown in their paths, the analyses point out that the adult immigrants' engagements with Canadian culture(s) are affected by the variety of their social positions within these discourses.

The study contends that CTN may be linked to discursively constructed desires. Further, CTN may entail the desire to continue to perform particular identity positions constructed differently in the new discourses surrounding adult immigrants or may involve the embracing of a particular new discourse and associated with it identity positions.

The study concludes with implications for classroom curriculum, practices and teacher education. It points to possibilities for inviting students' negotiations of the cultural discourses embedded in classroom texts, to the need for teachers and students to explore the discursive character of culture(s) through the employment of a model of critical multiculturalism in classroom settings, and to the need for teacher education practices to link issues of social change with work on teacher identities.

## Dedication

To my daughter Mia Gaya learning to live between and within

culture(s)

and

to adult immigrant ESL speakers living between and within culture(s)

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Nowadays, culture is widely acknowledged to play an important part in second language education and is no longer viewed as "an add-on", but rather as "an integral part" (Courchene, 1996, p. 1) of the second language classroom (Atkinson, 1999; Byram, 1989; Duff and Uchida, 1997; Kramsch, 1993, 2003; Kubota, 1999, 2003; Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan and Street, 2001). In addition, research in cultural instruction in language education suggests that textbooks are an influential bearer of culture in the second language classroom (Damen, 1987), functioning to purvey images of the new culture (Byram, 1989, Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004). Hutchinson and Torres (1994) claim, however, that despite the impact of study materials as "an almost universal element" (p. 315) of English language teaching, texts have received little attention from researchers.

This study explores engagements with texts as tools for cultural topic activities in two adult ESL classrooms as well as engagements with culture(s) in and outside the two classrooms. It introduces the notion of cultural tool normalization to conceptualize processes of cultural reproduction within engagements with culture(s). The study draws on classroom observations and interviews with 2 teachers and 41 students and employs sociocultural, poststructural, psychoanalytical and critical discourse analysis perspectives in analyses of the data.

In this chapter I explore the reasons behind my own research interests in the engagements of adult ESL[1] learners with culture(s) and texts, and in a process linked to these which I term cultural tool normalization. Overall, my investigative endeavours suggest that I perceive research as a search for personal meanings and courses of action that would allow me to cope with the challenges which I, an adult immigrant to Canada, an ESL speaker, and an EFL/ESL teacher/fledgling academic, experience (or have experienced at some time) in my daily life. Or, as Lather would say, I seem to be doing research as "another version of writing the self" (1991, p. 113). In the pages that follow, I present personal experiences that have triggered my research interests, fully aware that "direct" experiences cannot be communicated, but are always constructed within the discourses one is situated in. I discuss my interests in culture(s), texts, and cultural tool normalization separately. However, this separation is done primarily for the sake of coherence and, as it will become obvious from the stories I tell, does not reflect the intermingling layers of experiences which have led me to ponder over these matters.

**Culture(s)**

My interest in culture and cultural instruction in second language classrooms spans more than a decade now. I first developed a concern with

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[1] I am aware of the controversies implicated in using the term ESL to designate English language learners, and of the increasing preference to use other terms like ESOL (Zamel & Spack, 2004), learners of minority language backgrounds (Toohey, 2000), etc. to name these learners. I have kept the mainstream designation "ESL" not to perpetuate its negative connotations, but to be constantly reminded of the fact that "for all practical purposes" (Hall, 1988, p. 44), this is how these learners are being positioned in many discursive spaces they inhabit and this is the positioning they have to live with on a daily basis.

culture as a result of my personal experiences as an adult immigrant to Canada and the story that follows is a reworked and shortened version of a story I first told in my Master's thesis:

Story 1

> I studied English as a foreign language for over 10 years and taught it to adults for 7 years in my native country, Bulgaria. I came to Canada in 1992, confident that as a fluent speaker of the English language, who was also equipped with ample information about Canadian society, its history and its institutions, I would have few difficulties in coping with the new environment. Of course, I expected that there would be differences between me and the Canadians I was going to meet. But I assumed that I could predict them on most occasions. I knew, for example, that Canadians are "generally" very punctual or that I should phone ahead and arrange a date before visiting someone, instead of just dropping by unannounced. Unfortunately, however, such information did not help me much and problems started immediately after my arrival. They consisted mainly in my understanding the words when speaking with my interlocutors but not understanding the underlying meanings. For example, an invitation by a new friend to have coffee together resulted in each of us paying her own bill[2]; my long and detailed answers to the question "How are you?" more often than not took by surprise most Canadians greeting me; discussions with a Canadian on common words like 'forgiveness' led me to the realm of 'religion'

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[2] My assumption, based on previous experiences in my native culture, was that she would pay because she had suggested we go for coffee.

and 'sin' instead of to the comfortable, for me, understanding of the term as 'excusing a minor offence'. I was in shock. Countless incidents of this type in my everyday dealings with people led me to believe that there was something wrong with either me or my knowledge of English and of Canada. I was frustrated. I felt disappointed and deceived by the educational system which had left me with the expectation that knowledge about a language and culture received in a language classroom or from a variety of written texts allowed one to live effectively in a community of that language and culture bearers.

The story I told so far justifies an interest in culture and cultural instruction, but does not address the need I have developed to refer to culture in the plural as culture(s). This designation is again the result of my own immigrant experiences with culture, coupled with current anthropological and cultural studies conceptualizations of culture. I will elaborate on the theoretical formulations of culture I endorse in a later chapter, but here I will only add to my personal story that in my daily interactions with Canadians there continued (and occasionally still continue) to be situations when my verbal and/or non-verbal conduct produce a look of shock on the face of my interlocutors. I am often led to interpret this look as triggered by a cultural gaffe I have committed. Interestingly enough, however, the behavior I then assume would be more culturally appropriate in similar situations with other Canadians is often not interpreted as such. Because of my experiences of the impossibility of relying on a "body of cultural knowledge" to act on in any particular situation in a Canadian context, and the understanding I have developed of the heterogeneity and contradictions

that "criss-cross from within and beyond [cultural] boundaries" (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 20), I choose to discuss in this dissertation culture(s) and not culture.

But let me go on with my early grappling with culture(s). The frustrations I experienced initially in my struggle to feel comfortable in my new country led me to ponder over the inextricable tie between language and culture in my Master's thesis. They also triggered a search for ways to assist adult immigrants to a country (like myself) in their everyday dealings with a culture through language and culture classes. Thus, on the basis of personal experiences with immigration and current conceptualizations of culture in anthropological and culture teaching literature, my MA work outlined an approach to cultural instruction in adult second language education named "culture exploration" (Ilieva, 1997, 2001). Culture exploration consists of employing techniques of ethnographic participant observation in and outside the classroom, and holding reflective, interpretive and critical classroom discussions on students' ethnographies. In my thesis I argued that through culture exploration students could develop skills to investigate culture on their own as well as gain awareness of humans as cultural beings and positioned subjects, and of the relationships between language and culture. I also expressed the hope that through such an approach students would be in a position to develop their own voices and would be empowered to act to fulfill their own goals in their new environment.

On a personal level, the writing of my Master's thesis allowed me to make sense of the frustrations I experienced in my interactions with Canadians in my daily life, and the approach to cultural instruction which I advocated allowed me

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to build a comfort zone for myself in my new environment through the focus on developing coherent understandings of positioned cultural experiences. It also gave me the sense that it may be possible for me to begin to feel at ease in acting in Canada in a satisfactory manner with regards to the ends I have and in accommodating the ends of my interlocutors. My Master's work, however, also led me to begin my PhD research with very particular assumptions as to what might work to assist adult immigrant ESL students with their everyday dealings with culture in Canadian contexts.

## Texts[3]

As already mentioned, I am interested in examining adult immigrant ESL learners' engagements with texts on topics that address Canadian culture(s). Simply put, my interest in these was triggered by my own interactions with such texts in the early stages of my emergent interest in culture(s). I will present stories of these interactions later in this chapter when I explore my interest in cultural tool normalization, but here I want to reflect on why I began my PhD work with the assumption that texts are a very important curriculum artifact which shapes the classroom experience.

As Butt, Raymond, McCue and Yamagishi suggest, "[t]he form of education that stays with us and informs our subsequent choices and actions is that which results from experiences which have a telling impact on our person" (1992, p. 58). I was schooled in an educational system where classroom

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[3] I need to point out that much in line with poststructuralist understandings of the term text, I view texts to be not only pieces of written materials, but any attempts at representation regardless of the form they take (cf. Hall, 1997).

curriculum was equated with textbook materials and a standardized national curriculum prepared by "experts" at the Ministry of Education was expected to be "covered" in any school in Bulgaria. It may sound absurd, but there were no competing textbooks that teachers could pick and choose from to present an academic discipline to their students. The role of the teacher in the classroom was to communicate the knowledge about the subject matter presented in the textbook to the students whose task was to remember the information given to them[4]. The textbook was the unchallenged authority in the classroom and neither teachers nor students questioned the validity of that arrangement.

My teaching experience in Bulgaria confirmed my experiences as a student with respect to the unquestioned authority of the textbook. I taught English to Bulgarian adults at a Foreign Language Centre which can be compared to the language centres attached to universities in Europe and North America. Following the maxim which operated in Bulgaria that curriculum is textbook material, a textbook had been developed that presumably addressed the language needs of our student population. The materials in the textbook "English for Bulgarians" were mandatory and the values imparted in them were not open to questioning or discussion on the part of the students or the teachers[5]. In addition, teachers were expected to employ uniform methodology when using the textbook.

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[4] Such a model of instruction has been termed a transmission model (Au, 1993), characterized by students' passive absorption of skills and knowledge as opposed to constructivist models of instruction that encourage learners to construct actively their own understandings of texts.

[5] Despite the skepticism classroom participants secretly held about the official version of many events or cultural phenomena, in communist Bulgaria we were not provided with strategies to develop critical skills that would allow us to create meanings for ourselves that could differ significantly from the ones operating around us.

It seems obvious to me now that in beginning my PhD research, I placed an excessive emphasis on instructional materials as a formative tool in classrooms simply because I had experienced them as such. A direct transfer of my assumption to the Canadian context seems unwarranted. My studies in Canada made me realize the privileged position of teachers here as interpreters of texts in the classroom space. As worldviews are open to questioning and critique in a non-totalitarian state like Canada, the possibility exists for teachers and students to explore critically the knowledge legitimated in the textbook materials they use. The extent to which this possibility is realized is, of course, another matter, as other constructs, institutional norms and expectations may impinge on and constrain actors' possibilities for doing this.

The role of various sorts of texts as formative tools was apparent to me as well during my early immigrant encounters with broadcasts on Canadian television. I remember feeling frustrated that news broadcasts are constantly interrupted by commercials, that news anchors tell even the most horrific stories with a smile on their face, that sensational news of a crime investigation may precede news of changes in legislation that may affect the majority of the population in the country. Having experienced news broadcasts very differently in my native country, I wondered about their role as texts allowing different forms of connections to become prominent in one's interactions with news items. I wondered how involved a TV viewer in Canada would be with, for example, the plight of kids dying of hunger in Ethiopia if their story was related by the cheerful tone of voice of a news anchor and followed by a McDonalds commercial.

It seems obvious to me now that such an involvement would depend very much on the classed, gendered, racial, etc. position of a given viewer as well as on the particular circumstances in which s/he was when viewing the TV story of these kids. Nevertheless, I still wonder if such a story is related by a more somber looking and sounding news anchor and followed by another news item and not the lavish eating of burgers by happy North American consumers, whether more viewers would have a greater chance to empathize with the kids than see them as a distant reality unrelated to their world. In other words, if some of the circumstances of the viewing changed, perhaps that could lead to possibilities for change in one's interactions with the presented story.

## Cultural tool normalization

Cultural tool normalization (CTN) is a term that incorporates processes of acculturation, or more specifically cultural reproduction, and is a construct I have devised drawing on Wertsch's (1998) theorization of cultural tools[6]. In my never-ending struggle to make sense of my immigrant experiences, I felt compelled to address in my early work towards my PhD a phenomenon that I was experiencing with regard to my integration in Canadian society. In a paper for a graduate course I took in the spring of 1999, I employed the construct "cultural tool normalization" to explore the imperceptibility with which I, an adult immigrant to Canada consciously resisting some cultural tools available in my new

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[6] Cultural tool is a term used to denote the mediational means employed by individuals/agents in performing a given action. Cultural tools encompass a wide variety of means and, as an example, range from physical objects, to theoretical constructs a researcher employs to advance an argument, to language.

environment, had nevertheless appropriated these and come to consider them "normal".

My interest in this question was triggered by a feeling of loss of my immigrant perceptions that I experienced several years ago when attempting to examine how culture is constructed in Canadian textbooks designed for adult ESL learners. The stories that follow are the stories I wrote for my graduate course and display the intermingling of culture(s), texts, and immigrant experiences in grappling with topics that I deem important to address in research endeavours:

Story 2

> It is the spring of 1994. My husband and I have lived in Canada for one and a half years and I have just finished my course work for my Masters degree in Education at Simon Fraser University. I am wondering what topic to select for a thesis. The topic I initially intended to work on, the learning strategies of adult language learners, does not seem relevant any more. Subconsciously, I am looking for a topic that, while focusing on educational issues, would address to a great extent the challenges I experience in my life as an immigrant and whose research would allow me to make sense of the unfamiliar world around me. I have already realized that my greatest challenge is successful communication with Canadians despite my usually correct grammatical and, I think, pragmatic use of English in conversations. I have just started becoming aware of the interrelationship between language and culture. With the help of scholarly readings it dawns on me that, on the basis of my personal immigrant experiences, I perceive the need to argue that

language proficiency involves cultural competence and thus cultural instruction is essential for an in-depth understanding of and communication in a language. I decide then that perhaps I should focus in my thesis on ways to make language students aware of the relationship between language and culture and I start wondering what adult learners of English learn about that relation and especially about Canadian culture from the textbooks intended for them. I feel that focusing on this topic will allow me to learn what the society I live in now deems important to communicate to immigrants like myself and thus help me with integration in Canadian society that I am so desperately trying to achieve. I start searching for current Canadian textbooks designed for ESL adults in libraries, make copies of units specifically addressing Canadian content, and soon collect a whole pile. It is the summer of 1994. Now that I am done with photocopying, I make my task to read through the photocopied units and figure out what one can learn about the relationship between language and culture, and Canadian culture from these texts. I leaf through the units, page after page, and realize with dismay that I am not learning from these texts anything about the language/culture connection or what I seem to perceive Canadian[7] culture to be, i.e. Canadian ways of experiencing, understanding and explaining the world. The texts which purport to present Canadian content are just giving me factual information about Canadian history, geography, etc. True, some refer to shopping habits of Canadians, to hockey as the national

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[7] At this point in time I was not aware of the impossibility to identify a generic Canadian culture.

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sport in Canada, etc. But none tell stories I have experienced, stories of immigrants blundering over how to thank a host who has invited them over to dinner, stories of the fear to make a telephone call to a government agency of some kind, knowing that you will have to communicate with voice messages. Where is the person who is supposed to integrate in Canadian society, I wonder? True, the characters in some of the stories have non-Canadian names, but is there anything in their behaviour that would suggest they are struggling to make sense of what is around them? How realistic are these stories? Is the information in these texts the kind of knowledge adult immigrants need to survive and prosper in Canada? I leaf through these texts and place post-it notes on almost every page to remind myself that I have found something wrong with this particular text in the way it addresses Canadian culture. But, what do ESL theoreticians consider culture? How do ESL theoreticians think cultural instruction should be addressed in adult ESL classes? My answers to the last two questions, as well as the understanding I developed of one possible way culture could be addressed in adult second language classrooms, formed the bulk of my Master's thesis and left no space for an analysis of Canadian textbooks for ESL adults. That is fine. If I ever decide to do a Ph.D., I will address this question in my doctoral work.

Story 3

It is November 1998. My husband and I have lived in Canada for a little over 6 years. I started my Ph.D. studies a year ago and I have a clear focus for my Ph.D. dissertation. I intend to address in

it how culture is constructed in Canadian textbooks for adult ESL learners and to what extent textbooks as curriculum artifacts allow/invite students to explore and negotiate their own cultural experiences in the new for them Canadian environment. I am taking a course that focuses on issues of language, discourse, and identity. For a final paper for the course I decide to go back to units from Canadian textbooks that I photocopied some years ago and select texts on which to do a critical discourse analysis. I figure this will be a good preparation for the work I will have to do for my dissertation. I get the pile of photocopies lying at the bottom of a drawer for 4 years now and start leafing through them. What strikes me is that more than half of them seem O.K. to me! What did I find wrong with these texts when reading through them some years ago? Why did I put so many post-it notes? Why did I write comments on so few of them? I remember the general feeling that I felt alienated from these texts when I first read them. But was my reaction so self-evident then that I didn't see the need to write down my comments? I panic! Time is running out; what am I going to do for this course assignment? Fortunately, there are a few texts which I still revolt against so I choose some of those to focus on for the final paper. I manage to do some kind of critical discourse analysis of the texts I identify as blatantly stereotypical and write the final paper for this graduate course on time, but I am left with a big question. What do I do for my Ph.D. dissertation? I can no longer rely on my reactions as a new immigrant interacting with texts designed for ESL adults to guide me in the analysis I was intending to engage in. I am

upset. How did this happen? Why do so many of these texts appear "normal" to me? Where is the anger with which I initially read them? What am I going to do? True, there are enough sophisticated discourse analysis techniques described in scholarly literature which can help me get by and perhaps come up with a decent analysis of these texts in my Ph.D. dissertation, but the fact that I, as the "insider" in the group to whom these texts are addressed, can no longer perceive them with the eyes of an immigrant makes me question the usefulness of such research. I am reminded of a point de Castell and Bryson (1997) make of the need for Others to research and write as Others and not about them for a disruption of hegemonic voices in the academic world to have a chance to take place.

It is February 1999. I have to start thinking of a topic to write on for another graduate course. I still don't know where I stand in terms of a dissertation research topic; I guess I don't have one right now and I am devastated. I only feel that at this point in time I need to address the following questions: how did it happen that I lost my initial immigrant perceptions of the ways culture is constructed in ESL textbooks for adults while fully remembering how I rejected these ways of construction at first? Is there a chance to preserve some of my immigrant understandings of the world around me? They, I feel, are the most precious thing I have to offer the academic world if I want to add to the very few current efforts to disrupt and transform business as usual in institutions providing ESL instruction to adult immigrants like myself.

The paper that I wrote for my graduate course in the spring of 1999 employed Wertsch's work on cultural tools to conclude that the loss of my immigrant perceptions when interacting with ESL texts was the result of a process of cultural tool normalization which is tied to the availability, access to, pervasiveness and possibilities for mastery and appropriation of given cultural tools/discourses[8] in a given context. I was left wondering, however, how cultural tool normalization interplays with an individual's desires for integration in a given context. Overall, this work left me eager to learn more about processes of cultural tool normalization, processes I hoped I would gain further understanding of, if I explored how other ESL speakers engage with texts and culture(s) in the new for them Canadian environment.

**Final thoughts on personal assumptions**

This chapter attempted to present experiences that have triggered for me an interest in culture(s), texts/instructional materials, and cultural tool normalization as topics that deserve to be tackled in research endeavours. These themes are interconnected in my immigrant experiences as I see texts as offering available representations of culture(s) and as tools embedding cultural discourses the engagements with which may lead to cultural tool normalization. To clarify this view, I return to the example of TV news broadcasts I used in explaining my position of the importance of texts in one's interactions with a new environment: such texts, for instance, display what a news broadcast involves and means for the authors and producers of such programs, i.e. these texts construct a

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[8] I will argue for the possibility to conceptualize cultural discourses as tools in chapter 2.

"culture"/cultural discourse of a news broadcast which, if readily available and pervasive, gets mastered and perhaps constructed as normal by at least some of the broadcast's viewers.

This dissertation is also in a way an exploration of my desires as a researcher. Lee (2000), who "provisionally" aligns her research and writing with critical discourse analysis (CDA), a field that I associate with as well, argues that questions that need to be asked of analytic work in this field concern "the relations of power-knowledge that obtain between the analyst and the object domain of analysis" (p. 188). She sees at present an important limitation in CDA in the uncritical attitude of analysts towards their own positioned interpretations of the objects of their research. Lee (cf. also Lather, 1994) urges discourse analysts to ask themselves: "What is the itinerary of desire in my knowledge, and in the choice of my objects of study who is the other to whom desire is addressed, and how is this other constituted in relations to (one)self?" (2000, p. 200). These are questions that I will refer to tangentially in the pages that follow.

In a sense, this dissertation is about how biased I/one can be in making assumptions about the possible "findings" of one's research. As I feel I can identify with, and thus am "One" with the student participants in my research on two levels: as an adult immigrant and as an ESL speaker, I presumed that many of their experiences could confirm my own. Often this has not been the case as data presented in subsequent chapters will illustrate. So I would like my work to be read as a cautionary tale to "Others" who research and write as "Others" for a mainstream audience (see Bryson & de Castell, 1997), of the instability and

fluidity of identifications as "Others", and thus of limitations in acting as the representative of "Others".

## Overview of chapters to follow

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical frames of reference that guided me in my inquiry and offers a literature review of work on culture(s), texts, and cultural tool normalization in the field of English as a second language education. Chapter 3 offers the story of my research design, data collection and analysis procedures, situates me in this study and provides a background to the research sites and study participants. Chapters 4 and 5 present my analyses of data I collected in relation to the research questions I posed. Chapter 6 discusses what I have learnt from this study and suggests recommendations for developments in ESL curriculum and instruction and directions for future research.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical frames of reference that guided me in my inquiry and offers a literature review of work on culture(s), texts, and (what I have termed) cultural tool normalization in the field of English as a second language education. Broadly put, I situate my work within the discourses[9] of sociocultural theorists who argue for the tight interconnections between agents and their resources in human actions and communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wertsch 1991, 1998). In the field of ESL[10], Toohey (forthcoming) offers a model for understanding learning in sociocultural settings that draws on such relationships which she represents diagrammatically as follows:

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[9] In this dissertation I take a social theory and poststructural perspective on discourse. Foucault (1972) conceptualizes discourse as a historically developed form of knowledge/power referring not to "groups of signs" used to designate things, but to the discursive "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49).
[10] Work in second language learning from a sociocultural perspective has been growing since the 1990s. See, for example, Lantolf & Appel (1994), Lantolf (2000).
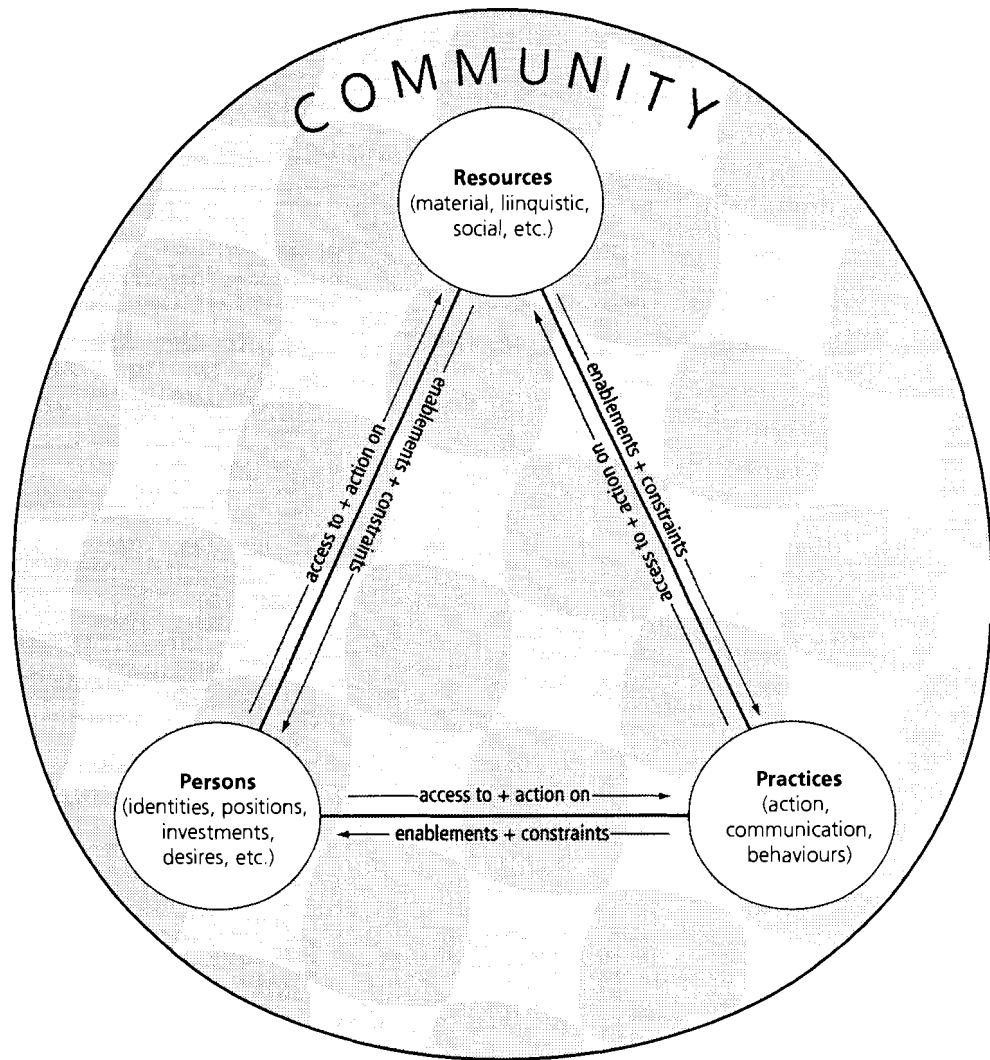
Figure 1 – Learning in Sociocultural Settings (Toohey, forthcoming). Used by permission of the author.

As this diagram indicates, persons, resources, and practices act upon (and thus shape and are being shaped) by each other so that neither is an autonomous entity unaffected by the sociocultural context within which it is embedded. In

addition, communities get produced and re-produced (Giddens, 1979, 1984)[11] in the contexts of the interactions among persons, resources, and practices in a given setting[12].

With respect to my own interests in culture(s), texts, and cultural tool normalization, this frame of reference allows me to view culture(s)/communities as produced and reproduced by agents/persons in their employment of available tools/resources in activities/practices[13]. More specifically, in relation to texts, my interest relates to how some agents/persons (in this case some adult immigrant ESL students and their teachers), with their variable identities, positions, and desires, interact with some tools/resources (in this case instructional materials) in the context of classroom activities. I am especially interested in what constraints and what enablements/affordances such textual resources present for persons. In other words, the emphasis of my work is on the axis persons/textual resources acknowledging, however, that persons engage with resources within specific activities. With respect to culture(s) and cultural tool normalization, I am interested in the aspect of cultural reproduction (and less in cultural production

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[11] Giddens' theory of structuration emphasizes the interactive relation between structure and human agency and offers the notion of duality of structure to overcome the dichotomy between structures and agents: "By the duality of structure, I mean the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution" (1979, p. 5). It is agents who in their daily actions produce and reproduce social structures.

[12] The relationships between communities/culture(s), persons, tools, and practices will be more fully theorized later in this chapter in the section on people's engagements with culture(s) and cultural tool normalization.

[13] My appropriation of Toohey's diagram, with the substitution of her terms with terms I find more pertinent to talk about, reflects a different emphasis on aspects of comparable phenomena theorized differently by different sociocultural theorists. Despite my awareness of distinctions associated with the terms above in the works of sociocultural theorists (see, for example, Cole (1995) on practice and Engeström (1999) on activity), I intend to use terms theorized in sociocultural works interchangeably, as my analysis in subsequent chapters does not necessitate such fine grained distinction.

also implied in the diagram above) that adult immigrant ESL learners may engage in when employing tools/resources within given practices in the new for them Canadian environment. I am particularly interested in the specific constraints and enablements/affordances in cultural texts and practices that the study participants engage in/with as well as in processes which might lead to some persons' reproduction of available cultural norms/discourses.

## Culture(s)

Consistent with sociocultural understandings of social phenomena, I would like to frame my discussion of current conceptualizations of culture around inquiries into the question of how people engage with culture(s). The issue of how people engage with culture(s) has been a fundamental question for many years in well established social sciences like anthropology, sociology, and psychology. For a long time, work in these disciplines has searched for determining factors, for causes and effects in the relations between "entities" such as culture and personality, structure and agency, and individuals and society, "entities" understood in dichotomous terms. Currently, with the rise of postmodernism and the development of new fields of thought such as sociocultural theories, cultural studies, and poststructuralism, work conducted on the ways people engage with culture(s) is interdisciplinary in nature. Such work theorizes links like practices, identities or identifications to address the dynamic nature of the relationship between people and culture(s).

## Culture in anthropology

Early developments in anthropology, the field that has preoccupied itself with defining and delimiting culture, led to conceptualizations of culture as a stable core set of values, beliefs, customs and behaviours (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). In the second half of this century there was a shift in conceptualizations of culture to include meanings, symbols, and language (Geertz, 1973). In the last three decades, especially with the advent of postmodernism, there has been an urge in cultural anthropology to construe cultural meanings and symbols as inherently a matter of political and economic interests (Baumann, 1996; Borofsky, 2001; Clifford, 1988; Keesing, 1994; Marcus & Fischer, 1986).

Current[14] understandings of culture in anthropology present the need for the reconceptualization of the term to account for culture's enactment in practices. Rosaldo (1993), for example, argues that a renewed concept of culture should refer "less to a unified entity ('a culture') than to the mundane practices of everyday life" (p. 217). Similarly, Baumann (1996) argues that culture "exists only in so far as it is performed" (p. 11) by human beings, and Goodenough (1994) finds "theoretically helpful to think of both culture and language as rooted in human activities (rather than societies) and as pertaining to groups insofar as they consist of people who engage with one another in the context of those activities" (p. 269).

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[14] As I have offered a review of developments in anthropological theory that have been drawn on in conceptualizing culture in second language education in my Master's thesis (Ilieva, 1997), I will focus here only on what I perceive as recent anthropological developments that have affected current shifts in thinking about culture in the field of second language teaching.

A second reconceptualization in the field of anthropology in the late 1980s and 1990s refers to culture's discursive nature. As Bauman (1996) suggests, "culture is 'occupied', in and by the dominant discourse, to mean a reified entity" (p. 197). Meanwhile, in trying to transcend the dichotomizing and essentializing notions of culture that have dominated anthropology, Clifford (1988) indicates that culture may have "served its time. Perhaps, following Foucault, it should be replaced by a vision of powerful discursive formations globally and strategically deployed" (p. 274).

Anthropologists have also turned to culture's ambiguity and slipperiness. Culture is no longer viewed as "an object to be described ... [nor] a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitely interpreted [because it] is contested, temporal and emergent" (Clifford, 1986, p. 19); it is a process with an essentially changing character (Street, 1993), characterized as much by multivocality, diversity, conflicts, and contradictions as by consistency (Rosaldo, 1993). Rosaldo also urges social analysts to recognize that "much of life happens in ways that one neither plans nor expects" and people "often live with ambiguity, spontaneity, and improvisation[15]" (ibid., p. 91). He reaches the conclusion that the fixed cultural expectations, static structures and social norms, given too much primacy in cultural interpretation, cannot attend to "improvisation, muddling through and contingent events" (ibid., p. 103). Finally, some anthropologists prefer to contest culture and instead discuss "discourses of identity" (Baumann, 1996) or speak about an identity crisis in anthropology and claim that their field is

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[15] Improvisation as an inherent element of cultural production is discussed by Holland et al. (1998).

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no longer about culture, but rather about subjectivities along with historicities (Borofsky, 1994, 2001)[16].

### Culture in cultural studies

A very important dimension of people's engagements with culture is, in my view, the role of power in people's dealings with culture(s). One field of inquiry, which is particularly concerned with power relations in cultural practices and institutions, is cultural studies[17]. More specifically, cultural studies theorists are interested in "how a particular ordering of culture came to be produced and sustained" (Hall, 1980, p. 27), and argue that this process always entails the subordination of alternatives. Thus they are interested in processes of domination and regulation and, accompanying them, resistance and struggles in the ways people engage with culture(s) (ibid.). In developing their understandings of these issues, cultural studies theorists draw on Althusser's (1971) conception of ideologies as practices which work by interpellating subjects, Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony focusing on 'common sense' as the ground on which ideologies operate (and which is incessantly contested), and Foucault's (1972) concept of discursive practices offering a break with any model of a hierarchy of determining factors in the ways people engage with culture(s) (Hall, 1980).

For the cultural studies theorist Bhabha (1990), culture(s) are symbol-forming and subject-constituting, interpellative practices constructed through a

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[16] Holland and Lave (2001) argue that both identity and culture are part of the same complex processes and focusing on one or the other alone leads to incomplete conceptions of social and individual events.

[17] Whereas culture(s)' link to power is acknowledged in recent anthropological literature (Baumann, 1996; Borofsky, 2001, Clifford, 1988; Keesing, 1994; Marcus & Fischer, 1986), this link is more fully theorized in cultural studies works.

process of othering. In other words, culture(s) are practices that constitute subjects by excluding certain subjectivities. Culture(s) operate through "the tyranny of the normal" (Aoki, 1996, p. 405) because "the discursive production of any culture as a shared thing necessitates the demeaning, isolation, repression, or annihilation of some people's subjectivity – the normalizing function of [a] cultural boundary" (ibid., p. 406). As Aoki further explains:

> Normalcy, language, power, and oppression come together in culture... the normal is another name for culture qua ethnos.... What every instance of the normal marks is the reification of culture as a thing within a particular discursive regime that elevates the binding force of that relation to the status of truth.... What culture signifies is not the community that it is, nor the one that it aspires to, but a certain fantasy of identification through articulation. (ibid.)

In this context, how certain formulations of culture come to function as authoritative frames of reference and incite identification (Bhabha, 1994a, 1994b) become central questions. The question of identification or identity is also of significance, and serves as a productive link, when "the process of subjectification to discursive practices" (Hall, 1996, p. 2) is addressed. I will turn to this question as formulated by Hall (1996) later on when discussing frameworks that have guided me in theorizing cultural tool normalization. Here I just want to suggest that the focus of cultural studies works on culture and power, and especially the implication of culture in "questions of representation, symbolic boundary

formation and identification" (Donald and Rattansi, 1992, p. 4) offer exciting avenues for second language educators interested in culture to explore.

## Culture in second language education

As the above brief review of work in anthropology and cultural studies suggests, recent reconceptualizations of the term culture imply culture's entanglements in discourses and power relations, enactment in practices, slippage into identity politics and possibilities for identification, and ambiguity. Many of these reconceptualizations have spilled over to some current culture theorizing in second language education. As I have engaged in a historical review of conceptualizations of culture in second language teaching elsewhere (Ilieva, 1997)[18], I will focus only on recent developments that signal links to the reconceptualizations discussed above.

Atkinson (1999), for example, distinguishes among three different notions of culture currently operating in the TESOL field: the first one accepts what he calls "received" (i.e. traditional) view of culture as an identifiable entity associated with national boundaries; the second one moves away from such a view in a theoretical sense, but in analyses of practices still sees culture "in some sense as repositories of shared possibly normative values" (what Atkinson terms "received-but-critical view"); and the third, a "critical view" that problematizes

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[18] Ilieva (1997) argued that inconsistencies in the conceptualizations of culture of language education theorists addressing the topic up to the mid 1980s led to inadequate practices and to the subordinate role of culture teaching in language education. The study engaged as well with more recent critical approaches to culture in the field and attempted to add to current inquiries in possible ways of integrating language and cultural instruction in second language education.

the usefulness of the concept of culture (p. 629). According to Atkinson, within the third subfield

> terms such as identity, hybridity, essentialism, power, difference, agency, discourse, resistance, and contestation have been used to describe and call into question more traditional views of culture. So used, these terms indicate the shared perspective that cultures are anything but homogeneous, all-encompassing entities and represent important concepts in a larger project: the unveiling of fissures, inequalities, disagreements, and cross-cutting influences that exist in and around all cultural scenes, in order to banish once and for all the idea that cultures are monolithic entities. (1999, p. 627)

> Following a review of current re-examinations of the concept of culture in poststructural literature, cultural studies and sociocognitive theory, Atkinson proposes six principles of a revised notion of culture to inform research and teaching in the TESOL field: all humans are individuals; individuality is also cultural; social group membership and identity are multiple, contradictory, and dynamic; social group membership is consequential; methods of studying cultural knowledge and behaviour are unlikely to fit a positivist paradigm; language (learning and teaching) and culture are mutually implicated, but culture is multiple and complex (pp. 641-647). I do not intend to engage in depth with the principles Atkinson suggests, but rather to signal their points of convergence with conceptualizations of culture in the fields of anthropology and cultural studies, for

example, the call for recognizing the complexity of culture and culture's implication in questions of identity.

Another ESL theoretician who argues for broader understandings of culture, in order to avoid unnecessary stereotyping typical of many classroom situations, is Kubota[19] (1999, 2003). Kubota (2003) suggests the employment of four key concepts in analyzing culture for the purposes of second language education: a focus on descriptive rather than prescriptive understanding of culture (1), a focus on diversity within a culture (2) and culture's dynamic nature (3), and a focus on the discursive construction of culture (4) by which she means that our knowledge about and experiences of culture are constructed in discourses. Kubota points out that the first 3 concepts have their limitations[20] that a focus on the discursive construction of culture addresses by recognizing the politics of difference and inviting a critical exploration of cultural characteristics in relation to politics, power, and discourses.

Another rich reconceptualization of culture in second language education is suggested by Kramsch (2003) who reviews recent research in biological anthropology, sociocultural theory, cognitive linguistics, and discourse and interaction, to examine implications of this research for the way language teachers conceive of culture in language study. For the purposes of the review I am engaged in, I would like to point only to some of Kramsch's views. Kramsch

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[19] Kubota (1999) discusses three models of pedagogical orientations for teaching English to culturally different students whose implications in the context of this study will be discussed later in the dissertation.

[20] For example, according to Kubota, a descriptive approach may lead to a modernist pursuit of an objective truth and may assume the existence of norms and undermine cultural creativity. In addition, a certain category that constitutes diversity and dynamics could be essentialized within a focus on culture's diverse and dynamic nature.

contends that currently in the field of applied linguistics culture is seen not as a product, but as a process of meaning ascription through language use and in various subfields of applied linguistics culture is perceived as (1) ways of categorizing, i.e. as belief or ideology, as (2) ways of interacting, i.e. as habitus or socialization, and (3) as ways of belonging, i.e. as social and cultural identity.

Finally, I would like to signal one aspect of current reconceptualizations of culture not as explicitly theorized, but nevertheless acknowledged in some educational literature – culture's ambiguity and slipperiness. In general educational literature, Yon (2000) critiques the notion of cultures "viewed as objects that can be set against each other" (p. 6) and juxtaposes to it the notion of elusive culture "made from the fragments and mingling of representations" (ibid.) to account for how "culture is experienced ambivalently and in multiple and conflicting ways" (ibid., p. 7). In second language education theory the "contradictions and inconsistencies within culture [which] often make culture learning a multiple choice question" (Whalley, 1995, p. 236) and the necessity to "go beyond training for the predictable to preparation for the unpredictable" (Byram, Esarte-Sarries & Taylor, 1991, p.8) have also been recently recognized (cf. Kramsch, 1993; Sauvé, 1996). Harklau (1999) calls culture "an elusive construct" and points to the position teachers are often placed in in the ESL classroom to "reify their own interpretation of [the target] culture, making static something that is in constant flux, and making unified something that is inherently multiple" (p. 110) (cf. also Zamel, 1997). In another publication (Ilieva, 2001), I draw attention to the need to recognize the ambiguity embedded in cross-cultural

encounters and advocate an approach to cultural instruction in language classrooms that "attempts to aid students in learning to live with the ambiguity that accompanies them in their everyday dealings with a new culture" (p. 4).

This brief review of current understandings of culture in language study/applied linguistics literature suggests that some language education theoreticians interested in culture fully embrace cultural studies and recent anthropological views of culture. One aspect of such views not as explicitly theorized in second language study works seems to be the notion of culture as a site of identification (Bhabha, 1994a, 1994b) and this is an aspect that I will attempt to explore more fully with some of the data analysis that follows[21]. Some of the analysis that follows will also entail wondering about the conditions of possibility to engage in classroom situations with the slipperiness/elusiveness of culture.

## Texts

A major part of the analyses that follow in Chapter 4 will inquire into people's engagements with texts. My initiation in this area has been primarily through theoretical work around texts rather than work that focuses on "talk around texts" (cf. Nystrand et al., 1997). In other words, my entry point in the analysis of the interactions between resources, people and practices in the classrooms I observed is the features of the textual resources available in these settings. In discussing frameworks that have influenced my thinking around texts,

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[21] I do not mean to suggest that issues of identification have not started to be of concern to applied linguists (see, for example, Ibrahim, 1999 and Norton, 2000a). My claim rather is that culture as a site of identification has not been systematically theorized in the ESL field.

I will focus on two frames of thought that I consider complementary. One refers to the field of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995; Luke, 1995, 2002) and the other to Bakhtinian (1981, 1984, 1986) understandings of texts.

## Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a relatively recent interdisciplinary endeavour in the field of discourse studies that attempts to blend functional linguistics, neo-Marxist social theory and poststructuralist discourse theory in textual analyses. Currently, CDA has gained recognition as a useful research tool in the field of education (Fairclough, 1992; Kress, 1989; Luke, 1995, 2002; Norton, 1999, Sunderland et al., 2002, Willett, Solsken & Wilson-Keenan, 1999). Whereas CDA can be termed a method of textual analysis, as Gee (1999) observes: "any [research] method always goes with a *theory*.... [because] tools of inquiry are designed to describe and explain what the researcher [already] takes to exist and to be important in a domain" (p. 5). Thus I find important to attempt to tackle the theoretical assumptions of CDA, especially as one of its proponents whose work I have found useful, Fairclough, defines CDA as "a *theory* and method for studying language in its relation to power and ideology" (1995, p. 1, italics added). (See also Luke, 2002, p. 97).

CDA stems from a view of language use as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995; Luke, 1995, 1997, 2002), which, viewed from a sociocultural perspective, involves persons and tools or resources. What this entails, for Fairclough, is that language use, or discourse, shapes and is shaped by

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society and discourse helps to constitute (as well as change) knowledge (and its objects), social relations, and social identities. Moreover, discourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies, and the shaping of discourse is a stake in power struggles (1992, p. 8-9).

Critical discourse analysts focus on texts[22] and their contexts and engage in three interrelated processes of analysis. As texts are viewed as embedded in discourse practices, which in turn are viewed as embedded in sociocultural practices, a critical discourse analysis entails a description of the linguistic features of a text (text analysis), an interpretation of the processes of production and interpretation of the text (processing analysis), and an explanation of the conditions of the production and interpretation of the text (social analysis) (Fairclough, 1989, 1995). With respect to textual analysis, following Halliday (1978, 1985), critical discourse analysts argue that language carries social meanings embodied in the lexical and syntactic structures of a given text. Thus they focus on linguistic features of a given text like transitivity, modality, passivizations, nominalizations, coherence, etc[23].

In analyzing discursive practices, Fairclough in particular draws on Foucault's (1984) work on orders of discourse as regulated social conventions as well as Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of genre, and more specifically on the tensions between centripetal and centrifugal forces in a text. The analysis of sociocultural practices is linked to Gramsci's theory of hegemony which refers to

[22] Analyses are conducted on both written, primarily media and educational texts, and on oral texts such as radio talks or doctor/patient interviews.
[23] See in particular Hodge & Kress (1979/1993) and Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew (1979) for detailed linguistic analyses of texts.

the processes of "naturalization" of the order of things in a given society and culture and highlights how "power relations constrain and control productivity and creativity in discourse practice" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 2). All these three levels of analysis are aimed at examining how knowledge, social relations and social positions are constructed in texts.

Luke (1995, 1997), is particularly interested in exploring the potential of linking a Foucauldian perspective on the *constructing* character of discourse and a linguistic analysis that examines lexical and grammatical features of texts as distinctive social actions to see "how educational knowledge, competence, and curriculum contribute to the differential production of power and subjectivity" (1995, p. 11). Luke sees the task of CDA in focusing on "how broader formations of discourse and power are manifest in the everyday, quotidian aspects of texts in use" (ibid.). Moreover, Luke argues that with the help of CDA particular discourses can be traced

> as they traverse particular institutional sites to see how they create different material effects in the way that they construct subjectivities and the bodily "habituses" of students and teachers (Bourdieu, 1991), in the way that they constrain and shape particular subjects' life trajectories ... and in the ways that they construct and instantiate particular institutional relations of power and social formations. (ibid., p. 20)

With respect to students, for Luke, and I agree, the repertoire of representations, practices, and positions made available to them in schools has identifiable material consequences for those students. "The sum total of these

[representations, practices, and positions] we could refer to as discursive resources that human subjects bring to bear when they contend with new texts and unfamiliar social institutions" (ibid., p. 21).

A significant limitation of CDA at this stage, however, is the paucity of specific research on contexts of text consumption[24] or uptake, even though their importance is widely acknowledged (Luke, 2002). Research in other areas of textual analysis can be instructive here. Smith (1990), who does research on texts from a sociological perspective, rejects the assumption of the inertia of texts and views them as active whereby "the activity of a text is a function of its reading" (p. 221). That is, texts get "activated" by the readers' interpretive practices which themselves are "properties of social relations and not merely the competences of individuals" (ibid.). For Smith (1990) textual meaning is in the text-reader encounter within a broader and sequentially significant sociocultural context.

Threadgold (1997), a feminist poststructuralist who draws on CDA, also relocates the source of textual meaning. She views textual meaning "in negotiations between readers, writers and texts" (p. 2) and maintains that the social order should be viewed as "*both* imbricated in language, textuality and semiosis *and* [as] corporeal, spatial, temporal, institutional, conflictual, and marked by sexual, racial and other differences" (p. 101). Another area of research which draws attention to reader-text relationships is reader-response theory (e.g. Fish, 1980) which has had wide implications for developments in teaching English literature (Hunsberger & Labercane, 2002). All these are different

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[24] Contexts of text production are also scarcely researched (Luke, 2002).

theoretical traditions that can be drawn on when analyzing text consumption/uptake.

In offering guidelines for the usefulness of CDA in the current times of economic and cultural globalization, Luke (2002) proposes that the range of CDA could include the documentation of

> idiosyncratic local uptakes – Fairclough's conditions of interpretation –
> where human subjects take ... dominant texts and discourses and
> reinterpret, recycle, and revoice them in particular ways ... [; as well as
> the documentation of] micropolitical strategies of interruption, resistance,
> and counter-discourse undertaken by speakers in face-to-face institutional
> and interpersonal settings. (p. 107)

The CDA that I will conduct in chapter 4 will be directed towards such documentation.

### Bakhtinian understandings of texts

Whereas CDA implies to an extent Bakhtinian understandings of texts (see in particular Fairclough 1989, 1995), I have chosen to review separately some of Bakhtin's[25] (1981, 1984, 1986) views that I found compelling in initially theorizing the texts available to my study participants. Thus, I engaged with Bakhtin's views on texts in thinking about the types of texts I observed in use in the classrooms of my study participants. In this context I found it useful to

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[25] Bakhtin's work has been seminal in advancing work in, among others, sociocultural theory (Holland et al. 1998, Wertsch, 1991, 1998), cultural studies (Bhabha, 1994), and language education (Kramsch 1993, Toohey, 2000). Whereas Bakhtin has influenced profoundly my understanding of processes of language appropriation and use in utterances as tied to processes of ideological becoming, I will focus here only on these aspects of his work that I have found particularly relevant to the analysis that I will engage in later in this dissertation.

distinguish between monological and dialogical texts. In Bakhtin's terms, a monological text depends on the centrality of a single authoritative voice whereas a dialogical text allows for a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" (1984, p. 6). An example of monological forms are poetic texts where "words and forms ... lose their link with concrete intentional levels of language and their connection with specific contexts" (1981, p. 297). Monological discourse also refers to the mode of description and narration in epics. According to Bakhtin, within the epic, characters are subjugated to the authoritative voice of the writer and differences are minimized, thus the dialogue inherent in all discourse is suppressed. As Bakhtin (1984) puts it,

> A monologic artistic world does not recognize someone else's thought, someone else's idea, as an object of representation (p. 79) .... With a monologic approach, in its extreme, a*nother person* remains wholly and merely an *object* of consciousness, and not another consciousness.... Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any *decisive* force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the *ultimate word*. It closes down the represented world and represented persons. (ibid., pp.292-293)

In contrast, novels, and especially the novels of Rabelais and Dostoevsky, are the epitome of dialogical texts according to Bakhtin. Here is Bakhtin's characterization of Dostoevsky's works:

A basic structural characteristic of Dostoevsky's works ... [is the creation of] *free* people who are capable of standing beside their creator, of disagreeing with him, and even of rebelling against him. .... It is not a multitude of characters and fates within a unified objective world, illuminated by the author's unified consciousness that unfolds in his works, but precisely the plurality of equal consciousnesses and their worlds, which are combined here into the unity of a given event, while at the same time retaining their unmergedness.... The hero's word ... does not serve as the expression of the author's own ideological position. The hero's consciousness is given as a separate, foreign consciousness. (ibid., p. 6)

In other words, novels[26] are dialogical texts within which characters interact with each other and the author to create a world of multi-voicedness and incompleteness.

### Instructional materials, society, and educational settings

Another strand of literature, which has influenced my thinking around classroom interactions with texts, focuses on the place of textbooks (or I would prefer to broadly interpret these as "instructional materials") in today's schools. Many North American curriculum theorists suggest that textbooks are central to all modern forms of schooling (Pratt, 1972; de Castell, Luke & Luke, 1989; Venezky, 1992; Westbury, 1990) and research their role from a variety of

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[26] Whereas Bakhtin (1981) claims that, unlike epics and poetry, novels are dialogic texts, he does suggest that there is a variety of novelistic texts and, thus, degrees of dialogicality in novels.

perspectives. One question of continuous interest has been the source of the 'authority' of the school text (Luke, de Castell & Luke, 1989; Olson, 1989). This question refers to whether the authority of school texts lies 'in' the structure of the text, or whether this authority derives from the broader institutional context in which such texts are used.

Olson (1989), for example, argues that the authority of school textbooks is lodged primarily in the linguistic properties and structure of the texts themselves. He asserts that unlike the language of oral communications, the language of textbooks is characterized by impersonality, i.e. the writer and reader are separated, the "knowledge" is detached from identifiable human sources, and assertions appear to have truth value independent of any particular expositor of the knowledge. In short, Olson claims that it is this manner of writing that assigns an objectivity and authority to the school texts.

Emphasizing the importance of factors which are extrinsic to texts, Luke, de Castell and Luke (1989) maintain that textbook authority is not due to texts' linguistic features, but instead is intrinsic to the social structure of schools. They perceive the nature of authority relations in schools and classrooms as the crucial context for the status assigned to texts. In contrast to Olson's analysis, which presupposes a reader's 'unmediated confrontation with the text', their position points to teachers as the mediators of textual knowledge. Thus in classroom uses of written texts, there are for students two parallel texts to be managed and integrated: the written text itself and the teacher's oral commentary on it via questions and responses to answers. In other words, Luke, de Castell and Luke

suggest that it is teacher authority to which textual authority is effectively subordinated (p. 258)[27]. In the context of this debate, Baker and Freebody (1989) focus on text-authorizing practices which may be observed in the course of classroom instruction, and argue that the relation between text and context is displayed in the activities of teaching and learning.

Of particular significance for my study is theoretical work around the notion that instructional materials are cultural artifacts (Apple, 1990a, 1990b; Luke et al., 1989; Williams, 1989). Research conducted on the relationship between textbooks and society stems from the assumption that school curriculum is not neutral and textbooks are the curriculum artifact which plays a major role in defining whose culture and knowledge are taught in classrooms. Apple (1990a) argues that texts are not simply "delivery systems" of "facts", but signify – through their content and form – particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing the vast universe of possible knowledge. In other words, they embody what Raymond Williams (1989) has called the "selective tradition", i.e. someone's selection, someone's vision of legitimate knowledge and culture (Apple, 1990b). As representations of the selective tradition, textbooks participate in no less than the organized knowledge system of society, they participate in creating what a society has recognized as legitimate and truthful (much in line with Foucault's (1980) notion of the discursive production of "regimes of truth"). In short, texts are cultural artifacts that participate in constructing ideologies and ontologies. As textbooks play an

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[27] Luke et al. (1989) also point to the function of texts as material artifacts whose value as icons in schools is reinforced by the institutional rules designed to protect the authority of the text.

important role in transmitting officially sanctioned economic, social, and moral conceptions, they influence, at least to a certain degree, the ways students come to understand themselves and their world, and the ways they can act in it and on it (Manicom, 1987).

### Research in ESL on texts in the classroom[28]

Research specifically in cultural instruction within the field of second language education indicates that textbooks are an influential bearer of culture in the second language classroom (Damen, 1987), functioning to purvey images of the new culture (Byram, 1989, Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004). Textbooks are regarded as authoritative, accurate, and necessary (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, Kramsch, 1988) and normative in presenting "cultural information as it should be viewed and interpreted" (Kramsch, 1988, p. 66). As Duff and Uchida

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[28] Most work on texts in ESL classrooms is not specifically concerned with the cultural underpinnings of language curricula, but discusses more broadly how instructional materials are linked to society. A classic in the field is McGroarty's (1985) work. Comparing ESL texts of the early 1900s with ones published in the early 1980s, McGroarty suggests that whereas earlier textbooks focused on lessons about civic responsibility, the virtues of democracy and the benefits of paying taxes, more recent ones are concerned with developing consumer skills in new immigrants. Another classic is the work of Auerbach and Burgess (1985) who argue that together with ESL institutions, textbooks promulgate ideological power with their hidden agenda of preparing adult immigrant learners for subordination. Later, Auerbach (1995) explores ways in which the relationship between learners, teachers, and texts might be changed to involve students more fully in classroom materials' selection, evaluation, and production.

Most work on second language textbooks examines textbooks for biases, stereotypes or under-representation. Porreca (1984) examines how sexism is manifested in ESL textbooks and Lesikin (1998) analyzes gender bias in instructional materials. Baik and Shim (1995) identify the different discourses operating in English language textbooks in South and North Korea as they support the dominant "regimes of truth" in these ideologically very different contexts. Shardakova & Pavlenko (2004) draw on poststructural theory and CDA to investigate two types of identity options offered by Russian textbooks: "imagined learners (targeted implicitly by the texts) and imagined interlocutors (invoked explicitly)" (p. 26). Their analysis adds to studies which suggest that "imaginary worlds portrayed in language textbooks may offer oversimplified and stereotyped identity options to FL learners. These options, in turn, may influence—and at times even shape—the students' motivation, degree of engagement with the target language and culture, and development of their intercultural competence." (ibid., p. 27-28)

(1997) point out, texts provide "a focal point and medium" for teachers' and students' negotiations with aspects of the target language culture and their own "(dis)identification with certain representations" (p. 470). Cortazzi & Jin (1999) examine ways in which culture is reflected in EFL and ESL textbooks and review textbook evaluation lists that are concerned with cultural content. Nicholls (1994, 1995) is interested in the degree to which cultural pluralism is reflected in ESL textbooks designed for use in government funded ESL classrooms in Canada. In her analysis of three such textbooks she points out that "whereby greater representation of minorities and women in textbooks now exists, ... a uniformity of middle-class, anglocentric values still informs the themes and characters in these texts" (1995, p. 113).

Very few studies are directly interested in how ESL learners and teachers interact with texts, even though the necessity to address this question has been readily acknowledged (Kramsch, 1987, Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004, Sunderland et al., 2002). One such study is by Duff (2002) who presents data on language socialization in mainstream content areas at the high school level which revealed the extent to which pop-culture texts enter mainstream classroom discussions. The analysis of these discussions as discursive practices revealed that they excluded most of the ESL students from the local English-speaking discourse community and positioned them as outsiders or outcasts. Another study by Norton & Vanderheyden (2004) addresses the appeal of Archie comics for ESL learners. On the basis of questionnaires and interviews with pre-teen ESL readers of Archie comics, the authors conclude that ESL learners find these comics engaging to read

and helpful for their literacy development in giving them a sense of ownership of the text meaning. In addition, ESL learners become through Archie comics part of a community of readers which enhances building relationships with their Anglophone peers.

Canagarajah (1993, 1997, 1999) has shown a consistent interest in how students engage with discourses represented in texts and curricula. His study of the glosses of Tamil first year university students in a North American textbook employed in their course in English for general purposes (Canagarajah 1993), points to the students' various modes of resistance to and appropriation of the discourses of the textbook. In addition, his study of the engagements of African American students with history textbooks in an English for academic purposes course suggests that students "dramatically appropriate the text to read their own themes and perspectives, thus eventually subverting the writer's message" (1997, p. 181). Hutchinson (1996) looked into the actual use of an English for Specific Purposes textbook by two teachers. She found that most often teachers did not follow the textbook script, but rather adapted and changed textbook-based tasks. In addition, the teachers' tasks were then reshaped and re-interpreted by the teacher/students interactions in the classroom.

Sunderland, Cowley, Rahim, Leonzakou and Shattuck (2002) explored teacher talk around what they termed texts 'going beyond a traditional representation of gender roles' as well as texts 'maintaining a traditional representation of gender roles' (p. 247). Sunderland et al. observed that teachers

either endorsed, ignored or subverted these representations in their classroom talk. They conclude that

> these teachers (and presumably others) draw on and produce a range of gendered discourses[;]... teacher discourse around a *given* text is diverse and cannot be predicted from the text itself ... [and] along with concerns about texts which maintain traditional representations of gender roles, there should be concerns (possibly more concerns) about those which do go beyond traditional representations, since these may not be done justice to. (p. 251)

None of these studies, however, involved exploring texts as tools for discussions on cultural topics in a classroom setting nor focused analytically on monologic/dialogic features of the texts used and whether these features made a difference in the possibilities for students' negotiations of these texts in the context of classroom text consumption. Thus, I felt it was worth exploring the qualities of the cultural tools that texts are/can be in some adult ESL classroom contexts.

## People's engagements with culture(s) and cultural tool normalization

### *Views on people's engagements with culture(s)*

Before discussing in greater detail theoretical constructs that have impacted my construction of some aspects of the processes of people's engagements with culture(s) as "cultural tool normalization", I would like to elaborate on the very process of people's engagements with culture(s) as theorized in sociocultural, poststructural, and psychoanalytical literature. Within

sociocultural literature, in their attempt to offer a theory of learning as a dimension of social practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that agents, activities, and the world are mutually constitutive. In their view,

> learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world.... Knowledge of the socially constituted world is socially mediated and open ended. Its meaning to given actors, its furnishings, and the relations of humans with/in it, are produced, reproduced, and changed in the course of activity. (p. 51)

Such a view suggests that people's engagement with culture(s) happens through activities and engenders learning on the part of people and reproduction as well as transformation of cultural systems all within the context of ongoing practice.

Another rich formulation of the ways in which people engage with culture(s) is provided by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) who consider identity, or senses of self, a useful linking concept "that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (p. 5). They use the term "figured worlds" to account for the contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted. Figured worlds provide the loci in which people develop identities and the "social positions [people occupy] become dispositions through participation in, identification with, and development of expertise within the figured world" (p. 136). In Holland et al.'s view "an identity becomes habituated" (1998, p. 190) in recurring activities.

As already pointed out, the question of identification or identity is also of significance, and serves as a productive link, when "the process of subjectification to discursive practices" (Hall, 1996, p. 2) is addressed and I will now turn to Hall's (1996) poststructural work in that regard[29]. Hall maintains that "identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude" (1996, p. 5). In addition, identities are constructed within discourse, "produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific ... practices, by specific enunciative strategies [and] ... emerge within the play of specific modalities of power" (Hall, 1996, p. 3). The subject produced as an effect of discourse has no transcendental continuity from one subject position to another. Within this context, identities are points of suturing, "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (ibid., p. 6). An effective suturing of the subject to a subject-position requires, however, not only that the subject is summoned by a discourse, but also that the subject invests in the position. Hall finds in Butler's (1993) analytic framework, which draws insights from both Foucault's work and Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, a promise for theorizing the question of the subject's identification with the discourses in which s/he is located, especially as it engages questions of the unconscious. In later work, Butler (1997) extends on her earlier formulations

[29] The question of addressing the ways people engage with culture(s) via discussing the question of identification with subject positions constructed within discourses is justified on the basis of a link that could be made between culture and discourse. First, as suggested in the section on culture(s) above, some theoreticians have made such a link. Among them is also Bakhtin for whom "culture consists in the discourses retained by collective memory ..., discourses in relation to which every uttering subject must situate himself or herself." (Todorov, 1984, p. x). Second, given the implication of "the cultural" (Keesing, 1994) in setting standards of normalcy (Aoki, 1996) and Foucault's view of discourses as normalizing practices, it could be argued that cultures, like discourses, entail knowledge-power relations.

of a subject's identification with the discourses in which s/he is constructed and it is to this later work that I now turn.

In "The psychic life of power" Butler (1997) is interested in how an attachment to subjection[30] is cultivated because she maintains that there is no formation of the subject without a passionate attachment to subjection. For individuals to become subjects, they first have to be established in language or in categories that are not of their making. Thus, assuming human beings' inherent sociality, Butler explains that

> Where social categories guarantee a recognizable and enduring social existence, the embrace of such categories, even as they work in the service of subjection, is often preferred to no social existence at all.... Bound to seek recognition of its own existence in categories, terms, and names that are not of its own making, the subject seeks the sign of its own existence outside itself, in a discourse that is at once dominant and indifferent. Social categories signify subordination and existence at once. In other words, within subjection the price of existence is subordination. (p. 20)

What this means, then, is that subjects identify with positions constructed for them within discourses because of individuals' inevitable attachment to social existence and to having a perspective (cf. Bakhin's voice) within that social existence.

In trying to tie sociocultural, poststructural, and psychoanalytically framed perspectives of people's engagements with culture(s), i.e. perspectives which

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[30] In Butler's views, subjection refers to the process whereby individuals acquire recognizable social existence and thus become subjects.

could be considered incommensurable, I have found useful the work of Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine (1984). In their book "Changing the subject", Henriques et al. argue, like many poststructuralists, that subjectivities get constructed in discourses, but, like sociocultural theorists, pay special attention to activities within which this takes place, foregrounding the regulated character of activities. In addition, in order to engage with issues of the unconscious (which they and I find important for understanding subjects' taking up positions in particular discourses), issues most thoroughly elaborated in psychoanalytical works, they use Lacan's psychoanalytical theory selectively. Critiquing Lacan's work for collapsing "into an account of a universal ... subject who is not situated historically, ...[but] bound by pre-existing language" (1984, p. 214), Henriques et al. "replace Lacan's emphasis on a universal and timeless symbolic order with an emphasis on discursive relations, viewed in their historical specificity. ... [and] produced through positioning within discursive practices" (ibid.). In this way they avoid Lacan's failure to deal with the material in its particular sociohistorical, sociocultural, and sociopolitical context and I intend to follow suit in some of the analysis that follows. Thus, drawing on Lacan's view of the unconscious as socially structured through language (and thus as the seat of signs and memories, and not drives or instincts), Henriques et al. suggest that "the discursive categories and norms which provide subject positions ... may provide the specific content of desire" (p. 218) and, thus, investment in these positions. More specifically, Henriques et al. argue that "desire ... [is] produced through power relations as they operate in particular social practices ... [which] are

themselves regulated discursively" (1984, p. 288). The notion of the discursive production of desire is illuminating for me in some of the analyses that follow.

### *What is involved in cultural tool normalization?*

As I conceptualize it, cultural tool normalization (CTN) is one aspect of the ways people engage with culture(s) and it refers to processes of reproduction of culture. Other processes refer to people's agency or creativity in engagements with culture(s), i.e. in people's production of culture(s), and while I acknowledge these processes, my inquiry does not focus on them. Whereas I am aware that processes of production and reproduction take place simultaneously (cf. Bakhtin's (1981) understanding of the interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces in any utterance), for purposes of gaining a more in-depth view of cultural reproduction, my research pays only cursory attention to processes of cultural production.

I now turn to work that has influenced my construction of aspects of people's engagements with culture which relate to the reproduction of culture(s) as cultural tool normalization. The sociocultural theorist James Wertsch (1991, 1998, 2002) discusses the question of how people engage with culture(s) by addressing the role of mediating tools in activities. The unit of analysis he proposes in his book "Mind as Action" - mediated action - refers to the "irreducible tension" (1998, p. 25) between active agents and the cultural tools they utilize in activities. By focusing on mediated action in various settings and practices, Wertsch presents a picture of cultural tools as both enabling and constraining human agents and of human agents as both appropriating and resisting (consciously or unconsciously) cultural tools. As he explains: "Cultural

tools help set the scene within which human action [occurs] and can have a powerful effect on human consciousness and action." (p. 166).

It seems to me that cultural discourses could be regarded as mediational means or cultural tools which agents employ in performing action. As already pointed out, discourse refers not to "groups of signs" used to designate things, but to the discursive "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). As Poynton clarifies, "Foucault's notion of discourse is not restricted to language but concerns the *whole gamut of cultural practices* which 'speak' to persons but which they also 'speak'" (2000, p. 19, italics mine). In Foucault's theorization of discourses, discourses are power/knowledge systems within which we take up subject positions. Discourses are both enabling and constraining, at one at the same time producing/structuring and limiting/positioning human subjects, i.e. simultaneously constructing and constraining our possibilities for thinking, categorizing and acting. Thus, it could be argued that a parallel could be drawn between Foucault's (1972) theorization of discourses and of subjects occupying positions made available to them by historically and socially contingent discourses and Wertsch's assumption that tools enable and constrain human action.

In his theorization of human action, Wertsch maintains that agents and tools are related to each other through mastery and appropriation. Mastery (or what other cognitive psychologists often call internalization), refers to the skill of knowing how to use a tool with facility (Wertsch, 1998, p. 50) and is developed though practice, i.e. mastery emerges through the repeated use of a cultural tool.

Appropriation, or the process of "taking something that belongs to others and making it one's own" (ibid., p. 53), has to do with employing a tool spontaneously and taking on particular roles and particular relationships with the tool[31]. In "Mind as Action", Wertsch (1998) offers a variety of examples of appropriation which suggest that appropriation ranges from actively embracing to strongly resisting a cultural tool (and sometimes perhaps both resisting and embracing a cultural tool at once). Wertsch does not address specifically what I call the normalizing effect of a cultural tool as evident in the stories of CTN I told in the introduction of my dissertation. Nevertheless, at least one of the examples of cultural tool appropriation he refers to provides for me an avenue to theorize cultural tool normalization.

In a section entitled "Mastering Historical Texts: Knowing Too Much" Wertsch describes a study which focuses on texts about the origins of the USA produced by college students. In his discussions of the students' texts, Wertsch suggests that in the productions of some of them, the appropriation of two or more conflicting narratives/tools is evident. What Wertsch himself points to, however, is that "one of the most striking facts about [the students'] texts is that *all of them were fundamentally grounded in the quest-for-freedom [discourse]*. No matter how much or how little the subjects seemed to accept and agree with this narrative tool, they all used it in one way or another" (1998, p. 107-108, italics in original).

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[31] In discussing how mastery and appropriation are linked, Wertsch (1998) points out that whereas in most cases "the processes of mastering and appropriating cultural tools are thoroughly intertwined" (p. 53), in some cases "the use of cultural tools is characterized by a high level of mastery and a low level of appropriation" (p. 57). He does not refer to cases, however, where appropriation does not involve mastery of a given cultural tool. The theorization of CTN that follows is linked to processes of cultural tool appropriation which imply cultural tool mastery.

The conclusion Wertsch draws is that all "subjects" did appropriate the quest-for-freedom narrative, a cultural tool they had been given, and "as a result, they were highly constrained in what they could say" (ibid., p. 108). I would like to argue that, in fact, this example points to the normalizing effect of a cultural tool on the students in his study. Moreover, it seems to me that it is indeed the students' mastery of one particular cultural tool that prevents them from employing "another narrative tool in any extended way" (ibid.). What could the students' mastery of the quest-for-freedom narrative be due to? Clearly, as Wertsch points out, "agents always employ cultural tools provided by particular sociocultural settings" (ibid., p. 109), but most important, in my view, is the pervasiveness of a particular cultural tool in a particular setting. This argument could be applied to the theorization of the loss of my immigrant perceptions when interacting with ESL texts (that I talked about in the introduction) as linked to the pervasiveness in the Canadian media and other contexts I interacted with daily of discourses employed in these texts.

As already pointed out, my work on the CTN that I myself experienced, left me wondering about the possible role of desire and identification in tool mastery and appropriation. In more recent work, in analyzing collective memory as textually mediated, Wertsch (2002) discusses at a point the mastery and appropriation of textual means and brings a further nuanced understanding of appropriation. Drawing on self-determination theory in psychology to theorize text consumption (i.e. the consumption of a cultural tool), he quotes Grolnick, Deci and Ryan's (1997) work to describe the process of appropriation as a process

involving initially "external regulation", followed by "introjected regulation" and finally "regulation through identification" (p. 121). Even though Wertsch does not elaborate on that process specifically, I see this last instance of appropriation as regulation through identification as implicated in cultural tool normalization[32]. To address CTN further, I now turn to constructions of identification and desire as framed in sociocultural and poststructural appropriations of psychoanalytical frameworks.

Both within sociocultural and poststructural appropriations of psychoanalytical theory, desire and identification are viewed as implicated in one another. Within a sociocultural framework[33], Litowitz (1993), who is interested in children's learning processes and defines identification as "both a process of making oneself similar to others ... and the product or result of that process" (p. (188), argues that "what motivates [a] child to master tasks is not the mastery itself but the desire to be the adult or to be the one the adult wants him to be. Such desires constitute identification" (p. 187). From a poststructural perspective, Fuss (1995) constructs "desire as a type of identification" and talks about the "fundamental indissociability of identification and desire" (p. 12). The link between identity and identification is also clearly exemplified in her argument

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[32] According to Grolnick et al. (1997), "internalization ... concerns the process by which individuals acquire beliefs, attitudes or behavioural regulations from external sources and progressively transform those external regulations into personal attributes, values, or regulatory styles". More specifically, "internalization ... concerns the degree to which an activity initially regulated by external forces is perceived as one's own and is experienced as self-determined" and regulation through identification occurs "when the identification has been *integrated* ... with other aspects of one's self"(cited in Wertsch, 2002, p. 121). In a similar vein, in discussing text appropriation, Wertsch suggests that "a text that is appropriated may serve as an identity resource – a means for anchoring or constructing one's sense of who one is" (ibid., p. 120).

[33] For rich formulations of identification from a socio-cultural perspective see Hodges (1998), Holland et al. (1998), and Wenger (1998).

that "every identity is actually an identification come to light... Identification inhabits, organizes, instantiates identity" (ibid., p. 2) and "names the entry of history and culture into the subject" (ibid., p. 3).

In my attempts to engage with questions of desire and identification to understand further processes of cultural tool normalization, I have also found useful Bracher (1993)[34] who successfully employs Lacanian psychoanalytical frameworks in his work in cultural criticism on how people engage with cultural artifacts. Bracher makes a strong case of the links between culture and desire[35]. As he argues:

If culture plays a role in social change, or in resistance to change, it does so largely by means of desire. Insofar as a cultural phenomenon succeeds in interpellating subjects-that is, in summoning them to assume a certain subjective (dis)position-it does so by evoking some form of desire or by promising satisfaction of some desire. .... If we hope to intervene in the interpellative forces of culture, we must understand ... the various forms and roles of desire in the subjective economy and ... the various means by which culture operates on and through these different forms of desire. (p. 19)

To sum up, in my employment of "desire" and "identification" in processes of people's engagements with culture(s) and cultural tool normalization,

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[34] Similarly to Litowitz and Fuss, Bracher (1993) views identification as one form of the desire "to become the Other" (p. 20).

[35] In the field of education Kelly (1997) also links desires to culture. She sees desire "as the tie that binds meanings of self to/and culture" (p. 17), and as "structured in and through culture" (p. 73).

I am interested in particular in appropriations of psychoanalytical works that focus on the discursive character of desire/identification. I wonder how some desires/identifications of adult immigrant learners of ESL could be implicated in processes of cultural tool normalization for them and what the material effects of these processes for these students could be.

### *Research in ESL linked to processes of CTN*

In the field of language study, work on processes that I have termed CTN has been conceptualized as acculturation. Brown (1980/1986) defines acculturation as "the process of becoming adapted to a new culture" which, in his view, demands a "reorientation of thinking and feeling, not to mention communication" (p. 33). A fairly recent construction of what acculturation involves suggests that:

> Acculturation is the process an individual needs to go through in order to become adapted to a different culture. For this to take place there will need to be changes in both social and psychological behaviour. (Byram, 2000, p. 1)

As is evident, notions of acculturation in the field of language study have not changed dramatically in the last 20 years. In summarizing acculturation theories, McLaughlin (1987) asserts that socio-psychological factors such as attitude toward the target language, motivation to learn, and social distance are seen to underlie the impetus toward acculturation. A most influential model of acculturation in second language education has been Schumann's (1978, 1986) view of this process. As Schumann argues:

two groups of variables - social factors and affective factors - cluster into a single variable which is the major causal variable in [second language acquisition]. I propose that we call this variable acculturation. By acculturation I mean the social and psychological integration of the individual with the target language (TL) group. I also propose that any learner can be placed on a continuum that ranges from social and psychological distance to social and psychological proximity with speakers of the TL, and that the learner will acquire the language only to the extent that he acculturates. (1986, p. 379)

More specifically, as Norton notes, "according to Schumann, if acculturation does not take place, instruction in the target language will be of limited benefit to the language learner" (2000b, p. 454). Norton critiques Schumann's model of acculturation and concludes that:

Theories of acculturation in SLA do not pay sufficient attention to inequitable relations of power between second language learners and target language speakers. Such theories need to recognize that attitudes and motivation are not inherent properties of language learners but are constructed within the context of specific social relationships at a given time and place.... Theories of acculturation in SLA should address the complex relationship among investment, language learning, and larger social processes. (ibid., p. 458-9)

Traditionally, acculturation has also been viewed as consisting of four stages:

The first stage is the period of excitement and euphoria over the newness of the surroundings. The second stage - culture shock - emerges as the individual feels the intrusion of more and more cultural differences into his own image of self and security. ... The third stage is one of gradual, and at first tentative and vacillating, recovery.... General progress is made, slowly but surely, as the person begins to accept the differences in thinking and feeling that surround him... The fourth stage represents near or full recovery, either assimilation or adaptation, acceptance of the new culture and self-confidence in the "new" person that has developed in this culture. (Brown 1980/1986, p. 36)

In other words, acculturation is presented as a process progressing through stages that "slowly, but surely" lead to a "new" person confident in him/herself in the target culture. First, we should be aware of cautions that culture shock may not be a stage-graded progression (Pedersen, 1995). Besides, as Clifford (1997) observes, "'acculturation' (with its overly linear trajectory: from culture A to culture B)" (p. 7) is stuck in the notions of cultures as static and bounded sociocultural wholes. In addition, such views on acculturation do not acknowledge that newcomers to a country and their positionings in the new setting are politically, historically and economically contingent. Moreover, "notions of culture shock ... place the burden of responsibility for adjustment on the individual student" (Singh & Doherty, 2004, p. 13).

Theories of acculturation will be taken up briefly again (and critiqued) in the chapter on the students' engagements with the cultural discourses thrown out

in their paths[36]. I would like, however, to conclude the section on work in second language study on people's engagements with culture(s) and CTN with a study by Ibrahim (1999) which, while focusing on issues of identity and identification[37], is very much linked, in my view, with questions of CTN.

Ibrahim discusses how a group of French-speaking continental African youth attending an urban Franco Ontarian high school enter a discursive space in which they are constructed and positioned as Black by dominant discourses which has implications for their identification with African American cultural and linguistic styles. This identification in turn influences what and how they learn linguistically and culturally. In other words, being constructed as Black, these youths become Black in their cultural and linguistic identities in the new for them setting, i.e. they undergo a process of cultural tool normalization. I find particularly powerful in illustrating processes of cultural tool normalization the following quote in which Ibrahim discusses how he himself was constructed in the discourses in his native land and in North America:

> as a continental African, I was not considered Black in Africa; other terms
>
> served to patch together my identity, such as *tall, Sudanese*, and *basketball*
>
> *player*. However, as a refugee in North America, my perception of self
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> was altered in direct response to the social processes of racism and the

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[36] In my view, theories of acculturation do not account adequately for the complexities in people's engagements with culture(s) in a new setting and CTN offers more nuanced understandings of such engagements by elaborating on cultural reproduction processes in the context of language learners' interactions with cultural discourses available in their new environment.

[37] I would like to acknowledge as well the successful interweaving of sociocultural and psychoanalytical perspectives in the field of ESL by Day (2002) whose ethnographic case study of Hari, a Punjabi-speaking English language learner in kindergarten, points to how power relations and unconscious emotional factors operate in the child-teacher relationship and indicates that a mutual process of identification between Hari and his teacher affected Hari's classroom identities, access to, participation in, and opportunities for learning.

historical representation of Blackness whereby the antecedent signifiers became secondary to my Blackness, and I retranslated myself: I became Black. (p. 354)

Ibrahim's retranslation as a result of a dominant discourse in North America exemplifies the following view by Hall which I consider the epitome of the effects of processes of CTN:

The circle of dominant ideas does accumulate the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others; its classifications do acquire not only the constraining power of dominance over other modes of thought but also the initial authority of habit and instinct. It becomes the horizon of the taken-for granted: what the world is and how it works, for all practical purposes. (Hall, 1988, p. 44)

If, "for all practical purposes", you become Black, or ESL or immigrant in the world you live in, it seems to me that it is worth exploring in depth how such a process may happen for an individual and what such positionings may entail.

I would like to conclude this chapter with Toohey's (forthcoming) urge to pay attention to

studies [which] argue that we must be concerned with the interlocking question of identification and desire in education [and which] challenge us to ask questions that have not typically been raised in ESL and applied linguistics research: Who/what do learners of ESL want to be/do in the new community? How do they see their futures and how can they move in those directions? What enables such movement and what constrains it?

Grappling with such questions should constitute an important part of future research.

I will attempt to engage with some of these questions in the analyses that follow.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will tell the story of the research design I devised and employed to inquire into culture(s), texts and CTN in adult ESL classrooms, describe my data collection and analyses procedures, and provide a background to the research sites and participants in this study. As I already mentioned in my introduction, my interest in culture(s), texts, and CTN results from my own immigrant experiences with these in Canadian contexts. Moreover, the work I did in my Master's thesis with respect to cultural instruction, and my own interactions with texts designed for use in adult ESL classrooms in preparation for my PhD work, shaped to a significant extent the research focus I developed for this study.

## Research questions and focus

When I began thinking about what in particular I was interested in finding out about culture(s) and texts in ESL classrooms, I felt that I was curious to know what issues/topics beyond the structure of the English language or functional skills like reading or writing came up in adult ESL classes and whether or how texts/instructional materials used in these classrooms brought about and tackled such issues. I chose to think of such issues as cultural issues[38] because it is my assumption that culture(s) infuse everything humans do, talk and think about. Certainly, I did not expect that through my study I would come up with an

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[38] Whereas I believe that issues around the structure of a language or functional skills are also cultural in nature, I felt that a focus on these could limit me in exploring in greater detail questions linked to ESL learners' struggles with new culture(s)/cultural discourses that they engage with in a new environment.

inventory of cultural issues/topics in ESL classrooms, but I hoped that I would catch a glimpse of the types of cultural issues that might occupy particular local ESL learning sites and find out if these are similar to the types of cultural issues I (and other immigrants I am familiar with) struggle with regularly. I was especially interested in finding out what teachers find important to communicate about life in Canada to their students as well as what instructional materials teachers find useful in addressing life in Canada and how students interact with materials that address life in Canada and negotiate the culture(s) in them. Again, I equated in my mind cultural issues with issues around life in Canada because of my belief in the cultural underpinnings of any activity, interaction, or event in a person's life and because I wanted to present the participants in the study with a broad framework that would allow them enough room and flexibility to bring in their understandings of what about culture(s) was of importance and/or concern to them. These assumptions and interests translated in the following formulation of my research questions:

How is life in Canada, or what I would call culture(s), constructed by teachers and students in (some) adult ESL classrooms?

What cultural issues/topics do (some) teachers and students find to be of most importance to adult learners of English in their life in Canada?

What is the role of instructional materials as tools for classroom activities on cultural issues?

How do materials on cultural issues used in adult ESL classes help (some) students with their life in Canada outside the classroom?

Together with this formulation of my research questions, I clarified for myself the focus of my data collection in my research journal (RJ) which I started in July of 2000, before I had negotiated access to any research sites. There I wrote that:

> I am particularly interested in examining the extent to which materials and their usage in adult ESL classrooms authorize students to explore and negotiate their own cultural experiences in their new Canadian environment. (RJ, 27.7.2000)

As it is evident from this excerpt from my research journal, the focus of my research was directly influenced by the understanding I had developed in my Master's thesis of what could be helpful for adult immigrants to begin to feel comfortable with their experiences of difference in the new for them Canadian environment. Soon after, in formulating who and what I wanted to study, I crystallized my view as follows:

> I would like to work with teacher(s) who attend not only to language but also explicitly to culture in their classrooms and use predominantly Canadian materials (texts, videos, newspapers, websites, etc.) to address adult ESL immigrants' integration in Canadian society. (RJ, 2.8.2000)

I felt that to address my research questions I needed access to adult ESL learning sites and envisioned my study as consisting of interviews with students and teachers and of observations of classroom activities at these sites. I then began work on possible questions for interviews and consulted (among others) with a fellow graduate student who was also an adult ESL teacher as to the

plausibility and relevance of the questions I intended to address to teachers and students at such sites.

My research questions, as I posed them at the outset of my data collection, do not engage in a direct manner with the process of CTN which, as I stated in the introduction, is of great significance to me. The reason for this is that I did not want to pose my questions in a theoretical discourse that the participants in the study might find alienating and incomprehensible. Nevertheless, it was my hope that the data I collected in search for answers to the above questions would offer glimpses into processes of CTN. Besides, one question in particular that I posed in the student interviews was, in my view, directly related to processes of CTN[39].

In the data analysis that follows I focus in depth on the experiences of CTN of only two of the advanced students in my study. This does not mean that others did not share experiencing changes they have undergone since their arrival to Canada. However, most offered brief responses that did not allow me to explore their processes of CTN in greater detail. In addition, some offered responses like "This change I think is my temper. I used to be very bad tempered fighting with other people only for parking car. I feel more safety in here; in Taiwan I had to get up at night [to check on my car]. I feel safe here." (SI, 5.04.01, Frank, advanced student) which, while responding to my question of whether they have changed their thinking about things they find important in life, allow limited opportunities to perceive those in terms of

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[39] Do you feel that since you came to Canada you have changed how you think about some things that you find important in life? If so, can you give me examples? What factors do you think could account for such change(s)?

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processes of CTN. As will become evident in the conclusion of this dissertation, one of the limitations of my study that I am aware of has been the impossibility to engage with processes of CTN that directly involve engagements with discourses available in the classrooms settings I observed. Given the short period of time I was in these classrooms and the fact that the students then moved on to other endeavors or further courses makes it unreasonable to trace processes of CTN as linked specifically to discourses whose availability to the students I observed for up to 3 months.

## Negotiating access to research sites

In the summer of 2000 I began wondering how to identify teachers interested in participating in this project and hoped to identify interested students among those in the teachers' classrooms. I first used personal contacts to gain access to sites of adult ESL instruction. I had no luck with three of the sites I approached. The first was a private school which had no interest in allowing research activities in its classrooms. The other was affiliated with a university and considered that its courses were too oriented to the functional language needs of its students to be useful for my research. The third turned out to cater only for international students, whereas my primary focus was on the experiences of immigrant ESL learners. I was beginning to panic. Fortunately, a fellow graduate student suggested that she speak with the administrative head of the institution at which she taught ESL. This administrator agreed to let me make a short presentation of the goals of the study at a staff meeting. In September of 2000 my

20 minute presentation[40] to over twenty teachers finally landed me one teacher, Joanne, who was interested in having me engage in my research in her classroom. The other teacher in whose classroom I conducted my study, Carol, was a personal acquaintance I had met in the spring of 1999 through a reading group of faculty members and graduate students who got together once a week for a semester to discuss readings that examined language learning, identity and the sociocultural aspects of pedagogical situations. I contacted her over e-mail in the fall of 2000 wondering if she would be interested in participating in my study and she gladly accepted. We agreed to get in touch again in January 2001 when she would start a course with a new group of students.

Gaining access to Joanne's classroom was not a very difficult matter. Having expressed an interest in having me conduct my study in her classroom, Joanne later contacted me over the phone and we discussed in greater detail the aims of my research. We then agreed to meet at her place of work to discuss the arrangements necessary to start my study: signing permission forms, scheduling of observations, etc. Following this meeting, Joanne talked to her class about my research and distributed a handout of my research proposal[41] and the permission forms[42] for them to sign. After all forms were back, including the one signed by the program coordinator, I was able to begin data collection in the second half of October 2000.

Negotiating access to Carol's classroom was more difficult. I contacted her again in mid January of 2001 and she suggested that I go talk to her class

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[40] My handout for this presentation is in Appendix A.
[41] This handout is in Appendix B.
[42] All permission forms are in Appendix C.

about my project. I did that and distributed a handout of my research proposal and the permission forms students needed to sign. A few days later it turned out that about 1/3 of the students had not signed their forms mainly because, as one of the students had put it: "he was paying for the course, he was there to study and not waste his time on stuff he was not interested in" (RJ 18.02.01). In addition, the program coordinator had expressed reservations about my doing research in Carol's classroom, citing a study which used video excerpts of students without their expressed permission. After I specifically wrote on the student permission forms that students were not obliged to participate in an interview and added on all permission forms that I would only use a written (as opposed to audio) format of my data in my dissertation, presentations, or scholarly works based on my dissertation, I got all the necessary permission forms and began data collection on March 1, 2001.

**Data collection procedures**

My data collection procedures can be broadly termed as ethnographic work (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The study consisted of classroom observations, usually twice a week for about 2-3 hours, typically on occasions when materials addressing life in Canada were used. The study also involved taped one-on-one interviews with the teachers early in the data collection stage and at the end of the course, and focus group interviews with students at the end of the course. During classroom observations I took field notes and made audio recordings of the activities in the classroom. In the initial interviews with the teachers I wanted to get a sense of what their goals in an adult ESL classroom

were and what they felt important to communicate to their students about life in Canada, why and how. The course-end interviews addressed some of the same questions in greater depth and focused on specific materials used in the classrooms at times I had observed.

The focus group interviews with students enquired about students' reasons for taking the course and centred on what, if anything, about life in Canada they were interested in becoming aware of in an adult ESL classroom as well as how they felt about some materials used at times I had observed[43]. I chose to do focus group interviews instead of individual interviews with the students for a number of reasons. I felt that one on one talks might be somewhat intimidating for some students who were not confident in their English language skills while the support of their peers in a focus group interview could help alleviate this problem. Besides, I felt that a group talk could perhaps allow greater elaborations on a question than a situation that might turn into me interrogating my interlocutor, especially given some students' English language proficiency level. In addition, most students had overwhelmingly expressed the wish that interviews took place within the time they came to class rather than outside class and focus interviews were thus the only option for me to get the views of as many students as possible on the topics of interest to me[44]. All interviews were semi-structured as the participants in the study and I had scripts of my interview questions during the interview process to refer to, but I let participants veer into issues they found

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[43] The interview questions to all participants are in Appendix D.
[44] I also had prior experience with focus group interviews in another study (cf. Beynon, Ilieva, Toohey and LaRocque, 2001).

particularly meaningful. All observations and interviews were conducted in the two classrooms.

The data for this study consists of what is typically considered ethnographic data: the field notes (FN) I wrote up of my observations, the transcripts of audio tapes (AT) of the classroom activities I observed and of all interviews (TI - teacher interviews, and SI - student interviews), the collections of text materials (TM) used in the classrooms at times I observed, and curriculum guidelines (CG) or other materials which offer a background to the programs within which the courses are situated, as well as the research journal (RJ) I kept during my data collection process. I have changed the names of all individuals who participated in my study to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. Two adult ESL teachers working in two different ESL programs and all their students, 41 in total, took part in this study.

**Data analysis**

It could be said that my data analysis began with my data collection as what I had set myself to observe and talk about with the study participants was very much geared to offering a picture that could illuminate my own specific research questions. In this sense my study departs from typical ethnographic research which attempts to re-present participants' cultural practices at a given site. For example, my field notes include references to situations where I had felt students' cultural experiences in relation to life in Canada were (or were not)

negotiated[45]. In addition, in transferring my handwritten field notes on the computer after each observation I often added in brackets some reflections on what I had observed meant to me at a given point of my data collection process.

Another level of data interpretation occurred with the transcribing process of the taped classroom activities and interviews as I again occasionally added in brackets some thoughts that certain excerpts from the ATs or TIs and SIs prompted in me. I began transcribing after I had collected all data and once I transcribed all tapes, which, together with the FNs, translated into about 800 pages of written text, the "real" data analysis stage began in the spring of 2002. It first involved the organization of all collected data into a manageable format. I first created two piles of documents, each associated with each separate research site. In each of these piles I first arranged in a chronological order my FNs and the ATs and TMs accompanying them; I added the TIs, SIs, CGs and finally the RJ entries associated with each research site.

At this stage I did not want to impose my research questions on my reading of the data, i.e. I did not want to look for instances in the data that provide answers to my specific queries. I read through all the FNs, ATs, TIs, SIs and RJ entries, occasionally referring to the TMs and the CGs for each site, with the

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[45] Here is an example from Joanne's classroom:
The class is working on a grammar exercise about count and non-count nouns. At a point students are to suggest types of garbage and say if a particular type is count or non-count. Following students' examples, Joanne suggests kitchen waste and says that one can make compost if one recycles kitchen waste and it makes good garden soil for one's garden. She is clearly making cultural associations, but maybe these could be drawn closer to students' lives if students are asked what they think about this practice that they might find novel. The class moves on to another set of nouns. (FN 16.11.00)

intention to let the broad themes I identify in the data guide me in the subsequent coding. However, I discovered that this process of reading through all data was so overwhelming that it did not render comprehensible themes within the data for me.

I then focused on rereading the FNs, SIs and TIs. After rereading, I realized I needed to look separately at the FNs to get a sense of the overall atmosphere, interactions with texts and cultural issues in each classroom and I reread all FNs. I was reluctant to make comparisons between the two classrooms as I felt they were very different settings operating with different mandates and aims and catering to students with different levels of English language proficiency – lower-intermediate as opposed to advanced. I thus initially thought of (re)presenting the data for each research site in a separate chapter that would tell the story, as I saw it, of the classroom and of the views of the students and teacher in that classroom on the topics that interested me.

I then went to reread the SIs and was struck by what I read/interpreted as very different engagements with Canadian culture(s) of most of the lower-intermediate as opposed to some of the advanced students at my research sites. I thus felt I wanted to explore this theme and, in particular, how these different engagements could be made sense of. So I decided that I would like to (re)present the data having to do with culture(s) and engagements with culture(s) in a separate chapter. This then meant for me that the data that involved interactions with instructional texts would need to be dealt with in another chapter. I then went back to all the FNs and pulled out the FNs that suggested what I interpreted as

intriguing interactions with texts in both classrooms. Following that, I went back to the ATs accompanying the selected FNs and reread them again. I started developing a sense that the content and features of the texts themselves had little to do with how classroom interactions around them evolved and it was the teachers' orchestrations of activities around these texts that influenced to a great extent students' engagements with the texts.

Despite my familiarity with theoretical literature that explicitly points to the negotiated character of text consumption in and out of classrooms (see section on texts in chapter 2), this was an observation that significantly shattered my deeply held belief that texts were a very important curriculum artifact which shaped the classroom experience to a considerable extent[46]. I thus felt this was another theme I needed to grapple with[47].

Having identified two themes that challenged my assumptions/expectations, I then went back to the research questions I had posed before I started data collection and wondered whether indeed I could find explicit answers to these questions within the data. So I again read through all FNs, SIs, TIs and the ATs accompanying the FNs which pointed to possibly rich classroom data around my research questions. I found numerous instances which could serve as examples of answers to my research questions and coded those in separate categories like: definitions of culture, knowledge students gain about life in

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[46] Here my assumptions/beliefs about classroom events around texts can be based on my habitus (i.e. disposition structured by and structuring representations and practices) (Bourdieu, 1977), acquired through long years of being schooled, as well as teaching, in a totalitarian state that allowed little deployment of instructional materials beyond their literal instantiation in classroom settings.

[47] Despite the variabilities in readers' responses to a curriculum text, "whose knowledge it is that students are learning, negotiating, or opposing and what the social/cultural roots and effects are of such processes" (Apple, 1990, p. 30), continue to seem to me very important issues.

Canada through classroom texts, etc. I divided my analysis into broad sections that coincided with my research questions and also summarized SIs data under the questions I had posed to students. I was beginning to wonder how much of the data I could include in the dissertation write up and realized that one of the most difficult tasks for me as a qualitative researcher would be to select the specific data that would illustrate the themes I had found important in my study. For me this was a process of not simply choosing the best quotes, but rather (re)presenting a particular slant on the data. On one hand, there were the two themes I mentioned above that I found particularly intriguing from a theoretical perspective. On the other, there were in my data somewhat essentialized constructions of culture(s) in the interviews and in the classroom activities and a somewhat limited, in my view, appreciation of the place of texts in one's engagements with culture(s).

What follows in the two data analyses chapters[48] are more extensive analyses of data in relation to my research questions that I found I needed to grapple with from a theoretical perspective and on the basis of my lived experience, and less intense analyses of data that responded to other of my research questions, but did not seem to extend significantly my understandings of the questions I posed. I have in mind specifically data that, on the basis of familiarity with critical pedagogy literature, I assessed as representing essentialized constructions of culture(s) or limited appreciation of the place of

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[48] One of the data analyses chapters focuses on texts in the two classrooms and the other focuses on culture(s) in and outside the two classrooms.

texts in one's engagements with culture(s) and thus reproducing dominant discourses in the wider society.

As Norton & Toohey (2004) observe, critiques of classroom practices in terms of their social visions have been common in critical educational literature. Instead of engaging at length with such critique of some practices at the sites I observed, I will attempt in the conclusion, drawing on critical pedagogy literature, to explore possibilities for expanding classroom practices with the hope to add to efforts to provide "fresh visions" (Beynon & Dossa, 2003, p. 249) for constructing more equitable second language education sites.

As I pointed out, the assessments of some of my data as reproducing discourses dominant in the wider society were, of course, the result of my intense reading, thinking, (and theorizing) around culture(s) and interactions with texts prior to my data collection. In a way, I was imposing my understandings of these constructs on how the participants in my study chose to engage with them while, at the same time, assuming that I had allowed them enough space to construct culture(s) and interactions with texts on their own terms by, for example, asking in the interviews (what I considered to be) open-ended questions like: "What does culture mean to you?".

But even if I offered my study participants space during the data collection process, is it not the way one interprets one's data that truly (re)presents a picture of one's study, thus allowing too much authority to the researcher to name what s/he has seen? The student participants in this study were the ones whose engagements with texts and culture(s) form the bulk of this dissertation, but I no

longer had access to them to ask them to comment on my analyses as they had moved on to other activities in their lives. Besides, because of their further engagements with life in Canada, the students could only present an updated version of their views from the time of data collection. I could try to get in touch with the teachers and present to them drafts of my analyses of the data. I did not do this because more than two years had passed since the data collection stage and I could not expect that these teachers would have comprehensive recollections of minute details of events in their classrooms or of the circumstances that might have affected the stands they took when they talked to me in the interviews. As life goes on, and we all engage in different activities and with different people, our identities and views on prior events change.

In addition, I am aware that I can tell my story of my study by being only partially faithful to how I saw my data in the data collection stage and that's only thanks to my FNs[49] and RJ entries. However, I can only read all data in an ever changing way as my experiences in the world change me, even if just a little bit and imperceptibly, every single moment. Thus the analysis offered here is an analysis of snapshots of two classrooms I took at a specific time in my and the participants' lives, an analysis that is constantly re-worked as I move on with my life in Canada.

A final note on my data analysis at this point refers to the fortunate access I got to classrooms catering to the needs of students with different English

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[49] I am aware of the further limitations of FNs. As I put it: "My written impressions/notes of the classroom can only be a snapshot of yet another snapshot – the little that I have observed during the duration of this course" (FN 29.11.00).

language proficiency levels. When I was designing my study I did not intend to attend to language proficiency level as a marker that might affect engagement(s) with cultures and texts in ESL classrooms. Reading through the collected data, however, gave me a sense that language proficiency could perhaps make a difference in how some students feel about culture(s) and what they need with respect to culture(s) and this is, in fact, one of the themes explored later. I now turn to a description of the sites and study participants.

## The sites and study participants

### *Suburban University College*

My first research site was Joanne's classroom, which she had taken in September 2000. I collected data in her classroom from October 25, 2000 till December 14, 2000 within which period I made 13 observations[50]. When I began data collection Joanne had 18 ELSA[51] level 3 students, i.e. lower intermediate English language proficiency students. During my stay 2 students left and 4 more joined the class, as ELSA classes have a continuous intake of students. Thus I observed 22 and interviewed 20[52] students in Joanne's ELSA level 3 classroom. Joanne was supposed to continue teaching the ELSA level 3 class till March of 2001, but at the end of the winter term she was informed that she would be teaching another level in the spring.

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[50] I also attended the classroom session on December 21, 2000 when the class had their Christmas party and, as this was a social event, I did not take notes.
[51] The acronym ELSA stands for English Language Services for Adults.
[52] The 2 students I could not interview were not present in class at the times I conducted focus group interviews with students with whom they usually sat.

Joanne's classroom was situated in a suburban university college which serves thousands of students on several campuses, offers bachelor degree and applied programs in a variety of fields, and has ESL programs with a variety of courses geared for either general or academic purposes as well as a program for aspiring ESL teachers. ELSA classes, formerly known as LINC[53] classes, are government-subsidized English language classes for newcomers to Canada that are either full-time or half-time. Students eligible for the program are admitted only by referral of an authorized Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment Testing Centre. Joanne's was a half-time class taking place Monday through Friday from 9 am to 11.30 am.

ELSA classes in Canada are a continuation of the LINC programs created in 1992 by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission "to facilitate the settlement ... of newcomers to Canada" (LINC Curriculum Guidelines, 1997, p. 3) by helping learners "develop communicative competence in English in order to participate more fully in Canadian society" (ibid, p. 8). In 1997, curriculum guidelines that would streamline the implementation of the subsidized LINC levels 1, 2, and 3 programs were published with the aim to "provide a way for newcomers to Canada to begin integrating successfully into their new country" (ibid.). In other words, cultural adaptation is clearly a focus of LINC/ELSA classrooms. The LINC CGs consist of an introductory section which provides a background for the instructors, and topic units that suggest instructional content and procedures. Twelve themes recur in each LINC level with increasing difficulty. The themes (in alphabetical order) are: Canadian Law, Canadian

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[53] LINC stands for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada.

Society, Commercial services, Education, Employment, Family life, Government and public services, Health and Safety, Housing, Leisure, Media and Transportation[54].

Entry into ELSA classes is streamlined. Once adult immigrants land in Canada they are provided with information about language training for which they may be eligible depending on the level of their knowledge of one of the official languages (in this case English), and they are directed to Benchmark Language Testing Centres in the area in which they intend to settle. There they take a test on reading, writing, listening, and speaking English, which places them on proficiency scales, and are informed of institutions in the area that offer ELSA instruction. The number of hours students can attend subsidized language instruction depends on their proficiency level, with students at a lower level being allowed a larger number of hours. Students who enter Canada at proficiency level 3 can take 350 hours of instruction at this level, which in a part-time classroom amounts to 7 months.

At Suburban University College students nearing the completion of their allotted hours are given a mandatory exit test on their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to allow for movement within the college should the students wish to continue learning English in the institution's paid programs. In her interviews Joanne told me that she thinks that reading and writing are a stronger

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[54] James (2000) analyzed the LINC CG and concluded that they attend to Canadian society and culture by focusing on sociolinguistic functions of English and sociocultural information. "Attention to learners' cultures is less evident. Apart from isolated suggestions in the introductory section and a small proportion of material in the topic units, it has apparently been left to instructors whether they will find ways to include the learners' cultures in lessons and materials." (p. 44)

focus in their ELSA program than in many other places because of the possibility for students to continue their education at the same institution up to university level.

Joanne is a middle aged white woman. Before her teacher preparation she got a B.A. in English in 1972. When I met her she had already taught adults for almost 20 years, and ESL for about 13-14 years, all in the Lower Mainland area, with the exception of 1 year teaching in Japan at the beginning of her teaching ESL career. After her return from Japan in the late 1980s Joanne went back to school, took a college program for training adult ESL teachers and then went to a local university and took a diploma and later M.Ed. in adult education.

As already mentioned, 22 students (19 female and 3 male[55]) attended the ELSA level 3 classroom I observed in. I was able to gather more detailed data from 20 of them in focus group interviews. The focus group interviews I conducted were talks with about 3-5 students in a group during the last 5 sessions of my observations in their classroom. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were conducted in a quieter part of the classroom while the rest of the class was engaged in language learning activities facilitated by Joanne. The demographic information gathered in the interviews from the 20 lower-intermediate students is in Table 1 below:

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[55] Given the small number of male participants in my study (3 at Suburban University College and 4 at City Community College), the data analyses in the following chapters do not take into account the gender of the interview respondents. It is notable, however, that few males attended these classrooms thus exemplifying the gendered character of much adult ESL learning in formal settings and the differences of location in society of immigrant men and women (cf. Norton, 2000a).

Table 1. Demographic information of the students in the lower-intermediate class

| Demographic information | Number of respondents: 20 |
|---|---|
| **LENGTH OF STAY IN CANADA** | |
| Over 1 month | 1 |
| Over 8 months | 5 |
| Over 1 year | 6 |
| Over 2 years | 2 |
| Over 3 years | 5 |
| Over 5 years | 1 |
| **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** | |
| China | 12 |
| Taiwan | 3 |
| Hong Kong | 3 |
| Armenia | 1 |
| Ukraine | 1 |
| **GENDER** | |
| Female | 17 |
| Male | 3 |
| **LANGUAGES SPOKEN OR STUDIED** | |
| (native, second or third language other than English; some individuals spoke more than one of these) | |
| Mandarin | 14 |
| Cantonese | 9 |
| Other Chinese dialects | 4 |
| Japanese | 4 |
| Russian | 2 |
| Armenian | 1 |
| Ukrainian | 1 |
| Polish | 1 |
| **OCCUPATION PRIOR TO COMING TO CANADA** | |
| Professional (e.g. engineer, accountant, teacher, librarian, graphic designer) | 15 |
| Clerical/trades | 3 |
| Homemaker | 2 |
| **OCCUPATION IN CANADA** | |
| Not employed | 12 |
| Part time work in the service industry (e.g. babysitter, hairdresser assistant, restaurant waiter/waitress) | 5 |
| Trades stocks on the internet | 1 |
| Editor at the Chinese TV station in Vancouver | 1 |
| Retired | 1 |
| **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND** | |
| University degree | 8 |
| College diploma | 8 |
| High school | 4 |
| **LENGTH OF TIME STUDYING ENGLISH** | |
| For less than a year | 2 |
| For 5-7 years | 15 |
| For more than 10 years | 3 |

## City Community College

The second site where I conducted my research was Carol's classroom. Carol had started teaching a 4 month course in writing, reading and Canadian studies in January 2001, but I was able to collect data in her classroom from March 1 till April 5 of 2001 during which time I did 12 observations. There were 19 students (15 female and 4 male) in her classroom and I was able to interview 17[56] of them.

Carol's classroom was situated in a community college which serves about 25 thousand students in a variety of programs in health, hospitality, business, English as a Second Language, adult basic education, career access, trades and technology at several campuses in urban areas of the Lower Mainland. Carol's course was within an ESL department geared towards preparing advanced ESL students for study in Canadian post-secondary educational institutions. Upon completion of 6 single skills programs of study (that make up the course she taught and a subsequent course), provincially articulated to be the equivalent of Grade 11 Social Studies and Grade 12 English, students who get a grade of "C" or better are granted a certificate stating that they are proficient enough in English to undertake post-secondary level studies. Besides, students enrolled in these programs of study can also register in a course in Math, Science, Business or Humanities at the same time. Students registered in Carol's course pay tuition fees and are required to have completed grade 10 or equivalent as a minimum

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[56] The 2 students I could not interview were not present in class when I conducted focus group interviews with students with whom they usually sat.

entry standard. They need to obtain an English language assessment and have appropriate immigration documents prior to registration.

As the Department's guide to instructors states, the courses it provides offer "the basic language-related study and learning skills required to compete with native speakers of English in Canadian education institutions" (Instructor's guide, 1994, n. p.). As already mentioned, Carol's course combined instruction in writing, reading, and oral skills (also referred to as Canadian studies). The writing component of the course focused on developing students' skills to write expository essays of about 300-350 words employing as means of development generalizations and examples, comparisons and contrasts, cause and effect statements, etc. The reading component centred on analytical reading together with a continued development of students' vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills. A special emphasis was given on demonstrating understanding of literary terminology and an instructional goal was the fostering in students of an interest in reading in English as a source of enjoyment and increasing their awareness of the cultural referents underlying English discourse through the use of short stories. The Canadian studies portion of the course focused on Canadian geography and population, historical developments up to and including Confederation, and work on a Canadian novel. Carol had chosen for her class the novel "A Bird in the House" by Margaret Laurence. The course took place 4 nights a week from 6 pm to 10 pm (writing session: 6-7.30 pm, reading session: 7.35-8.40 pm and Canadian studies: 8.50-10 pm). I took fieldnotes at 12 Canadian

studies sessions and 10 reading sessions, and conducted my (45 min. to 1 hour) focus group interviews with the students during 5 of the writing sessions.

Carol is a white woman in her 40s. She has a BA in linguistics and some ESL training from a local university and has been teaching adults for about 20 years, mostly in the Lower Mainland and for a few years in Greece and other countries. She has also done some course work towards a Master's degree in Education at a local university, but has postponed her graduate studies.

The demographic information I gathered from the 17 advanced students in Carol's class whom I interviewed is in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Demographic information of the students in the advanced class

| Demographic information | Number of respondents: 17 |
|---|---|
| **LENGTH OF STAY IN CANADA** | |
| Over 3 months | 2 |
| Over 1 and a half years | 4 |
| Over 2 years | 5 |
| Over 3 years | 3 |
| Over 5 years | 1 |
| Over 8 years | 2 |
| **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** | |
| China | 7 |
| The Philippines | 3 |
| Slovakia | 1 |
| Bulgaria | 1 |
| Kosovo | 1 |
| Ukraine | 1 |
| Sri Lanka | 1 |
| Taiwan | 1 |
| Vietnam | 1 |
| **GENDER** | |
| Female | 13 |
| Male | 4 |
| **LANGUAGES SPOKEN OR STUDIED** (native, second or third language other than English; some individuals spoke more than one of these) | |
| Mandarin | 7 |
| Cantonese | 4 |
| Russian | 4 |
| Tagalog | 3 |
| French | 3 |
| Bisaya | 2 |
| Other Chinese dialects | 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Albanian | 1 |
| Bulgarian | 1 |
| Serbo-Croatian | 1 |
| Tamil | 1 |
| Ukrainian | 1 |
| **OCCUPATION PRIOR TO COMING TO CANADA** | |
| Professional (e.g. teacher, computer programmer, nurse, agriculture consultant) | 12 |
| High school or college student | 4 |
| Homemaker | 1 |
| **OCCUPATION IN CANADA** | |
| Not employed, focused on upgrading English | 3 |
| Work in the service industry (e.g. waitress, hotel housekeeper, assembly work) | 8 currently 4 have held such jobs |
| electronic technician | 1 |
| part-time computer consultant | 1 |
| clothing designer engineer | 1 |
| **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND** | |
| University degree | 9 |
| College diploma or some college education | 6 |
| High school diploma or finishing high school | 2 |
| **LENGTH OF TIME STUDYING ENGLISH** | |
| For 5-7 years | 14 |
| For over 8 years | 3 |

## Situating myself in the study

In the introduction to this dissertation I presented my desire to inquire into the engagements of adult immigrant ESL learners with culture(s), texts and CTN. Here I want to elaborate on my positionings in the process of data collection at the two research sites. This is done in the context of reflexivity as "the new canon" (Lather, 1994, p. 50) in generating qualitative research and with an awareness of the "limits of self-reflexivity" (ibid.) as bounded by the discourses one is situated in and by the impossibility to know all possible effects of one's research. Of particular interest are the notions of the power relations my study participants and I engaged in and who could benefit from my study.

I entered both sites as the adult immigrant ESL speaker who identifies with the learners at these settings and as the graduate student who is not sure how to perform the role of a fledgling researcher in the research sites. In the course of my data collection, other positionings, and especially that of a former EFL teacher, were also salient at times. I introduced myself to both classes as a student and an immigrant like themselves, who on the basis of personal experiences with immigration feels "strongly that culture should be a part of an ESL classroom [and is] just curious to know how [they themselves] feel about this" (AT 25.10.00). Throughout my observations I sat beside students and, sometimes with encouragement from the teachers, took part in classroom activities as a participant assisting students with vocabulary, grammar or even cultural knowledge. I felt that this teacher role would allow me to reciprocate even if to a minor extent the generosity both teachers and students displayed by letting me be part of their classrooms. Here are two examples from my FNs of how I performed a teacher role in the classrooms:

> The class works in pairs on idioms that students were given the previous day. I am sitting beside Nina and Valery.…They are working now with the idiom 'hard of hearing.' Nina responds to Valery's question, 'My best friend. She is hard of hearing'. Valery, 'I don't know anyone who is hard of hearing, but my husband pretend when less smoking, quit smoking.' I think she's trying to say that he pretends to be hard of hearing when she talks to him about quitting smoking. Nina seems not sure what pretend means and asks me. I try to explain saying that if you don't want to hear something you say, 'Ah, what did you say, I

can't hear you.' She still seems not sure she understands and I suggest that, for example, when she was a teenager probably her mom was telling her by what time she had to be home, but she pretended to be hard of hearing. At a point when I was trying to explain the word to Nina and she wasn't getting it I asked her whether there is in Ukrainian a word that would sound like 'prestruvam se' which is the Bulgarian [my native language][57] equivalent of 'pretend'. She says, 'Oh, yeah.' Valery and Jennifer are listening attentively to what I'm saying. I explain to them that Nina and I have similar native languages and sometimes the words are very similar. Nina also says that 'sometimes the words are the same.' Valery says to Nina, 'You're lucky'. Nina has gotten the meaning of 'pretend' and says 'Ah, like my daughter, she watch TV and I tell her do her homework, she says, 'What, I don't hear.' (FN lower-intermediate class, 7.12.00)


At a point during the writing session Lynda had gone to Carol and Carol said, "Roumi, I think you can help here". So I went to Lynda's table and asked what the question was. Lynda said that she had to write a statement of her goals for a computer studies program at SFU she wants to apply for. …She was wondering whether to write it in a point form or as a story/essay. I say that since this is the only writing they want her to present maybe it would be best to write it as an essay, to start with talking about her background and to try to connect her goals with the courses they offer. She says, "Oh, to show I am a good fit." I say, "That's right, show them how their courses fit

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[57] Items enclosed within brackets denote explanatory additions.

with your goals and also how you are an asset for their program". Lynda thanked me and said this was very useful and started working on her statement. (FN advanced class, 13.3.01)

Students seemed comfortable with my presence and chatted with me in class and during breaks. Here are some excerpts from my fieldnotes to corroborate this statement:

As I arrange the equipment Miriam who is sitting close to it asks me, "Was talk yesterday good?" I think she is referring to the interview I had with a group of students the day before. I say, "Yes, it was very good". Miriam, "Better?" (I think she is asking whether it was better than the interview I had with the group she was in). I say smiling, "They are all good." She smiles back. (FN lower-intermediate class, 30.11.00)

The students are working in groups with photocopied texts from Encyclopedia Britannica to prepare for their oral presentations on events in Canadian history the following day. Lorna is giving an example to the people at her table to differentiate between 'bitch' and 'beach'. She then says a couple of times 'ship' and 'sheep'. I say that the distinction between the two words is exactly like the one they made before about 'bitch' and 'beach'. They ask which one is the animal; I say the long 'i'. A conversation around 'pronunciation' ensues. Too bad the recording has caught so many voices; the discussion is hardly discernible on the tape. Lorna says something to the effect that pronunciation is very important.

She gives an example of herself being Filipino and how coming from a particular region in the Philippines she has a tendency to pronounce a combination of 'dl' as 'dal'; she gives the example of the word 'bundle' which she says she often pronounces as 'bundal'. I say that this shouldn't be a problem because it's understandable what she is trying to say. She says, 'But we have accents'. I say, 'Everybody in this room has one accent on another, as long as you are understood it's O.K.' She says, 'But sometimes we are not understood; I say something and Canadians say 'what, what?' Sheila then says, 'If I don't say something the way a Canadian says it, they don't understand'. I say that it really depends a lot on who you are talking to; that there are people who are willing to try and understand and that there are others who sort of ignore you and are not willing to try to understand you. I give them an example of how people have not wanted to understand me [Example with the name Sarah which I pronounce with [a] instead of [ae]. At this moment Carol asks for the attention of the whole class. (FN advanced class, 7.3.01)

Further, with respect to my relations with the students, in the focus group interviews some asked more details about my project or expressed positive views of it. Here are some more data excerpts:

Roumi: O.K., thank you everyone, tell me, do you want to tell me something else about the course, about this talk?
Valery: I like it
R: You liked our talk, why did you like it?
V: I like to help you to get a good project

R: You like to

V: You do the work, to help you finish your good project. (SI, 30.11.00, lower-intermediate class)

After the [interview] tape is off we talk mainly about what I am doing; Sheila especially is interested in finding out more about my project. I explain how long it has taken me to get to the data collection stage and what I will have to do afterwards. Sheila is wondering whether the college will get to see my results and sort of make changes to the program as a result. I say that I will publish my work, but they can read it if they want to and it's up to them to make changes if they want to. I remind the students that as participants they can also get a copy of my results. They seem impressed by that. (FN 29.03.01, advanced class)

I believe that the data presented here attests to relatively horizontal power relations between the students and me, despite my status as a more proficient speaker of English. Had I been a native speaker of English and not a student doing research, but a full time university researcher/professor, perhaps things would have been different.

My relations with the teachers were more varied. The teachers let me in their classrooms of which they were in control, but, understandably, they were apprehensive about the data I was collecting or how useful I found observing in their classrooms. Here is an entry from my research journal following our first extended meeting with Joanne (before I started data collection in her classroom) to attest to the feelings I believe guided us during that meeting:

> Both Joanne and I are in a precarious position
> vis-à-vis each other. She is cautious and trying
> to figure me out to make sure that I don't paint a
> negative picture of her classroom, her students
> and herself. After all, it's very risky to let
> someone in one's classroom. I am cautious and
> trying to figure her out to make sure that she
> lets me collect my data that I so desperately
> need. So we are very careful about what we are
> saying. (RJ 21.10.00)

Here are more excerpts from my data to attest to the teachers' apprehensions with respect to my data collection:

> After class Joanne says she doesn't know what I
> want to do with the data, but she would be
> interested to know more about how students respond
> in the interviews. I tell her that the group I
> just interviewed said that culture has to do with
> 'food'. She says in a surprised not very content
> voice, 'Yeah, I heard them talk about food'. I go
> on and say that culture for them is also people,
> and tell her that in any interview I've had so far
> students have referred to the Rick Hansen texts.
> She says, 'Good, so they like people, I can do
> more people.' (FN lower-intermediate class, 30.11.00)

> As we were talking with Carol before class tonight
> she asked how my data collection was going. I told
> her that hers was the second and last class I
> would collect data in because there was so much
> data. She said, "Good, because I was thinking you
> weren't getting anything." (FN advanced class, 7.3.01)

In my final interviews I asked the teachers how they felt about having me in their classrooms and their responses suggest to me that while this experience may have

added to their stress, overall they saw some value in my being in their classrooms.

Here are some excepts from the final interviews with the teachers:

> Joanne: My experience of having you in the class has been interesting because normally you're not having your class taped, you know, and that for me has, at first I was really quite thrown off, now I don't really pay much mind to it, you know, I mean it's there, but I don't really think about the fact that the tape-recorder has been running, …. but, yeah, I found it a little intimidating at the beginning, but then, as we've gone on, you know, it kind of decreased, but it is an added stress or
>
> Roumi: absolutely
>
> J: you know, the whole thing, um but I felt I wanted to do it, you know, so that wasn't a problem
>
> R: Why did you want to do this?
>
> J: and I didn't feel that the students suffered, because they, certainly as I said to you before, nobody ever mentioned a word since we started this thing … and I think maybe in their own little way they felt quite important…. [With regards to why I took part in this study,] because I have done some very, some very preliminary really basic research in this area myself in terms of my masters, [but] it really needed so much more in terms of actually moving from theory to practice…. So, you know, that's why I felt compelled to become involved in this project, because I don't have time to do it myself. (TI 14.12.00)

> Roumi: What experience has it been for you to have someone do research in your classroom?

Carol: Well, it's really interesting, because it's just, first of all, you know, I'm thinking a little bit more about the [instructional] materials, too. And I'll just kind of carry on, but I think a little bit more about this, that's good. And, um, I think it's good for the students to have somebody to express their point, maybe they might have help. So yes so it's, that's kind of how I feel about it, [and] I'm always interested in research in general

R: Why?

C: Well 'cause I have to do more [laughs, I assume in reference to her own thesis writing she has been postponing for several years]…. No, because I think one has to do this when one is teaching, step outside this classroom stuff, you know, the stuff on the surface, thinking a bit more beyond it, if I can say, I think that's a good thing to do. (TI 18.04.01)

I need to acknowledge that despite the relatively amicable relations between the teacher participants in my study and me, suggested in the data excerpts presented above, the possibility exists that the teachers may have felt at times intimidated by me as a researcher representing the academic discursive community, a community in whose language they are not accustomed to converse on a daily basis.

In the context of situating myself in the study I would like to conclude with some reflections on who would benefit from my research. Most clearly, I will be the greatest beneficiary of this study. On one level, this research entails for me "learning from/working with/standing with" (Lather, 1994, p. 50) other adult immigrant ESL speakers about issues that I am struggling with in my own life. As

I put it in my final interview with Carol when discussing her interest in perhaps

pursuing her masters degree:

> Roumi: It's really, I mean for me I do research
> because it answers my questions about what I am
> dealing with in my life.
> Carol: Personally?
> R: It's actually my life as an immigrant mostly
> that I am struggling with stuff and I don't know
> how to deal with it and I have found that reading
> theory and doing research gives me answers.
> C: Isn't that interesting
> R: Yeah. (TI 18.04.01)

On another level, the production of this dissertation would allow me to

acquire symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) that could have real material effects in

my life. Yet, it is my hope that this research may also have effects for other adult

immigrant ESL speakers and the teachers in their classrooms if my story of this

study and reflections of its implications for classroom curriculum and practices

become available to teachers and prospective teachers in the field.

## Methodological perspectives

The analyses that follow make use of a variety of perspectives and I had a

hard time delineating the approach I take to my data. Whereas I started data

collection with the intention of analyzing all data through critical discourse

analysis, I soon realized that a neat systematic research method was not adequate

to handle the kind of data I was collecting. Thus, broadly put, I work within a

qualitative framework which stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, is

aware of the value-laden nature of inquiry, and emphasizes processes and

meanings not examined or measured rigorously "in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4). Within this framework, I find the notion of bricolage as particularly useful to illustrate the heterogeneity of means I employed to tell my story of my data. Bricolage is a collage/assemblage of research perspectives adapted to the circumstances of specific studies and not a research method in its own right. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) use the terms bricoleur and bricolage to do justice to the messy reality of doing qualitative research which requires flexibility and in line with postmodern thinking around research which throws into doubt grand narratives and privileged perspectives on knowing. As Denzin and Lincoln define it, "a bricoleur is a 'Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person' (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). The bricoleur produces a bricolage, that is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation" (1994, p. 2). As Hatton (1989) puts it, "bricoleurs borrow from other specialties typically with less than full knowledge of them, and adapt these borrowings to their own purposes" (p. 82). To summarize,

> the researcher-as-bricoleur-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms. The *bricoleur* understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting. The bricoleur knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications. There is no value-free science. The bricoleur also knows that researchers all tell stories about the

worlds they have studied. ... The product of the bricoleur's labor is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collagelike creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2-3)

McLeod (2001) suggests that Denzin and Lincoln intended the idea of researcher-as-bricoleur to be subversive:

Adopting the posture of the *bricoleur* throws into question the purpose and status of mainstream, rigorous and codified qualitative methods .... What is highlighted through the metaphor of the *bricoleur* is the view that knowledge is not produced by method. There is no methodological 'sausage machine' that allows the researcher to crank the handle and produce 'findings'. The *bricoleur* is not a machine operator of this kind. ....The *bricoleur* is someone who ...understands and 'owns' his or her perspective on research. (p. 122)

McLeod sees as well another critical perspective in the notion of research-as-bricolage: "that of the reader or consumer of research" (p. 128). In McLeod's view, "the notion of bricolage undermines the operation of rhetorical conventions" (ibid.) readers of research manuscripts have been socialized into to assess the knowledge claims being made. Thus, "the rhetorical eclecticism of the researcher/author introduces the necessity for the *reader* also to become a *bricoleur,* and to develop his or her skill in assembling meaning from what is offered." (ibid.).

McLeod makes the point as well that the powerful and ambitious image of researcher-as-bricoleur that Denzin and Lincoln present can resemble

> a return to something like the role of the 'lone ethnographer' ...with its implication of being able to adopt a privileged position outside, or on the edge of, mainstream culture. A key difference, however, lies in the kinds of knowledge claims made by *bricoleurs,* who 'cobble together stories' (Lincoln and Denzin, 1994) rather than claiming to produce monumental 'grand theories'. (p. 120)

This dissertation attempts to cobble together one such story and wonder about its implications for adult ESL curriculum and classroom practices.

# Chapter 4: Instructional materials in two adult ESL classrooms

This chapter attempts to answer two of my research questions in relation to the two classrooms where I conducted my research: what is the role of instructional materials as tools for classroom activities on cultural issues and how, or if, materials used in adult ESL classes help students with their life in Canada. It also discusses how the two teacher participants in my study perceive instructional materials. I am particularly interested in examining the extent to which materials and their usage in classrooms authorize and equip students to explore and negotiate their own cultural experiences in their new Canadian environment.

In tackling the role of texts as tools for classroom activities on cultural topics, I will use critical discourse analysis (CDA). To recap what I said in Chapter 2, CDA stems from a view of language use as a form of social practice both shaping and shaped by society. CDA is a type of textual analysis that examines what systems of knowledge and belief (or what I would prefer to term 'realities'[58]), what relationships and what identities are displayed in texts (and, I would add, in their contexts of use). The analysis of the systems of knowledge and beliefs that seem to be enacted in the classrooms I observed will center on the "realities" being produced in terms of the regimes of truth that seem to operate in a given classroom in a given moment. As Foucault explains, regimes of truth are

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[58] I have chosen to frame systems of knowledge and belief as "realities" because of work which asserts that such a link could be made. For example, Kramsch (1987) argues that for language learners "learning to understand foreign culture concepts means abandoning initial models of reality and constructing others, or 'reconstructing reality'" (p. 96). In addition, Gee (1999) sees language use as engaging us in a variety of tasks amongst which is what he calls "world building", i.e. "using cues and clues ... about what is here and now (taken as) 'reality'" (p. 85).

"the types of discourse which [each society, in this case, the classroom community] accepts and makes function as true" (1980, p. 131). When focusing on the realities enacted in classrooms I will thus examine what assumptions and taken for granted 'truths' appear to be played out in a given moment[59]. With respect to relationships and identities, I will focus on those I read as salient in my data. Thus the question about relationships will inquire into relations of domination, subordination as well as alliance-building or co-operation/identification that could be discerned among participants in a classroom interaction. Similarly, the question around identities will inquire into the types of identities displayed (e.g., student, mother, immigrant, etc.). As suggested in Chapter 2, I am wondering whether a distinction between monologic and dialogic texts (Bakhtin, 1984) used in the classroom makes a difference in the possibilities for negotiation of the realities, relationships, and identities that I read as being played out in the context of the participants' interactions[60] with these texts.

## Entering the data

I come into the process of writing as a positioned subject who cannot shake off partiality in data analysis[61]. Two of my biases in particular will play a significant role in the ways I perceive and interpret the data which refers to classroom use of instructional materials. One of these biases involves my insistence on engaging in critical analysis and the possibility for negotiation by

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[59] How classroom regimes of truth are related to larger regimes of truth will be discussed in the section on teachers and instructional materials below.

[60] I have chosen to refer to participants' talk around texts as 'interaction' with texts because of work that points to the dialogic character of people's relations to texts (Dyson, 1997, Kramsch, 1993, Smith, 1990).

[61] Partiality is also an inherent part of how a study gets conceptualized and the data gets collected because human beings cannot escape being "positioned subjects" (Rosaldo, 1993) in any endeavour they undertake.

students of any material that gets used in a classroom. The other refers to the paramount role of instructional materials in shaping classroom interactions and students' understanding and learning of the world around them. Whereas the first bias is still with me, I have had to abandon the second one in the interpretation of the data. The data below indicates that of paramount importance in how texts are interacted with in classrooms are the teachers who orchestrate classroom activities. This view is very much in line with the argument Luke et al. (1989) made that the authority of instructional materials may not be due to texts' linguistic features, but "intrinsic to the social structure of schools" (1989, p. 264). Similarly, Baker and Freebody (1989) argue that text- and teacher-authority are reciprocal and entail a subordination of students' knowledge. My data suggests, however, that students' knowledge and views could be ignored as well as powerfully evoked when both what I termed, following Bakhtin (1984), dialogic/open and monologic/closed classroom texts were interacted with.

## Classroom interactions with texts

This subsection will look into interactions with texts that occurred in both of the observed classrooms[62]. It will attempt to discuss the variability of ways in which texts are used. The first text that I will focus on presents features of what, following Bakhtin, I would call a monologic or closed text. However, the realities,

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[62] The interactions with texts (including videos) I observed in the lower-intermediate classroom were focused on aspects of life in Canada (volunteering, weather, news items from the media), Canadian holidays (Halloween, Remembrance day, Christmas), North American cultural artifacts (Granola, Blue Jeans), famous Canadians (Rick Hansen), and grammar exercises. Texts interacted with in the advanced classroom during my observations included a history book (*Canada: Growth of a Nation*) and worksheets on it, video materials on aspects of Canadian history, Canadian short stories (A Field of Wheat, The Loons), a Canadian novel (*A Bird in the House*), texts on speed reading, making inferences and developing listening skills, and exercises on increasing vocabulary.

identities and relationships that are being displayed in classroom interactions with the text seem to flow (as directed by the teacher) from rigid to more open and vice versa.

### *Working with a monologic text*

The text is an exercise that follows a video script used in the lower intermediate classroom I observed. The text appears in material designed specifically for instructional purposes and is aimed for use in adult ESL classrooms. Thus, it is prone to entail a single-voicedness considered typical of the textbook genre (de Castell, 1990, Kress, 1989). The video, entitled Community Volunteers, presents the meeting of a small group of volunteers at a community centre who discuss setting up a hot meal program for shut-ins. Following its script there are several exercises which focus on students' comprehension of the video. The last exercise is intended to open up the theme of volunteering for a broader discussion. It is the classroom use of this text[63] that I want to ponder over. Here is the text itself:

> Consider doing some volunteer work in your community. To help you think about this, write answers to these questions:
> What are some kinds of volunteer work that you can think of?
> Where might you go to help as a volunteer in your community?
> How can volunteer work help you as a newcomer to Canada? (Open Learning Agency, 1995, p. 2)

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[63] I take this exercise to be a text in the sense of "a stretch of written language which shows unity of purpose" (Sunderland et al., 2002, p. 224).

I begin with a brief textual analysis of the exercise largely impacted by my own identity position as an immigrant with particular experiences in volunteering. What I argue is that it gives limited opportunities to learners of English to negotiate their own understandings of volunteering with the ones suggested in the script. Even though this particular text is intended to open a discussion on various possible ways of volunteering, it is nevertheless closed, or what Bakhtin would probably term monologic, in some of its features. The use of the imperative in the first sentence presents to readers volunteering as an unproblematic worthy activity. While some people might shiver at what I could be implying I would like to mention that for someone like me, coming from an ex-communist country, volunteering may never have been a voluntary, but rather a compulsory activity for quite some time. I would assume that others might have experienced volunteering quite differently. Thus in dialoguing with this text my first reaction to it is to resist it and wonder inside of me, 'Why don't you ask students if and how have they experienced volunteering in their life?' My resistance is further exasperated by the last question. Implying almost automatically that volunteering would help a newcomer, the text does not give the reader room to imagine other outcomes. Thus it acts like a monologue "deaf to the other's response ... [pretending] to be the *ultimate* word [by closing] down the represented world" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 293)[64].

The bulk of the analysis of this text, however, is on how it gets negotiated in the classroom. Set by the teacher, class work on this text begins with pair work

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[64] Possibilities to make this text more dialogic will be explored in the conclusion of this dissertation.

on these questions. Then the students engage in a whole group discussion of possible answers to them which is facilitated by the teacher.

I will focus in particular on the discussion around the second question: where might you go to help as a volunteer in your community?, whose textual features seem to allow greater flexibility in responses. Students' responses to the question include volunteering for a Chinese immigrant organization, in schools and libraries, and at the airport. In other words, the suggestions students come up with are all related to how they have experienced volunteering in Canada in their identity positioning as immigrants and parents and are not related to the community volunteer script they had worked with before discussing the above questions. In the following transcript excerpt, I analyze the realities, identity positionings and relations that could be discerned in it:

```
Teacher: … where might you go [to help as a
volunteer in your community]?
[several turns later]
Vanessa: Airport.
Teacher [incredulous]: Airport?[makes a face
expressing incredulity]
S1: Hospital.
Teacher [whispering in wonder]: Airport, airport?
Some Ss: [a light giggle]
[Vanessa is pointing to Vincent]
Teacher: Vincent said 'airport'?
Ss [some awkward laughter]
Teacher [sarcastic]: I volunteer to go to Hong
Kong.
Ss [burst in laughter]
Teacher: Did you say 'airport', Vincent? She's
pointing at you.
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Ss [giggle]
Teacher [laughing]: No, no, no, no, no, she's
kidding, I think she's kidding.
Vanessa: In general, a newcomer, to new home, from
the airport to new home
Teacher: Pick up
Vanessa: Pick up the newcomers [newcomers overlaps
with the next sentence]
Teacher: The newcomers from the airport. Thank
you.
[Students giggle]
Teacher: And take them to their home or the place
they're gonna stay. That's good, actually that's a
really nice kind of volunteer work I think. (AT
25.10.00)
```

Overall, the text consumption evident in the excerpt above can be viewed as instantiating a classroom discursive practice realized in different discourses by the students and teacher and operating within and informing wider social practices. The reality of what volunteering might involve that Vanessa presents is shattered at the start by the teacher whose sarcastic comments suggest the impossibility of such a reality. The identity positioning of the teacher displayed here appears to be that of the ultimate expert on volunteering. The teacher dominates the scene and all others seem subordinated to the teacher with Vanessa (and Vincent) cast in a somewhat alienated position. However, Vanessa insists on clarifying her reality and what the teacher does then is to authoritatively assess its worth as a type of volunteering, regaining her position as the ultimate expert. Once the reality of volunteering at the airport becomes possible in the classroom through its legitimization by the teacher, the students pour in additional information on its value that they themselves have experienced:

S1: I remember when I came to Canada in airport, there have, there have some volunteer, they give me some information for some

Vincent: Newcomers.

S1: For newcomers, yeah, yeah. They speak different kind of language, is

Teacher: What kind of information did they give you?

S1: A-ah, for [tax], for children [tax] form, I don't know how to say, child

S2: Child care

S3: Benefit

S1: And SIN card

S2: How to apply

S1: Child benefit and SIN card application

Teacher: Application for your social insurance number, uh-huh

S2: Mandarin, Mandarin, Mandarin form

S3: Some Mandarin

S1: Medical insurance form

Teacher: Medical insurance forms, O.K., social insurance, child care

Valery: But many different kind of information they will give you, a bag. (ibid.)

Five students take part in the above discussion during which the teacher asks a question to which she does not know the answer. The teacher thus sets the conditions for the conversation to become an exchange of knowledge among immigrants (who are experts in what volunteering at the airport involves) and a novice in this reality (the teacher) and not the classroom work of students answering a specific question. Relationships of co-operation and support with language use are evident among students. The teacher's assistance with language seems also co-operative rather than directive to a right answer, especially as

students do not get to repeat what the teacher says, but rather take the conversation in other directions. In this way the reality that a classroom is a place where students have other identity positions (immigrants in this case) and can be experts in knowing about volunteering is set. Several turns later the teacher directs the class to a discussion of the third question:

> Teacher: How can VOLUNTEERING[65] help you?
> S4: Introduce you local information
> Teacher [starts writing it on the board]: You can find out local
> S5: News
> Teacher: Information.
> Ss: uh-huh
>  [several turns later]
> Teacher: O.K. Other reasons why you should be a volunteer? Jennifer?
> Jen: I want so they can help me how to find a job.
> S: Give the experience.
> Teacher: [this is overlapping with the previous sentence]. Volunteering is a GOOD way to get experience, work experience. It doesn't matter if you don't get money, it doesn't matter, but volunteer experience is, in Canada, anyway, the same as work experience, so it's VERY useful and helpful, you can use people's names as references to move on to get a paid job or a better job so it can be very, very helpful, very, very helpful. (ibid.)

After this long turn by the teacher, she directs the students to where they can find out about volunteer work in the community they live in and thus any potential discussion of the merits (and, I would add, possible disadvantages) of

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[65] Capitals indicate emphasis.

volunteering is cut short. The above excerpt presents, as a regime of truth maintained by the teacher, the notion that volunteering is GOOD as it can help you get a paid job. The teacher's views dominate the interaction and the learners are simply students giving right answers. That the adult immigrants I observed negotiated differently the meaning of volunteering is evident from the words of one of them when I interviewed her. Here is her response to my question about what she thought of the text on volunteering:

> Rose: It's O.K., if you can help. Like, my situation, with kids [I don't have the time]. But I like to help. My friends want to go far to doctor, don't have car, I help, I take them. It's volunteering, too, right?' (SI, 3.11.00)

This response presents on one hand another construction of volunteering altogether, where volunteering is applied to instances of helping someone and not only the poor, sick or mentally challenged (which is the view the video transcript students worked with in the classroom offered). On the other hand, it points to a situation which demands that we inquire into who has the time and, I would add, the financial freedom to volunteer, i.e. whether adult new immigrants with obligations like taking care for small children or making a living can afford to do volunteer work. The reality of time constraints is evident in the words of another student as well:

> Shirley: I like [the volunteering text] ...I think I can help some people, if I have time. And then I can get more experience from do the volunteer. (SI 14.12.00)

Rose's, Shirley's and Lea's views (below) seem to suggest that students appreciate learning about volunteering in a Canadian context. However, it seems to me, they also suggest that a more in-depth engagement with students' negotiations of the concept of volunteering in classroom settings could be useful.

> Lea: Volunteering, it's very useful I think. We are new here.... Just for me it's very strange. (SI 13.12.00)

Overall, it could be argued that the classroom discussion of this exercise did not challenge the language of the text which presented volunteering as an unproblematic, benevolent, useful, and possible activity for new immigrants to Canada. The closed text was discussed in a fairly predictable way and the views of the authors of this text on what counts as volunteering and its worth remained more or less uncontested in the public classroom space. However, as the excerpt above on types of information about Canada that immigrants can gain thanks to volunteers at the airport indicates, there could be moments in the interactions with a closed text where realities, identities and relationships in a classroom can depart from those prescribed by the text. An open text, used in the second classroom where I did observations, points to the same important aspect of interactions with texts: a flow from a closed to an open discussion and back is very much a possibility in classrooms.

### Working with a dialogic text

The text is the short story "The Loons" written by Canadian writer Margaret Laurence and discussed in the advanced adult ESL class that I observed. While used as an instructional material, this is a literary text not specifically

written for the purposes of ESL instruction, nor abridged for use in this classroom. The story is about a Metis girl, Piquette, who grows up in harsh circumstances in a small prairie town in the 1930s. It is told by a white girl and engages the attitudes of white society towards "half-breeds". However, following Bakhtin, I would term this text dialogic because the characters' words "do not serve as the expression of the author's own ideological position [but rather represent] separate, foreign consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6). Besides, the imagery and symbolism in the story that link Piquette to the loons leave many gaps for the reader to fill in when pondering over the story's meaning and the connection between the lot of people of mixed blood in the world of white invaders and the disappearance of a bird species from its natural habitat invaded by humans.

The students first engage in a silent reading of the story while the teacher writes on the board questions that students are to address, initially in small groups, and later in a whole class discussion. These start as rather closed questions such as "What information is given at the beginning of the story or Who is the protagonist" demanding specific "right" responses and move on to questions more open to interpretation and personal opinion like: What does the loon symbolize? and What is the theme?

On occasions through the discussion of these questions both students and teacher perform identity positions that do not necessarily comply with what we could term "traditional" teacher and student roles in the classroom typical for the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequence which research has identified as a

prototypical pattern of classroom talk between teachers and students (Mehan, 1979, Nystrand et al., 1997, Skidmore, 2000, Toohey, 2000). The departure from the more traditional teacher and student identities as engaged in IRE sequences is most evident when the more open questions are discussed. I will focus only on the discussion that ensued around the question of the theme of the story:

```
Teacher:… So, what would you say would be the
theme?[silence]Maybe it's not too complicated
[a few Ss whispering to their neighbours]
Connor:    Society, Metis, they will be lost
Teacher:  Did everybody hear that? Why don't you
say that one more time a little louder? See what
you think
Connor:   I think if we don't maintain, if we
don't
Teacher:  If we don't maintain?
Connor:   Yeah, Native people's culture, then it
will   be   lost.   Actually   forgotten   by,   um,
intentionally    forgotten    or,    unintentionally
forgotten  by  discrimination  from  the  white
society, white people society
Teacher:  Like the loon⁶⁶
Connor:   Like   the   loon,   society   forgot
[inaudible] and the loon just disappear
Teacher: Anybody else has something to add to
that .... that's different?
Sheila:   I think it [the theme] should be broader
Teresa: It's difficult for the Indians to find a
place of belonging
Teacher:  Uh-huh
[Several turns later]
Teacher:  Anybody else?
```

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⁶⁶ The notion of Native people being likened to birds may very well be contested by First Nations people.

```
Sheila:    I think we have to think about, just for
Piquette
Teacher:   What's that?
Sheila:    I have, I need a theme just for Piquette
Teacher:   Oh, you mean referring to Piquette?
Sheila:    Yeah
Teacher:   What were you going to say?
Sheila:    Life is short, make the most out of it
Teacher:   Oh [meaning "interesting"]. (AT 15.03.01)
```

This excerpt presents the possibility for students to express personal opinions on the theme of the story. The teacher on several occasions probes for various "different" responses displaying a reality that the theme of a story cannot be fixed, but instead is open to interpretation. The students seem to share this reality of the unfixed nature of a text's theme by offering various ideas. This reality gets consolidated in the classroom when a student, Sheila, is given the space to elaborate on her vision of what the story is about and thus is able to negotiate her understanding of the story's theme. The identities and relationships displayed in this excerpt seem to be those of a leader of a discussion (the teacher) and participants in it (the learners) as they respectfully exchange views on the meanings of a short story. Further on, the teacher, acting as the conductor of classroom activities, attempts to connect the theme of the story to contemporary issues with First Nations in Canadian society:

```
Teacher:   So what is the solution then for Native
people, because it isn't really resolved yet, is
it?
A few: Yeah
[several turns later]
```

Teacher: It's a very big question right now, about treaty, the treaty process, um, especially in British Columbia

Teresa: Even [equitable] treaty

Connor:    Nisga

Teacher:   Yeah, Nisga

Teresa:    even treaty process

Sheila:    Equal

Teresa:    Equality

Sheila:    Equal rights and privilege

Teacher:   What's the best way for Native people to respond?

[several turns later]

Connor:    They should adapt, but not be adapted by the white people

Teacher:   To adapt, but not be adapted by, is that what you mean? To adapt in their own way?

Connor:    Yeah, like they, they should be treated in a fair manner

Teacher:   Uh-huh

Connor:    and the white people should open ... their policy to Native people. Not to, not to give them too much freedom because ... if we give them too much freedom and they, somehow they can abuse it

[FN 15.03.01-There is the tension of silence in the room when everybody is listening and involved.]

Teacher:   Um, some abuse it, some. Well, there is that question of freedoms um, and responsibilities

Connor:    There is this question, I heard people complain about Native people, they [inaudible] but they don't always do something for themselves.

Teacher:   Sometimes it's pretty hard

Connor:   They   complain   about   being discriminated, they complain about being treated bad, being treated unfairly

Teacher:   uh-huh

Connor:   But   they,   actually   they   themselves sometimes … don't deserve to be treated as fairly by the white people

Teacher:   They   don't   deserve   to   be   treated   as fairly?

Connor:   Sometimes

Teacher:   Sometimes? Some people?

Connor:   Yeah, because of their behaviour

Teacher:   uh-huh, this is really a big question [a bit of an awkward laugh]

[several turns later]

Connor:   Canadian   [non-Native]   people   can't catch   salmon   without   paying   taxes   to   the government

S2:       I think they [Native people] should work, too

Connor: Yeah, they have this fish for themselves, but they sell it, they catch fish and they sell it

Teacher:   uh-huh

Connor:   And   it's   not   all   right   with   people [simultaneous talk among students]

Teacher:   Well,   it's   all,   unfortunately almost 9 o'clock   so   we   can't   pursue   this,   but   this   is   a whole   other,   other   question   itself,   a   very interesting   one,   sure.   So… let's   now   have   our break… I hate to cut it off. (ibid.)

As the excerpt above suggests, students seem aware of some of the realities

First Nations in British Columbia face like negotiating fair land treaties. The

discussion quickly becomes a free exchange of opinions with the teacher trying to

curb it when it begins to take a racist turn. Whereas initially four students and the

teacher participate in the conversation, it soon becomes a dialogue between the teacher and Connor. Clearly, Connor is here not the student providing right answers, but an adult member of Canadian society with rather mixed views on First Nations people. The teacher also displays the identity of a member of Canadian society who attempts to defend First Nations from the racist comments Connor begins to make, comments that at one point in the excerpt get somewhat corroborated by another student (S2: I think they [First Nations] should work, too). By the end of the excerpt more ESL learners engage in conversations with each other, most likely in the capacity of members of Canadian society. In the end, the teacher switches back to her role as the instructor who has control over what and how much gets discussed in a classroom setting. The conversation seems dominated by Connor whose construction of Canadian people, for example, as excluding First Nations is left unchallenged.

What about the realities that could be discerned through this excerpt? One seems to be the reality that various kinds of views on issues in Canadian society are permitted in the classroom. The other, however, that I am uncomfortable with, is the reality that stereotypical racist views new Canadians may have picked up through their engagements with the cultural discourses surrounding them outside the classroom, may remain fairly unchallenged in an adult ESL classroom[67].

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[67] This teacher works under pressure to cover a particular amount of curriculum material in a limited time. Like many other teachers she may not feel particularly equipped to deal with issues of racism in her classroom. My fieldnotes of that day document that during the break the teacher did continue her conversation with Connor on the topic and got a clearer understanding of his views which suggest he is aware of the effects of white society domination on the situation First Nations find themselves in (FN 15.03.01).

It could be argued that the interactions with some of the questions accompanying the open text "The Loons" allowed the students and teacher to enact a variety of identity positions, relationships and realities departing from the ones traditionally displayed in IRE sequences in the classroom. However, as the excerpt above suggests the dialogic features of the literary text engaged with in the classroom did not seem to have much influence on the direction of the talk.

With respect to Luke's (2002) suggestion that CDA include the documentation of contexts of textual consumption, the analysis above seems to indicate that dominant discourses in the text on volunteering were resisted by at least some of the students who interpreted volunteering on their own terms[68], but these same discourses were also re-voiced as a discussion of, for example, who has the time and freedom to volunteer did not take place in the classroom setting. Similarly, whereas the realities, relationships, and positions made available to students through the work on the Loons text seemed more varied, racist discourses on First Nations people in Canada, available in the world outside the classrooms, were not re-interpreted very successfully in the classroom thus limiting the discursive resources these students could "bring to bear when they contend with new texts and ... institutions" (Luke, 1995, p. 21). The possibilities for students' negotiation of their cultural experiences and how these are tied to wider institutional discourses will be explored further in the next section.

**Teachers and instructional materials**

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[68] See Rose's, Shirley's and Lea's views presented earlier.

This section addresses the question that I posed to teachers with regard to the instructional materials (texts from textbooks or other sources, videos, games, etc.) they found useful in addressing life in Canada. I was particularly interested in what features of these texts the teachers appreciated. In line with the work I had done in my Master's thesis, I sought answers that would suggest that teachers preferred texts that would allow students to explore and negotiate their own cultural experiences in their new Canadian environment. Even though I was not sure I would get such answers, I was somewhat unprepared for the extent to which the choice of texts for these two teachers was linked to the pressures of curriculum mandates and related to other constraints (and in that sense not very different from how I myself had experienced instructional materials in my role as a teacher in a non-democratic state) [69].

### *Curriculum mandates*

When I asked Joanne why specifically she had chosen to bring into the classroom materials about Halloween, Remembrance Day, Rick Hansen, Granola, Blue Jeans[70], she responded as follows:

> Joanne: Hm, why would I choose these topics, for many reasons, first of all I have a responsibility to the ELSA mandate, ... we try to cover issues surrounding these guidelines that are given to us through the ELSA mandate and that's one aspect of it, the settlement issues in terms of dealing with life in Canada, and so ... as we go through a year, I'm gonna be dealing with all the major holidays ...

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[69] This point will be taken further in the conclusion to this dissertation.

[70] All these were themes that were discussed at times I observed in Joanne's classroom.

and other special events that maybe are taking
place around us like … the Terry Fox run which…
can blend into the notion of later dealing with
Rick Hansen because both of them were in the area
of ability and disability which we're also working
with. (TI, 14.12.00)

Joanne framed her response first and foremost in relation to the curriculum

mandate she was operating within rather than representing herself as an active

agent in choosing to focus on themes that she finds (or has negotiated with her

students as) meaningful for adult lower-intermediate ESL learners in the relatively

new for them Canadian environment. A similar reference to curricular mandates

as guiding her in her choice of texts is also evident in Carol's construction of how

she selected her instructional materials that have to do with life in Canada:

Carol: First of all the choice is only partially
mine because, um, the department, you know, the
history textbook, would come to a [departmental]
decision.    Working   within   the   [department's]
framework … we go from the beginning of Canadians,
… Native studies to about Confederation. That's
the time period and so the content that's anything
that we would choose would have to fit into that…
So I mean the textbook is just about that. Now
regarding the novel and short stories those are
basically the individual instructor … basically
we're supposed to do a Canadian novel, and
Canadian short stories, 3 or 4 …[and] of the ones
that I know of that could work I try to choose
something that is accessible to students, um, so
that they don't get frustrated and they can just
really get beyond just the basic sort of story

> into other points of literary analysis [that]
> we're supposed to be doing. Part of the goal is to
> discuss and teach different kinds of literary
> analysis, different aspects of that. (TI 18.04.01)

The tight curriculum guidelines that Carol needs to follow are related to the mandate that students who have successfully completed this course (together with another one that immediately follows it) get credits equivalent to Social Studies 11 and English 12. In this context the choice of content and its study are far from being linked to advanced ESL students' negotiations of their cultural experiences in the new Canadian environment and have to do with learning facts from Canadian history and discussing, for example, similes or personification as means of literary expression. The curriculum mandates Joanne and Carol operated within created further constraints that affected the teachers' work with instructional materials.

### Time and tests

A major issue Joanne articulated was the limited time she could spend on various topics:

> Joanne: Time is a problem… it really concerns me,
> it concerns me every day and it's one of the
> stressors of the job because you know you can just
> never get there…. because I have so much to do in
> order to give these students a basic run-through
> of English and culture included, Canadian culture.
> Hello [laughs a bit]…and if you have students that
> are coming in at a 3 level, they get 350 hours,
> that goes by pretty quick. (TI, 14.12.00)

In this context, as the quote below indicates, much of the negotiation of cultural experiences in relation to information in instructional materials could only be left to the students themselves:

> J: …just stressing the incidental learning that may go on, always trying to hope for that, you know, so to provide information, materials that are interesting … and … from my knowledge of the information, is it correct and truthful …and throw it out there and hope that when they're driving home they might think a little more about it … or that there may be opinions being shaped and attitudes been formed and stuff as they change, you know, from where they've come from to where they're now. And just, just throwing it out there. Yeah, I guess. It's a big responsibility.
> (TI 14.12.00)

An issue for Carol was the amount of testing students have to undergo:

> Carol: They are very heavily tested. Content or not, … I mean in general, they are heavily tested, which I am not so crazy about, but on the other hand they have to be evaluated accurately, you know as accurately as possible because their lives are just sort of sitting there…. So I guess there is a certain amount of testing that needs to be done in order to be accurate, but so, I don't test them for content. …I mean writing is writing, reading is reading comprehension, vocabulary, some of the skills, but Canadian studies is most, a combination of tests I do, like I give them a mark for their oral presentations. Like they do several of those, give them a mark for their listening activities, their note taking and questions and all, and then there are a couple of marks that are based on the content. So it's the skills rather

than the material content, it's a hybrid of ESL
and content. (TI 18.4.01)

As evident from the excerpt above, Carol focuses on testing students' language skills rather than content even though the curriculum mandate does not prioritize such an approach. The consequences of testing, which is conducted at least once a week, make it dubious that time would be spent on allowing students to reflect on how the cultural information they come across in texts relates to their experiences in Canada:

> C: It's kind of horrifying in a way that their
> lives are so dependent upon whether it's a C+ or a
> B-, you know, they cannot get into this course if
> they only get a C+, … they are so dependent on
> these actual marks that it's just, it's very, very
> important that we be as accurate as possible with
> it. … Their reading comprehension tests, there are
> 6 of them, and I think it's better to have 6 than
> 4 because you get a better, more accurate mark. So
> I don't know, I don't have a perfect answer to
> that, it kind of takes a lot of their time, the
> testing. (TI, 18.04.01)

Joanne and Carol's accounts of their curriculum mandates, and the limited time or testing linked to them, present a picture of some of the structural constraints in these teachers' ESL classrooms and thus the impact of wider discourses on their everyday classroom life. Curriculum mandates, limited time and testing constrain students, too. The discourses that surround them not only in school, but also in the wider society, seem to suggest that to get a decent job or continue with one's education one needs to be proficient in English measured exclusively by proficiency certificates and test grades.

In Joanne's classroom, the amount of time students can spend in a government funded ESL course may provide them with the basics of the language and some cultural "facts", but does not allow a deeper exploration of the cultural issues that they come across or may come across in instructional materials. In Carol's classroom, the fact that the course her students are taking could allow them "to partially satisfy the requirements for the "Community Colleges College Foundation Certificate" (Instructor's guide, 1994, n. p.) and is a prerequisite to gaining further academic qualifications, makes it very much an exercise in test-taking. Operating within such discourse, this course seems to limit even further than the ELSA course opportunities for the students' classroom negotiation of the culture(s) in the instructional materials they interact with.

The classroom "realities" for Joanne, Carol and their students are reminiscent of the discourse of schooling (Varenne & McDermott, 1999) in North American culture organized to sort people where, in the context of second language study, English language fluency becomes the key criterion in determining success. Within this discourse people live their lives amidst vast apparatus of tests and rankings and "being a teacher" becomes "a quality of the culture that requires ... that 'teacherliness' be displayed [in ways that involve] making success and failure ... documentable" (ibid., p. 17).

Within these structural constraints Carol and Joanne's agency in choosing instructional materials can be viewed in Carol's attempt to reinforce content:

```
C: the short stories or novels … something that I
   like to do is to tie it with what we've been
   talking about in the history, so the timeframe and
   setting, it's good if that can tie in (TI, 18.04.01).
```

and in Joanne's search for materials that satisfy multiple goals:

> J: I'm always looking for that multiplicity of stuff. ... I'm looking [in materials] for grammar opportunities and vocabulary opportunities and um cultural opportunities and ... learning opportunities, you know, in terms of learning new things or for reviewing knowledge they probably already have. It's always a, it's always a multiple task. (TI, 14.12.01)

### Teachers' changes to instructional materials

Of particular interest to me were the teachers' views on how they used instructional materials. Both teachers saw themselves as modifiers of instructional materials. As Joanne put it:

> J: There's not a lot of set materials that I don't modify any more.... I came to rely more on that material that is around you.... and less and less on books, there are very few that I actually use. Some bits, there may be an exercise or two[71]. (TI 9.11.00)

In a similar vein Carol observed:

> C: I can't just use them just as they are, I never, I never [laughs] just use the materials as they are, I always, like my cooking, I mean, I change the recipe. (TI 13.3.01)

A probe into the changes these teachers make to materials, however, indicates that these do not seem to be in the direction of allowing greater negotiability of these materials by students, nor of questioning the "truth" of these texts, but rather of

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[71] Apart from the LINC videos, none of the materials used in Joanne's classroom were written to incorporate the objectives of the ELSA curriculum.

learning content or skills. Here's Joanne's account of her use of the video on volunteering referred to earlier in this chapter:

> J: The LINC videos are fairly um, sometimes they are a little bit wooden. You know, but they do deal with certain everyday situations that you can build on… that vignette I think we saw on the video [about volunteering], that gives me an opportunity, it gives the base from which to work and if we wanna talk more about the topic of volunteering or how to go about it, where to go, to role-play a meeting, you know, I can use that to go in many directions, that's just basically, it offers just the base, you know, somewhere to start. (TI, 14.12.00)

And here is Carol's account of her use of videos:

> videos for instance I won't take necessarily the whole thing, I'll take bits of it, um, depending on what I am doing, but, and I'll skip some parts …. So for me the text is secondary. And what we're doing is primary, the text is used for that, the text doesn't drive it. (TI, 18.04.01)

When I enquired further into what Carol's goals are when using instructional materials she responded as follows:

> C: Well, part of it is content … facts, I mean, really, and part of it is to um use it really as the basis of language learning for them, you know, whether it's preparing a debate, whether it is preparing for an oral presentation, sometimes that's the focus rather than the content itself. (ibid.)

Both accounts suggest that these teachers see instructional materials as merely supplementary to their goals in the classroom. I am wondering, however, to what

extent it could be argued that these texts have an auxiliary impact on what goes on in the classroom since the excepts above could be seen to confirm an observation Doyle (1992) made when reporting on a study on textbook use by mathematics and social studies teachers: "[p]edagogically, the emphasis was not ... on deconstruction of text meaning but rather on mastery of curriculum content" (p. 496). In an ESL classroom specific language skills get added to content or precede content in importance, but I am wondering to what extent negotiation of content or language skills take place. For example, during the time I observed in Carol's classroom, the teacher negotiated with students the features of their oral presentations that would be assessed (pronunciation, grammatical correctness, clarity of voice). However, an oral presentation was not discussed as a specific cultural practice whose meanings students might struggle with and might need to negotiate.

Another aspect of the teachers' views on some texts also deserves to be pointed out. The constructedness of facts in historical texts does not seem apparent to these teachers. When discussing her perusal of ready-made materials, for example, Joanne made the following comment:

> J: The Remembrance day [text], yeah, I did more of
> that, it's historical, I can't do a heck of a lot
> to change that. (TI 18.04.01)

Whereas nobody could possibly deny the historical fact of Canada's participation in war efforts, the meaning of this participation, in my view, needs to be negotiated with students. Here is an example of what perceptions of the role of

North America in the Second World War some students might have in entering an adult ESL classroom in Canada:

> The United States made a lot of money from selling arms and other things to countries during the early years of the war, but it did not really contribute as an ally. ... It was only after the U.S. and Britain began to think that the Soviet Union might win the war by itself and dominate post-war Europe that they became concerned enough to enter the war. (excerpt of the views of a 16-year-old Russian boy quoted in Wertsch, 2002, p. 4)

In all fairness, it has to be said that the text Joanne referred to did, for example, mention that minority groups had participated in Canada's war efforts. However, it was not more specific, nor did it present different views of war events or encourage students' negotiation of the material.

A similar unawareness of the constructedness of historical textbooks could be read in the following excerpt of my interview with Carol:

> ```
> these texts change, you know, every once in a
> while, we try to bring in a few more choices, but
> I don't think they would differ much in terms of
> culture, they would differ more in terms of how
> the materials are presented, [the content would be
> the same]  pretty much. (TI 13.3.01)
> ```

I view the understanding of historical texts these teachers seemed to share as indicative of the curriculum and instructional discourses they live in. I wonder if elsewhere things are different.

**Texts as sources of cultural knowledge**

In this section I turn to my explorations of the other major question I posed myself in initiating this study: do (some) adult learners find texts on life in Canada they interact with in classrooms useful for their life outside the classroom? I had hoped that this question would give me further glimpses into how students interact with classroom instructional materials. I posed the question to inquire into the relevance of such materials to the immigrants' identity positions and relations in "real life" Canadian settings. As I suggested in my introduction, I had experienced my interactions with similar materials as very limiting in allowing me to display a range of my identity positions and to act adequately and feel comfortable in my new surroundings. Thus, I was somewhat skeptical of the usefulness of these materials for the student participants in my study. So it came as a surprise to me that the data collected in student interviews to a large extent presents students as satisfied with the materials introduced to them. Both lower intermediate and advanced students constructed the usefulness of the materials for their life outside the classroom in terms of "gaining knowledge" about aspects of Canadian culture. Here are some quotes from the interviews:

> [Through these materials] I learn about Canada … And I know Canadian culture and before that I don't know Canadian culture. I know, for example, Rick Hansen and Thanksgiving Day and Halloween. Before I don't know that. (Alison, lower intermediate student, SI 29.11.00)

I like [the text on Blue Jeans]. It's a kind of culture, North American culture. Maybe this is, how to say, popular knowledge in North America. But for us something new ... in the text we can learn. (Harriet, lower intermediate student, SI 13.12.00)

Shirley: I learn many, culture I learn from this class. Example is maybe your Halloween, you know, when I came here I didn't know how to, um, how to say it ... Halloween was give some
Roumi: Oh, the trick or treat thing
S: Yeah, so I learnt some kind of culture then. I know why I must give the children candy. (Shirley, lower intermediate student, SI 14.12.00)

These quotes from my interviews with the lower intermediate students point to their satisfaction with learning about concrete holidays (Thanksgiving, Halloween), people (Rick Hansen), or practices (like the widespread practice of wearing jeans in North America), and gaining a sense of their meaning (e.g. why children are given candies on Halloween or what wearing blue jeans may symbolize in popular North American culture). Similarly, quotes from interviews with the advanced students reiterate the theme of gaining knowledge about people, practices, places or historical developments, and their meanings as useful:

Roumi: Um, do you find anything that you've learnt from Canadian studies in the classroom useful for your life outside the classroom?
Rossi: Oh, yes. For example several times I was downtown and I was wondering about the statue of George Vancouver. And I was wondering who is this person. Now I know that he was Scottish explorer who came here to explore this new land. And also Simon Fraser ... So I enrich my knowledge about some

famous Canadians. And also I have learnt about
these totem poles. Before that I was wondering
what they, why they are created. And what is their
meaning, now I know that they were created by the
Native peoples and explain the way their life is,
their tradition. (Rossi, advanced student, SI 4.04.01)

I was talking to one of my friends, she is
Canadian. We were talking about the French in
Quebec, how come they are like that, they want to
separate. And you kind of think why, and Canadian
history really tells you about what really
happened, so you got an idea about their side, why
they want to separate. So it's kind of good. (Lorna,
advanced student, SI 29.03.01)

[The classroom materials are] sometimes [useful
outside the classroom] sometimes no. Some things
in the history book, for example the Maritime,
before I read the, before I study the history, I
don't even know what is, what Maritime means. And
now I know, O.K., it's on the East coast, some
parts of Canada, now I know. (Frank, advanced student, SI
5.04.01)

What struck me in most accounts of the student participants in my study
was the opposition "Before I didn't know, now I know" in the way they construct
the usefulness of classroom materials for their lives outside the classroom.
Clearly, the students I talked to feel that they are gaining useful cultural
knowledge about their new surroundings. But in a sense the participants in my
study left me with the impression that they assume the knowledge they have
gained to be somewhat written in stone, not changing, and always true.

Gaining cultural "knowledge" is a legitimate aspect of cultural instruction in second language education and, in fact, for long has been the major approach to addressing culture explicitly in the classroom (see Byram & Morgan, 1994, Ilieva, 1997, 2001, Stern, 1992 among others). Byram and Morgan insist that as part of culture learning "students need some factual knowledge. They need to know historical and geographical facts, facts about the society and its institutions ... and so on" (1994, p. 136). Whereas it would be absurd to dispute the claim that students need "facts" about Canada and Canadians to be able to communicate in a satisfactory manner in a Canadian setting, becoming aware of the constructedness of such "facts" from a particular perspective to serve particular interests could, in my view, be more productive in allowing students the opportunity to negotiate this cultural "knowledge" on their own terms and not accept it at face value. I say this because this same assumption of cultural knowledge "written in stone" that I had before coming to Canada triggered my own dissatisfaction with the positions and relationships with Canadians I found myself in in my early immigrant years in the country. The instructional materials I interacted with when wondering about a topic for my MA did not acknowledge struggles of the types I was experiencing as an immigrant in making sense of Canadian contexts, nor invited me as a reader to be more than a learner of cultural "facts".

But why was I surprised at the students' constructions of texts as useful sources of cultural "knowledge"? Was I trying to be, in psychoanalytical parlance, "one with the Other" when, in fact, I was hanging on to loose identifications with the students whose experiences of Canada did not seem to repeat my own? Or

could it be that one needs to have learnt/know cultural "facts" of the kinds students refer to before s/he can realize that these cannot be helpful in many real life situations? I tend to believe that the latter is more often the case. Yet, I felt the need to inquire into what knowledge may mean to me/them/us from a perspective that would take into account desires and identities as they may play out in new settings. According to Bracher:

> [The] desire to acquire or consolidate a body of knowledge can be ... powerful ... This is the case because identity is a function of relationships, which give identity its definition, its boundaries.
>
> Knowledge provides such definition and boundary. Knowledge of even the most trivial or impractical sort can support our identity by giving us a sense of orientation and stability through connecting us to something other, the object of knowledge. (1996, para. 12-13)

I then read the students' quotes cited above as in fact telling me something not only about (what I thought was) uncritical satisfaction with gaining cultural "facts" and their "meanings", but also about knowledge as offering the students the security of an identity that can be anchored in the new for the students Canadian surroundings by providing familiar signposts. Such reading of the students' accounts above is especially relevant for the quote below which situates Melissa as the mother who knows and can orient her son in the new surroundings.

> And this Rick Hansen [materials] I think also important because um he lives [in the city where I live], last week he went to my son's school...So I know, I tell [his] story to my son. ... This is very important. (Melissa, lower intermediate student, SI, 29.11.00)

I read this quote to mean that through interacting with instructional materials about Rick Hansen, Melissa seems to be gaining a desired identity of being a reference point for her son not only in their native country, but also in Canada, their new home.

## Conclusion

Overall, in discussing from a sociocultural perspective what constraints and affordances the features of the classroom texts presented for the students in my study, as the excerpts in the subsection on classroom interactions with texts suggest, these constraints and affordances were related to a larger extent to the mediating role of the teacher in these activities than to the monologic or dialogic features of the texts themselves. In examining the role of instructional materials as tools for classroom activities on cultural issues, it seems that classroom interactions around texts are "a dynamic system of relationships" (Gutierrez, Rymes & Larson, 1995, p. 445). Together with the paramount role of teachers in setting in particular activities and orchestrating this "dynamic system", the monologic versus dialogic features of the texts engaged with could, to an extent, direct us to our expectations of how these texts might be interacted with. However, both monologic and dialogic texts entailed fluid discussions moving from being more open to more closed and vice versa. We could also perhaps conclude that some opportunities existed for the students to articulate their own cultural experiences of the new for them Canadian environment. However, the negotiation of these experiences remained limited largely because of the pressures of wider discourses as discussed in the section on teachers and instructional

materials. These discourses demanded that Joanne and Carol display "teacherliness" (Varenne & McDermott, 1999) and teach to the test (Carol) or within the time limits set for a group of students ranked as lower-intermediate before they entered their language classroom (Joanne).

In summary, in embarking on the analysis of classroom interactions with texts, I knew that people could respond to texts in complying, negotiating, oppositional ways (see section on texts in chapter 2), but I was wondering if text features made a difference, especially with reference to possibilities for negotiation. Even though textual features did not seem to make a difference in whether a text got negotiated or not, as my data of classroom interactions with texts suggests, my data from the interviews with teachers and students indicates as well that texts in the two classrooms did not seem to be regarded critically or discussed in relation to the positions/relations/realities they offer to their readers in a classroom. I think such critical discussions are important because the positions/relations/realities embedded in textual discourses, together with the discourses employed by teachers in mediating the texts, are available resources students may use in their engagements with the culture(s) they live in in their new environment and impact their positionings in such engagements.

# Chapter 5: Culture(s) and engagements with culture(s) in and outside two adult ESL classrooms

This chapter will attempt to answer two of my research questions: what constructions of culture are evident in two adult ESL classrooms and what cultural issues seem to be of most importance to adult learners of English in their life in Canada. Both questions in my view relate to the broader question of how people engage with culture(s) theorized in chapter 2.

## Constructions of culture(s) in two adult ESL classrooms

As pointed out in chapter 3, one of the research questions I posed myself at the outset of my study referred to how culture(s) were constructed in two adult ESL classrooms. I conceptualize this question as related on one hand to the study participants' articulations of their understandings of culture[72] and its place in their classrooms, and, on another hand, to instances where cultural meanings are constructed in classroom settings.

### Students' understandings of culture(s)

With respect to the study participants' understandings of culture(s) I found it interesting that students in both classrooms held various, but somewhat rigid views of this concept, or what Yon (2000) would interpret as views of culture as a sum of attributes. For most students in my study, culture(s) are associated with traditions, history, customs, and ways of thinking:

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[72] To get a sense of their understandings of this fuzzy concept I phrased my question to all study participants as "What does culture mean to you?"

I think the culture for me is the tradition, and the customs and the background of the country. (John, advanced student, SI 2.04.01)

The first thing [to] come out to my mind about culture is the lifestyle of the people in that society, their attitude toward life, toward people around him, for example, toward marriage, toward, you know, family, things like that. (Leila, advanced student, SI 2.04.01)

For me it's not only things you can write on the board or, like history, and then learn the difference. No, I mainly focus on thoughts, you know, people's mind, they use different ways to think. Like the Chinese and the North American, they are very different and [the way] they treat child that's very different. (Frank, advanced student, SI 5.04.01)

[Culture] is the history [that] continue in present. (Vincent, lower-intermediate student, SI 29.11.00)

[Culture refers to] some holidays they celebrate [and] for what [reason], history, and food, and hero like the Terry Fox and Hansen, people most important. (Alice, lower-intermediate student, SI 30.11.00)

[Culture] is different thinking, different habits. (Lea, lower-intermediate student, SI 13.12.00)

The above quotes represent the range of understandings of culture among ESL students in my study and suggest that variability of constructions of this concept is as present in the lower-intermediate as in the advanced classroom. Nevertheless, this variability clusters around conceptualizations of culture typical for modernist cultural anthropology (see Keesing, 1974; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952 for examples of normative, historical, cognitive, etc. definitions of culture). In that sense the students' views coincide with understandings of this concept that assume the possibility to define culture and do not engage with culture(s)' entanglements in discourses and power relations, enactment in practices, slippage into identity politics and possibilities for identification, and ambiguity that characterize current theoretical understandings of this concept. The views the students expressed could be seen as representative of the discourses about culture available to them in their classrooms.

I find it fruitful to approach students' views as well from an angle that takes into account poststructuralist stances on enunciation (Bhabha, 1994a) and the role of activities that sociocultural theorists consider paramount in human interactions. Thus, while one way to analyze students' constructions of culture is as offering definitions of culture as essentialized, core characteristics of a bounded entity, another would be to perceive their views as strategic articulations. In this sense these are constructs that "arise at specific times, in specific places to do specific work" (Poynton in Nelson (1999), p. 379). In a way, what I had asked the students to do was to "fix" culture for my consumption at a particular occasion and they did just that for me within the activity of the classroom-situated focus

group interview that I set[73]. Could it be also that although I have been trying to grapple with the ambiguity and indeterminacy of culture(s), I secretly wished to stabilize this unruly concept and asked the question in the first place in order to get a better sense of what culture could be as a "thing"[74]? Whereas I am unable to respond adequately to this question, this study taught me that the moment we "fix" culture(s) in words they may become rigid as the quotes from the students' interviews cited above suggest. However, the moment we live culture(s), they are slippery and fraught with indeterminacy and momentary positioning. I say that because students' replies to my question whether culture is part of their classroom (asked to inquire further in their constructions of culture) produced not only somewhat expected answers, but also pointed to the slipperiness of the concept in the way culture(s) are lived by students in their classroom contexts.

The expected answers I refer to are related to three areas identified by students as involving the presence of culture in their classrooms. First, students saw culture as part of their classrooms in its presence in the curriculum:

> We in classroom learn Canadian culture, too. I learn about the holiday, Christmas and Remembrance day; last lesson there we learnt slang. (SI 14.12.00, Gerald, lower intermediate student)

> Like [the] Canadian studies [section of the course], it's related to culture. (SI 4.4.01, Rossi, advanced student).

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[73] It is possible that had the students been asked outside the classroom and in their native languages what culture meant to them, their answers could have reflected other discourses on culture.

[74] Upon reflection, I realize that the grammatical structure of the question, "What does culture mean to you?" implies such a desire to fix the concept of culture.

Second, in the classroom students were able to find out about the cultural practices of other students:

> Because many different people [in the classroom], different countries, interesting, [we find out] what's going on like in Japan, what kind of custom in Japan. (SI 3.1.00, Rose, lower intermediate student).

> [Culture is part of this classroom], but it's many, not, you know, related to the things that we are doing, sometimes it's more like chatting with each other, not like the formal cultural education in the course, sometimes people give some information about various countries. (SI 5.4.01, Frank, advanced student)

In addition, the students' perceptions of difference or similarities in classroom culture(s) in their native countries and in Canada were also evident:

> In my country we are not allowed to particularly sit with men in class, but in here it's different life, I sit here like with Vern. In India we don't have that chance, there are different rows for boys and girls. (SI 4.4.91, Fay, advanced student)

> [In the classroom] the same culture, all the Chinese [i.e. Asian students] are the same culture, talking about something, the opinion it belong to the Chinese culture. (SI 13.12.00, Sandy, lower intermediate student)

With respect to the slippery place of culture in their classrooms, here are some views:

I learn this class the culture is we come from
different area, regions. We come here to learn
English is this class culture. (SI 29.11.00, Vincent, lower
intermediate student)

I think the culture must be there all the time,
always, everywhere, like the politics, you don't
have to agree, disagree, but it's there, always,
culture, politics,  in any situation. (SI 27.03.01,
Teresa, advanced student)

I don't know, it's like Translink [public
transportation company], on Sunday they will start
to strike, that's culture. (SI 29.03.01, Moira, advanced
student)[75]

These views are more in line with the experiences of the participants in Yon's

(2000) ethnographic study who live culture in multiple and conflicting ways. In

the first quote above Vincent, whom I cited earlier as "fixing" culture as that

aspect of history that survives in the present, sees the presence of culture in his

ESL classroom as assumptions about who could be students in this classroom and

what their focus should be. Teresa, on the other hand, speaks to the pervasiveness

of culture(s) in any situation, while Moira sees culture in her classroom when the

everyday outside world enters the classroom setting[76]. In other words, culture(s)

elusiveness is something these students experience in their classrooms on a daily

basis.

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[75] On the day of this interview the class spent time discussing alternative transportation to avoid
disruption of class attendance because of the upcoming strike of Translink employees.
[76] This interpretation of Moira's words is based on her clarification of what she meant further in
the interview.

*Teachers' understandings of culture(s)*

The two teachers in my study presented their understandings of culture with a greater awareness of the fuzziness and complexity of this concept. As Joanne points out:

> I'm reluctant to sort of say, well culture is this because I don't believe it is, you know, I could argue against that just as well as I could say "That's what it is". … It's really nebulous, isn't it? It's moving,… it is unstable you know, it's everything around us … what we use, language to express and it's always changing…. To me at the moment it's like mercury. (TI 14.12.00, Joanne)

And here are Carole's views:

> It's tricky with the word culture because it has so many meanings, connotations. So it's always kind of, I mean you have to, O.K., what kind of culture are we talking about? … So for me I mean if I use the word in class, Canadian culture and the students mostly what they see as culture is … anything to do with, you know, background, heritage, language, ethnic stuff. … So when I talk to the students about it I usually refer to that one …. [As] for me …it's like the word communism …. I guess, it's I just don't have one definition; it depends who I'm talking to. It's like, if I say it's like communism, O.K., communism means this in Italy, it means that in … whatever Russia. (TI 18.04.01, Carole)

As these excerpts suggest both teachers are reluctant to define culture. Joanne seems to prioritize the instability and changing character of culture(s),

while Carole seems to be more interested in culture(s) dependence on contexts both as a construct to define and as a practice to engage in. In addition, both teachers see an intricate relation between culture and language and also communicated to me their awareness of culture's inevitable presence in their classrooms:

> It's really impossible to separate language and culture, as far as I am concerned…. So even when I am working on a grammar exercise worrying about whether my students are in control of the past tense or not I am still facing cultural features, they are always there. (TI, 9.11.00, Joanne)

> First of all, and I think probably if you ask any other ESL instructor you'd get the same answer that … the definition of ESL instruction is culture partly…and whatever else it is that you do, that's part of just what it is. (TI, 13.03.01, Carole)

Referring back to theoretical conceptualizations of culture prevalent in current times, it becomes obvious that whereas culture's links to discourses and identities do not seem to be engaged with by these teachers, the notions of culture's ambiguous character and pervasiveness in practices are very much a part of the tools these teachers enter their classrooms with. To what extent these tools get activated in classroom practices will be exemplified in the next section.

*Assumptions about culture(s) played out in two adult ESL classrooms*

This subsection offers examples of types of situations where cultural meanings are constructed or communicated in the two adult ESL classrooms I

observed and refer to occasions when culture(s) appear open to questioning and sense making as well as to occasions when they are presented by the teachers as a given. I coded such occasions as involving an "engagement with a cultural term in passing" when the focus of the classroom activity was not on culture(s) per se and as involving "cultural constructs as specific targets of instruction" when cultural meanings/discourses were explicitly pointed to by the teachers.

*Engagement with a cultural term in passing*

One instance of assumptions about culture(s) played out in these classrooms refers to situations when a cultural term in passing is either jointly constructed by teacher and students or presented by the teacher as a fixed entity. In the first example below Carole's students had taken notes on a text about the Women's Movement they listened to on a tape. The text stated that "In 1992 women-owned businesses employed more people domestically than the Fortune 500 companies did worldwide" (AT, 5.04.01). Following their note-taking the students were asked to respond to, among others, the question: Women-owned businesses employ more people domestically than what group of businesses do world-wide? In checking the students' responses to this question Carole seemed to be unsure of what exactly Fortune 500 companies referred to and invited the students in the construction of the meaning of this cultural term:

```
Teacher:   Do you know about that, Fortune 500?
S:         No, I don't know
Teresa:    500 companies
S1:        I got fortunately 500 companies
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[laughter]
S2:        Fortune means the future?
[simultaneous talk]
[Teacher spells fortune]
Connor:    Fortune 500 is the top companies
Teacher:   So I guess it's the top, really, this is
the top 500. Does anybody know who those would be?
S:         Maybe the most productive, GE
Teacher:   General Electric?
S:         Who make the most
Teacher:   Is it?
S:         Another is  [inaudible]
Teacher:   Oh, and then they make a list of the top
500.
S1:        All over the world. (AT, 5.04.01)
```

The excerpt above points to students' agency in the construction of the meaning

of a cultural term in their classroom setting. As the teacher did not seem to have a

clear concept of the term Fortune 500, the activity she engaged the students in

allowed the negotiated construction of participants' understanding of the term. In

a sense, the circumstance of the teacher not knowing allowed distributed expertise

(Salomon, 1993) to take central stage in the classroom by triggering a willingness

to share the varied levels of expertise of the group's members thus expanding the

community's knowledge of the term Fortune 500.

On occasions, both in Carole's and in Joanne's classrooms, cultural

referents employed in passing were fixed by the teachers without students' input

in their meanings in these adults' lives. Here is one example from my FNs in

Joanne's classroom:

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At one point, the text on Granola mentions bean
sprouts and in discussing the text's vocabulary
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> Joanne [referring to the large number of Asian students in the class] says, 'I know, you eat bean sprouts all the time'. At this moment Shirley [an Asian woman], next to whom I am sitting, turns to Alice [an Asian woman] and says quietly in English, 'All the time? Once in a blue moon!' using an idiom they just learnt on the same day. Joanne has moved on. *(FN 7.12.00)*

As this excerpt suggests, this classroom moment is occupied by a somewhat rigid construction of a nutritional habit of Asian students in the public space and a resistance to such a construction within the context of the classroom "underlife" (Goffman, 1961).

*Cultural constructs as specific targets of instruction*

As already mentioned, another instance of assumptions about culture(s) played out in the two classroom settings refers to situations when cultural norms or constructs are specific targets of instruction. Thus, in both settings students were on occasion directed towards cultural norms presented to them as facts that need to be lived with. In the example below, Carol's class discusses their difficulty in taking notes that would allow them to answer the second question posed to the Women's movement taped lecture that I mentioned above. Carole ends the discussion as follows:

> Teacher: Did anybody else have trouble with getting the information for # 2?... That was very tricky, but if you take that kind of suggestion where you just use nouns or verbs that are important, that capture the idea, because you know in a lecture situation you're not going to be able to rewind, you know, with somebody standing up in the front, it's only one, although people have

```
taped,  it  happens,  but  it  may  not  always  be
possible,  so  in  that  case  you  DO  have  to  be  able
to  capture  those  in  your  writing  VERY  quickly. (AT,
5.04.01)
```

This example suggests the teacher's normalizing students to cultural expectations in a lecture situation, a situation the department she is teaching within sees as its mandate to prepare these students for (see information provided for City Community College in Chapter 3).

In both classrooms there were occasions, even though not very frequent, where cultural meanings were slippery and open to negotiation. My search through my fieldnotes from both classes under the rubric "cultural constructs as specific targets of instruction" points to 4 occasions of negotiation in Joanne's class (where I conducted 13 observations) and to 3 such occasions in Carol's class (where I conducted 12 observations). I am presenting an example from Joanne's classroom of prompting students' questioning of and being active in the interpretation of the cultural construct "Canadian health care". The excerpt below follows a discussion of the news of the day which in this case involved a story of the controversy surrounding a surgery to separate two Siamese twins. The discussion went on to a case reported in the local news of a woman who could not have a liver transplant because there was no bed in the hospital for her.

```
Teacher:  So  this  woman  now  has  to  wait  again,
maybe  she  will  die  before  she  gets  another  chance
S:  Yes.
Teacher:  Can  you  believe  it?
Valery:  I  believe  [some  laughter]
Teacher:  You  believe  it?
Some  Ss:  Yes,  yeah.
```

Celia: I believe it

Teacher: Why?

Celia [she sounds very involved, voice trembling]: I, I, I went to emergence

Teacher: You went to emergency? What happened to you?

Celia: Once I take my friend car, had an accident, I ran to … emergency, wait for a long time, and one woman to see me, I guess her is a doctor…But I wrong, she is a nurse … to ask some questions and then I wait for maybe 1 hour, 1 hour and then doctor to see me. And one time is my children, son, he had, [playing basketball he had an accident]… I go to … um children emergency

Teacher: Children's emergency.

C: Wait a long time, yeah, wait a long time, and the doctors said, um, um, the parents to sign name and then … wait, and wait, 4 hours, my children's whole bodies, is very cold, but not blanket

[several turns later]

Teacher: So this doesn't seem really like Canada. You know, everybody always says, 'Canada has a really good medical system, good health care, you know, the government pays, it's free, you don't have to pay a lot of money', but there are more and more people in Canada, if you pay attention to the news, who think we should change this system

S: Yeah.

Teacher: You know, but to change it, just think about that, to change it, probably means that if you have money, you can get good health care, if you don't have money [laughter], what happens…. You know, you die, if you don't have money.

[several turns later]

Teacher: Uh-huh, well, let's, let's pay attention to this health care

S: Yeah

Teacher: situation, yes, it is a very serious problem, you know. So when you hear these politicians talking about health care, you know, we really need to pay attention what they're saying, what are the plans for the future …because we need to know. What are they going to do, is it going to be better, is it going to be worse, so we could have a voice. (AT 7.11.00)

This exchange between Joanne and some of her students allows students to relate their own experiences of the Canadian health care system thus briefly letting struggles over cultural meanings freely into the classroom. In addition, it brings to the fore the political import of decisions over health care thus addressing the inherent power relations in the construction of cultural meanings.

Overall, as suggested earlier through my FN data, teachers' awareness of the impossibility to "fix" culture in words, as well as their awareness of its constant presence in their classrooms did not seem to translate often into practices when culture(s) appeared open to questioning and sense making. The approach to culture that seemed to predominate in both classrooms is an example of the acculturation model in cultural instruction identified by Kubota (1999). Within this model teachers are concerned with teaching dominant forms of language and culture that students are perceived to lack. I would like now to turn to data that in my view clarifies to an extent why exchanges like the one above about Canadian health care were more of an exception rather than the rule in the classrooms I observed.

## What teachers find important to communicate to their students about life in Canada

As I pointed out in chapter 3, I was interested in finding out what the teachers in my study deemed important to communicate to their students about life in Canada. I felt that these views would give me a sense of the place of culture(s) in their classroom. In the interviews Joanne suggested that perhaps themes like mutual respect and acceptance of difference as well as appreciation of the impossibility to have a right answer with respect to cultural matters run through her teaching practice. What I found telling however, in relation to the question I posed myself, i.e. why such awareness of culture(s) ambiguity did not seem to translate very often into the classroom practices I observed, were her views that:

> Joanne: In dealing with culture, I deal with a lot
> of it through the readings that I give the
> students because they're, they may have a little
> more stability in them sometimes because, um
> there's historical or factual information
> connected to some of the holidays and
> celebrations, and customs that we have, and, you
> know... it's more stable than some of the things
> that I might do otherwise. Give them some kind of
> background. (TI 9.11.00)

This view suggests that Joanne views materials as an anchor for the ambiguity that surrounds culture(s). It is interesting to note, for example, that the play with the cultural construct "Canadian health care" evident in the excerpt in the previous section was not related to text material use per se, but rather followed a

discussion of the news which seemed to be a useful tool for the negotiation of meanings in Joanne's classroom.

As for Carole, she sums up what she finds important to communicate to her students as follows:

> C: It's so different for each individual student. It's just everything and anything that comes up… that's kind of important for them. (TI 13.03.01)

To this she adds the importance to cover material suggested by the curriculum mandate:

> C: Primarily what we talk about is some more of the historical point of view about what makes Canada Canada. And some literature as well, the kind of literature we have. (TI 13.03.01)

It is interesting to note, however, the same lack of exploring the constructedness of life in Canada as presented through texts used in the classroom:

> C: For instance, I find it very interesting, you know, if we talk about history, Quebec … It's a very important thing that has been going on … I think Canadian studies does help that to a certain extent to see how the whole picture is and where it came from. (TI 18.04.01)

I find interesting the definitiveness in Carole's words at how the whole picture "IS" and "WHERE" it came from. What I believe needs to be part of classrooms is occasions when the materials' constructedness from a given social position is highlighted and students are invited to explore other possible constructions of what a material presents for their consumption. But the constructedness of texts about life in Canada is related to the myriad of discourses in which culture(s), as present in texts, are entangled. As data in chapter 4 and here suggests, culture(s)'

discursive nature did not seem to be explicitly addressed in the two classrooms I observed. In other words, it seems to me that if culture(s)' entanglements' into discourses are not very much part of ESL classroom situations, culture's ambiguity and slipperiness may have few chances to be explicitly engaged with, either. Thus, my data seems to confirm Kubota's (2003) insistence on the primordial role of acknowledging the discursive character of culture in classroom situations.

## Engagements with Canadian culture(s)

Together with constructions of culture(s) evident in two classrooms, this chapter further asks the question: How do some adult immigrant ESL learners engage with the Canadian culture(s) they interact with in their new environment? As already pointed out in chapter 2, in second language education theory the process of interacting with a new culture has been addressed in work on acculturation. Conducted mainly in the 1980s (Brown, 1980/1986; Schumann, 1978, 1986), it contends that socio-psychological factors such as attitude toward the target language, motivation to learn, and social distance affect cultural adaptation (McLaughlin, 1987). The remaining sections of this chapter problematize such understandings of the process of people's engagements with culture(s) and draw on sociocultural, poststructural and psychoanalytical perspectives which offer a more complex view of people's engagements with culture(s).

In the remaining sections I will draw on the interview data from the 20 lower-intermediate and 17 advanced learners in my study about the cultural issues

they find important in their life in Canada. Out of the 20 lower-intermediate students I interviewed only 1 was not interested in dealing with culture in a language classroom and most of the rest were really enthusiastic about learning more about Canadian culture(s). At the same time 8 out of the 17 advanced students I interviewed (or almost half) were in one way or another distancing themselves from the target culture and of the remaining 9 only 1 was truly enthusiastic about engaging with it in an ESL classroom. These numbers provoked my interest and in the pages that follow I grapple with this difference in the students' engagements with Canadian culture(s) by probing into culture(s) as sites for identification (Bhabha, 1994a,1994b).

### The desire to (dis)identify with Canada and Canadians

One set of questions I asked in my focus group interviews with both the lower-intermediate and the advanced students inquired into the learners' thoughts and feelings about topics or activities that broadly have to do with life in Canada or Canadian culture(s). Such topics in the lower-intermediate classroom comprised a variety of subjects, examples of which are Canada's health care system, geography, grocery shopping in Canada, etc. In the advanced classroom such topics were primarily focused on events in Canadian history and short stories and a novel by Canadian writers. Here are the views of one lower-intermediate and one advanced student:

```
I like[d] [going to the cranberry farm] because I
came to learn a lot of new things. I think [the
field trip] give me more topics to talk to others.
So then I [have] one more thing to connect to
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Canada, Canadians I feel because cranberry is a major food. (SI 30.11.00, Alice, lower-intermediate student)

Because we came to Canada, we have to know their history. Maybe not in whole details, but at least in general we have to know how this country became what the country we're living right now is. [As for] Canadian literature, it depends of people, some people don't like to read at all. I like to read, but me, I am more interested in European writers and I don't think Canadian literature is very fine, not very interesting. European is more popular. (SI 4.04.01, Iris, advanced student)

These quotes exemplify the yearning shared by many of the beginning students in my data to "connect" to Canada and Canadians and the contrasting unwillingness to relate to things Canadian among many of the advanced students.

The quote above from Alice offers her views on a fieldtrip to a cranberry farm her lower-intermediate class went to. Alice enjoyed this activity and found that it gave her a chance to learn about a major food in Canada and thus gave her the possibility to become closer to Canadians. Iris's words tell a different story, a story of learning about "THEIR" [i.e. Canadians'] history and in this way merely gaining a background knowledge of the country this advanced student immigrated to, as well as a story of distancing from the "not very interesting" Canadian literature and assuming the superiority of the literature she has grown up with. I view the positions these (and other) students have taken as expressions of their desire to identify or dis-identify with Canadian culture and its people. As already discussed in chapter 2, I understand identification, "a process of

substitution and displacement" (Fuss, 1995, p. 10) in an attempt to make oneself "similar" to others (Litowitz, 1993, p. 191), to be the desire to become the Other (Bracher, 1993, Fuss 1995). In this case I perceive "the Other" to be the image these students have of Canadians. More specifically, I view identification not as "the affirmation of a pre-given identity", but rather as "the production of an 'image' of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (Bhabha, 1994b, p. 117).

The yearning to become the Other seems evident in Alice's words or in Harriet's words quoted below:

> It's very useful for us to know the Canada social, not only English. The teacher can tell us how to live in Canada and what people usually do in Vancouver, and here's customs, geography, and the weather, and the social problems. I hope to join the society. (SI 13.12.00, Harriet, lower-intermediate student)

Harriet seems to find valuable learning all sorts of things about Canada and its people and hopes to learn "how to live in Canada" because she wants to be part of Canadian society. She is willing to transform her subjectivity to assume the image of a Canadian identity. Compare this view with Sheila's detachment from things Canadian in what she is learning in the classroom:

> I am not really into that Canadian studies, but I have to study just to pass. For me, my principle is, do I have to study like what happened in the past if I am dealing with a patient [laughs]. Like I don't have any connection, they don't have any connection.... [As for] the stories and the novel, the way they made [them] it's kind of interesting, [but not because they tell you something about

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Canadians], the way the authors wrote event of the
story was good. (SI 29.03.01, Sheila, advanced student)

Sheila seems focused on the prospect of becoming a nurse and does not see any

connection between herself in this future role and identification with "the Other",

i.e. the Canadians who live in the pages of the history book, novel and short

stories that she interacts with in the classroom.

How could we account for the different identificatory possibilities

(Hodges, 1998)[77] these lower-intermediate and advanced students see in Canadian

culture(s) engaged with in their classroom settings?[78] Probing into the work of

sociocultural theorists Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) allowed me

to find some explanations for the theme running across the quotes referred to

above. According to Holland et al. persons develop identities "through and around

the cultural forms by which they are identified, and identify themselves, in the

context of their affiliation or disaffiliation with those associated with those forms

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[77] I understand identificatory possibilities to mean possibilities for identification created/constructed within/through the discursive and material conditions of given practices of the community engaged in these practices.

[78] I first went back to SLA theories of acculturation to search for ways to analyze these differences. As already pointed out, in SLA theories of acculturation cultural adaptation is presented as progressing through 4 stages: euphoria over the newness of the surroundings, culture shock, gradual recovery, acceptance of the new culture (Brown 1980/1986). While the division into stages linked to time spent in Canada might work to explain Harriet's and Sheila's views given that Harriet has been in Canada for 8 months and Sheila for 2 years, the newness of the surroundings does not seem to explain matters in the case of the lower-intermediate student Alice who has been in the country for almost 4 years and the advanced student Iris who has lived here for one and a half years. Iris and Sheila do seem to be offering views that might be related to their experiences of second stage culture shock, but we should be aware of cautions that culture shock may not be a stage-graded progression (Pedersen, 1995). It appears to me that focus on length of stay cannot really offer an elucidation of the themes evident in the students' views quoted above. Given that the lower-intermediate and the advanced students differed on levels of language proficiency, it seemed to me that language proficiency should be a better indicator of whether some adult ESL students would identify with or dis-identify from the target culture. But, views in SLA on the relationship between target language proficiency and acculturation, directly contradict my "findings" on identification or dis-identification with Canadian culture(s). For example, in summarizing research on affective and personality factors that influence language learning, Stern (1983) concludes that "studies seem to be unequivocal: positive attitudes related to the language and the ethnolinguistic community are closely associated with higher levels of language proficiency." (p. 386). The data presented above does not support such a view.

and practices" (p. 33). However, "the directive force" of these practices, their "compelling nature ... depends upon the realized world of social position, of hierarchy and power, as well as upon cultural forces" (p. 122). This view, coupled with Norton's (2000a, 2000b) critique of acculturation theories as not paying sufficient attention to inequitable relations of power between second language learners and target language speakers and not recognizing that attitudes and motivation are not inherent properties of language learners but are constructed within the context of specific social relationships at a given time and place, leads me into wanting to explore the positions the students may have found themselves in in Canadian culture(s).

Bracher's work exploring in depth connections between identifications, desires and cultural discourses was also useful in clarifying for me issues of identification and dis-identification with Canada for the students quoted above. Bracher (1993), drawing on Lacan, explains that identifications can function as effects of desire because "identifications are always *motivated*-that is, they respond to a want-of-being" (p. 22).

> At the same time, "a basic desire motivating all subjects in their [engagement with] culture is the ... desire of having [their] identity-signifiers repeated [in the discourses they interact with]. Discourses that offer this ... usually give us a sense of security and well-being. (ibid., p. 26)

The notion that identifications respond to a want of being seems to elucidate the desire to identify with Canada and Canadians of the lower-

intermediate students quoted above. At the same time the notion that human beings seek in a cultural discourse the dominance of signifiers that represent them seems to explain the dis-identification of the advanced students referred to above from the cultural discourses which occupy Canadian history and literature, discourses they are more likely to engage with in a more profound way given their greater proficiency in the target language.

***To (not)know, to adapt or to assimilate?***

Another set of quotes seems to indicate to me other types of engagements with Canadian culture(s) which I see as linked to the students' desires to (dis)identify with Canadian cultural discourses. In my focus group interviews I probed into the students' desires/unwillingness to learn about Canadian culture(s) inside the classroom. Whereas, as already pointed out, most lower-intermediate students overwhelmingly expressed a wish to engage with Canadian culture(s) in the classrooms, there was a number of advanced students who did not share such a wish. Here are two contrasting quotes:

> I want to learn everything [about life in Canada or Canadian culture in an English classroom], education, health, social insurance, history, geography. …. I think it help you learn Canadian culture. So when you have a work you know, it's useful I mean, you know Canadians already, also how to have a good relationship with other Canadians, you know that. (SI 29.11.00, Melissa, lower-intermediate student)

> For me, I didn't need that, to learn the culture inside the classroom …. Because for me I thought

if I want to learn the Canadian culture I'd better
go to contact those Canadian people  …. I came [to
this class], my [goal] is only to improve my
English. And then I can teach myself in the
society since I must be with other people, I will
learn, learn for myself. And then I will make
myself comfortable. (SI 2.04.01, Lynda, advanced student)

Whereas Melissa desires to learn "everything" about Canadian culture(s) in a

language classroom, Lynda wants to make herself "comfortable" in Canadian

society through "teaching" herself in her everyday contacts with Canadians. Thus,

Melissa's view seems to invoke a desire that satisfies a lack, a want of being and

of knowing, and Lynda's position invokes a desire to engage with Canadian

cultural discourses in ways that assure her security and sense of personal

significance. Developing cultural knowledge on your own versus acquiring it in

an ESL classroom is not the only difference in the ways these students perceive

their engagement with Canadian culture(s). One important aspect refers to the

extent to which such engagement is perceived as necessitating assimilation versus

adaptation:

I think Eastern and Western different, everyone
knows. But how to mix it, 'cause we live here, our
children will live here and grow up here and maybe
work here. And so maybe how to melt, mix in this
culture…. Because my children teenage, they live
in Canada, have this problem. (SI 29.11.00, Jennifer, lower-
intermediate student)


Mostly we really want to learn the customs. And
then you mix and keep the gap, but this way the
gap is closer also, you know. Even I finish grade

> 12, I'll keep studying and during studying we can learn more things about cultural lifestyle, customs, and we talk to the people outside, we'll be more flexible and one day we talk to our next generation we don't have the big gap, you know, they had the local education here, this is why they don't understand why you think like that, right, keep your Chinese cultural[style].... I think in order to [be] close to my sons, it's a good thing to learn English and the culture. (SI 27.03.01, Jessica, advanced student)

Whereas Jennifer seems willing to assimilate and have her children assimilate by "melting" in this culture, Jessica wants "to keep [a] gap" between herself and Canadian culture and sees learning about it primarily as a way to remain close to her children. An even stronger statement of some of the advanced students' unwillingness to "close the gap" is evident in the following quote:

> I want to adapt, not to be adapted. You adapt is you adapt to a new life, that's very different from assimilate [which] means to be absorbed. [I don't want that], no, I remain my Vietnamese identity, but keep my own way of what I call Canadian way. (SI 27.03.01, Connor, advanced student)

This quote also suggests that among some advanced students there is a sense of conscious agency in forging new ways of being Canadian when engaging with Canadian culture(s), i.e. of creating rather than reproducing culture(s)[79].

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[79] Going back to mainstream acculturation theories in SLA to clarify these positions does not seem very helpful. For example, as stated in chapter 2, SLA acculturation theories assume that "the more social distance there is between a second language learner and the target language group, the lower the learner's degree of acculturation will be toward that group" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 110). As all of the quotes in this section come from interviews with students of Asian culture(s), the impossibility to elucidate their views through the notion of social distance as indicative of processes of cultural adaptation is evident.

*Stories of discrimination*

How could we account for the desire to dis-identify and adapt selectively among these advanced students? According to Norton, "when we 'invest' in a second language, we desire a wider range of identities[80] and an expanded set of possibilities in the future. Conversely, if we are not invested in a particular target language, it may be as a result of limited options for identification and possibility" (in Churchill, 2002). I would like to transfer this argument to issues of identification and dis-identification with a second/target culture and wonder if many of the advanced students in my study have seen "limited[81] options for identification and possibility" in the culture(s) they live in now. Similarly, going back to Holland et al.'s views on the link between identification with a cultural world and one's social position within it, I will now tell some of the stories the advanced students told me which lead me to assume that engagements with Canadian culture(s) some of these students have had or heard about have not allowed particularly powerful positions for them.

Unlike the lower-intermediate students, most of whom did not hold jobs in Canada at the time of the interviews, 11 of the 17 advanced students were employed. However, while most had been professionals in their countries of origin, all but three of those employed in Canada held low-paying jobs in the service sector at the time of the interviews. More importantly, it seemed like some

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[80] I do not read this view to mean that we are keeping previous identities "intact", but rather that we incorporate newer facets into identities we have lived with in previous settings.

[81] I interpret "limited options for identification and possibility" to involve a restricted choice of identity positionings which one might inhabit in a given setting and may entail subordination. Options for identification may likely be viewed as limited by some students on the basis of prior identity positions they have performed in prior discourses they have inhabited in their native countries.

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of them had had experiences that they characterized as discriminatory. Several

people commented on difficulties related to seeking employment in Canada:

> There is a common saying among the new immigrants
> from China, if we can survive here, we can survive
> everywhere in the world.... The job hunting [in
> Vancouver], it's very difficult. For many of the
> new immigrants, they got a good job in China
> before they came here. For example for me,
> [laughs] I was a computer programmer, ...now [I
> hold] much, much lower position, I mean, you're
> working, but you got a low, really low [pay].... I
> expected it will be hard, but not as hard as it
> really is, I mean, discrimination is really,
> really it seems to be here. I tried to find a job
> as a programmer or even just something related to
> the computer [but I couldn't]. (SI 2.04.01, Lynda)

> Here, there is like big discrimination, do you
> know that, 'cause... a friend of mine, she came from
> the Philippines and she finish BSc computer
> engineer [there]. When she got here no one wants
> to take her. And one time she said I didn't
> realize that discrimination in Canada is so
> intense 'cause what she did, she took off all the
> Philippines words in her resume so after like
> probably a week she got a lot of interview like
> she was surprised that, you know, that happened,
> and that's why she said that it's so intense
> discrimination. I just didn't know that. (SI 29.03.01,
> Lorna)

In addition, a practice the advanced students had to engage with in their

learning English was questioned by some. Within the writing component of their

course the ESL students could only have a 6% error rate to be able to pass, i.e.

they were allowed 6 mistakes in an essay of 100 words to be able to avoid a failing grade on the essay. Here is a somewhat lengthy excerpt from my fieldnotes that attests to what some students may have perceived as the devastating effects of this practice on their future plans:

> During the break Rhona is in the room and now her talk with Moira is louder. She is upset because she won't pass the writing component for the course. Lynda asks if she's sure. Rhona says, 'Yeah, she told me, not told me, but you know'. Leila, [smiling], 'She implied'. Rhona, 'Yeah, and I was planning to start the nursing program in September and now I can't, but I don't have time, I have to start it'. Lynda and Leila tell her how she is very young and she has plenty of time, but she keeps insisting 'no, and I can't go to 099 now and have my English 12'. I ask her if she needs English 12 for the program because I know Rossi has to pass only TOEFL for her nursing program. She says she needs it, but she won't be able to get it in time if she doesn't pass the writing and go on with 099. It turns out however that she has promised her step father she will go to the nursing program in September and now what is she 'going to do.' She is really sad and upset. (FN 2.04.01)

This practice of assigning an error rate that could lead to a failing grade did not sit well with some of the students as well who, in the interviews, saw it in light of the requirements for students attending adult basic education courses in the same school. Here are some of their views on this practice:

> I don't think this error rate is fair. I think it's too high even for Canadian people. I found

out that Canadian people who didn't finish high
school, they don't have error rate at all. Then I
am wondering why we do, and I think it's good like
to improve, but on the other [hand] I don't find
it fair. (SI 27.03.01, Teresa, advanced student)


S: I don't think [the Canadians in adult basic
courses] are perfect in writing. I'm not really
saying I'm not happy [with the error rate] because
it will improve your writing skills. But it's kind
of curious other people, they are not perfect
enough, why, why this is
L: Why us? (SI 29.03.01, Sheila and Lorna, advanced students)

The perception of being singled out to meet what these students saw as a high

gate-keeping academic requirement seemed to be experienced as hurtful and

alienating, an instance of language discrimination.

Holland et al.'s view that the compelling nature of a cultural world

depends on one's social position in this world seems to offer a possible

clarification of the routes some of the advanced students in my study have come

to take in relation to some of the cultural discourses around them. This view is

further supported by another sociocultural theorist, Wenger (1998), who argues

that:

Identification is one half of [processes of identity construction],

...Negotiability, the other half, is just as fundamental, because it

determines the degree to which we have control over the meanings in

which we are invested. (1998, p. 188)

Examining the excerpts of students' interviews in this section in the light of such theoretical formulations suggests that perhaps many of the advanced students had very little control over and were unable to negotiate what it means to write proficiently in English or to be a capable professional in the cultural discourses they lived in in Canada.

Bracher's work provides further clues into how this lack of ownership of meaning and of room for negotiability might affect identification with the cultural discourses surrounding the students. According to Bracher (1993), "discourses interpellate subjects by operating on and through subjects' desires and identifications" (p. 14). More specifically,

master signifiers[82] ... account for much of the interpellative force ... that discourses have. The first major way that culture operates on our ... desire is by either allowing or preventing us from enjoying the ... gratification of dwelling within circuits of discourse controlled by our master signifiers.... Discourses that offer this dominance usually give us a sense of security and well-being, the sense ... that we are significant, that our existence matters. Discourses that fail to provide a reassuring encounter with our representatives tend, in contrast, to evoke feelings of alienation and anxiety and responses [like] rejection of the discourse, or indifference toward it. (ibid., p. 26)

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[82] As Bracher explains, master signifiers are any signifiers that define us for ourselves and for others such as "man", "woman", "black", "white", "scholar", "athlete", "dumb", "smart", etc. Such "definitions", however, as Ibrahim (1999) illustrates, are not fixed markers of one's self, but rather depend on the discursive, sociopolitical and sociocultural practices one is located in at a given time. In other words, I interpret the term master signifiers to mean positionings within a given discourse.

It seems to me that the discourses of written English language proficiency and, especially, of the possibilities for work placements for immigrants, which surround these advanced students are unlikely to engage the master signifiers they have lived with in prior discourses and provide the students with the sense of being significant. Thus they may evoke dis-identification with Canadian culture(s).

## Cultural tool normalization

Despite the instances of dis-identification and unwillingness to assimilate that were evident in quotes by some of the advanced students above, there seems to be evidence of what I call "cultural tool normalization" in their engagements with culture(s). As already pointed out in chapter 2, CTN refers to processes of reproduction of cultural discourses, and, is tied to the availability, access to, pervasiveness and possibilities for mastery and appropriation of cultural tools in a given context. To learn more about processes of cultural tool normalization I asked the students in my study whether they consider they have changed in the ways they think about important matters in their lives after coming to Canada.

> I think [I've changed with respect to] the concept
> of parents. The first time I heard when they say
> what the parents should be in Canada, I didn't
> accept that, I refuse that…. Because, for example,
> my Chinese style, and they say all the parents
> have to care for the kids even after they grow up,
> finish university and then they have to care for
> marriage, all the things, even they have
> grandchildren, they have to care for them until
> the parents die. Here it's very different, and

they say after you go out, maybe at 18 or something, you can go, go wherever you want …. In the beginning I cannot accept that, I say, how can the parents [be] like that? [laugh] They don't care, they are cruel, right…. After I live for 2 or 3 years and then … I make sense and now I think that's right. (SI 27.03.01, Jessica, advanced student)

This excerpt from the focus group interview in which Jessica participated, points to a change she has experienced in the way she constructs parenting. Whereas when she first came to Canada she believed that the parents' role is to be actively involved in their child's life till they die, she now takes a view more consistent with what she may have experienced as the cultural discourse of parenting surrounding her here in Canada that a parent is to have a more "laisser-faire" approach to her/his child once this child leaves the parents' house to live independently. Consistent with my interest in how people engage with culture(s) one question that I want to explore is how this change has happened for Jessica. As she further explains:

Most of [the Canadian ideas] I learnt from school. I talk to the teacher, practice my speaking, and then I learn more, a lot, their idea, the concept …. I understand it why Canadian do it like that. From teacher I learn a lot. (ibid.)

Thus, it seems that Jessica's engagement in talk with a Canadian teacher for the purpose of practicing her English has brought a mastery of a given cultural discourse on parenting (i.e. she can use the discourse with facility). As is evident from the previous excerpt, she also seems to have appropriated embracingly this cultural tool since she thinks that it is "right". In other words, as it is further

evidenced in the excerpt below, she seems to consider it now normal to apply this tool in her identity position as a parent:

> Actually after I learn more and more and then I accept the Canadian style, the parents' style and then right away I change the attitude to my son. Before that I like my parents, I say O.K., yeah, you can't go out, stay here, do your homework until it is done. Right now I try to use the Canadian style, more friendly talk to him and play a game awhile and then let him feel happy and confident and do his homework. I think it's the easy way to ask him to do his homework happily and perfectly. The attitude is friendly. The Chinese parents have to learn that; I think it's very important. (SI 27.03.01, Jessica)

Jessica seems to apply this cultural discourse spontaneously and takes on particular roles and particular relationships with the tool. In this context, I am interested in revealing the desires (or, more specifically, the identifications as instances of desires) operating in a particular type of engagement with a particular discourse, in this case, the embracing appropriation of what Jessica perceives to be "Canadian style parenting". As Bracher (1993) points out,

> Discourses that get us to change our position are discourses that coerce us to give up some of our representatives [i.e. master signifiers] and/or embrace new ones often in order to retain and solidify the services of others that are even more central to [some of our identity positionings]. (pp. 27-8)

It seems to me that Jessica is willing to abandon the master signifiers/positionings she has lived with as exemplifying the cultural discourse of what she constructs as

"Chinese style" parenting for what she perceives to be the master signifiers of "Canadian style" parenting because even more central to her is to continue to inhabit the identity of a loving parent amidst the new cultural discourses thrown in her path.

Another example of the operations of cultural tool normalization is evident in Lorna' experiences who was a student in high school before coming to Canada with her parents:

> [I've changed] for sure... I think it's really different 'cause in the Philippines ... until you marry you still stick to your parents so it's like ambition is not really something that we think about in the Philippines .... [There] usually the girl after you like graduate in high school and you got married, for example, you usually stick at the house, you usually take care of the kids and things like that. In my family that's how it works, but here, um, you can see the difference 'cause women here are career oriented, they think more about, you know, their life, what they want, it's not always like, you know, family, settling down. 'Cause in the Philippines that's the only thing, the issue you think about. But here it's always the career that comes first. (SI 29.03.01, Lorna, advanced student)

This excerpt seems to indicate that unlike before when Lorna lived in the Philippines and considered a woman's place was in the home, she now perceives it to be normal for a woman to have ambition and focus on a career. Clearly, the presence of what she observes as independence around her, as indicated in the excerpt below, can account for this change in her perceptions.

When I got here it's different 'cause I've seen
like people so independent, … especially the
Canadians. And those Filipinos who grow overseas
here in Canada, they are so independent. And so
when I came I was like so shocked it's like the
adjustment, it's like, um, kind of different, from
being dependent to trying to be independent… I've
been here for 3 years so kind of until now I am
still adjusting but I am focused on my career
because I really want to be independent….
Eventually [I prefer the Canadian way]. (ibid.)

What can be noted as well in the quote above is Lorna' desire to be independent.

Given the discursive production of desires (Henriques et al., 1984), it is possible

that the pervasiveness of independence as a cultural tool women employ in their

actions in the Canadian context has led to this desire. Another desire it has led to

is the desire to have a career. As Bracher (1993) asserts, "in coming to embody

certain signifiers [in a given sociopolitical and discursive setting], [a] subject also

adopts certain specific desires" (p. 30). In other words, it is Lorna' desire to

embody the signifier/positioning "independent" that perhaps entails the desire to

become a career woman and these two seem linked in her engagements with

Canadian culture(s). I am led to speculate whether the CTN of one discourse (in

this case the discourse of independence) may entail CTN of perhaps a host of

positionings considered linked to it (in this case becoming a career woman).

While these (and other) instances of CTN are evident through the

interviews of some of the advanced students[83], there is no such evidence of

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[83] The evidence of CTN, or cultural reproduction, with respect to Jessica's identity positioning as a
mother and Lorna's identity positioning as a prospective career woman does not preclude that
these immigrants may, and most likely do, "accent" (Bakhtin, 1981) and infuse with their own
intentions Canadian discourses of parenting and independence and thus act as agents when

cultural tool normalization in the interviews with lower-intermediate students. What can be observed, however, is the desire of some of these students to change.

> I should change. [I am in a] new situation, need to change my mind. (SI, 23.11.00, Vanessa, lower-intermediate student)

> I think I need to change. In here very difficult operate .... It's strange Canadian conversation, communication different, if I change my thinking, maybe I can conversation with other people. (SI 13.12.00, Virginia, lower-intermediate student)

How could we account for the desire evident in some less language proficient immigrants to change their ways of thinking (and talking)? In each of us there seems to be an urge to have an identity in which one can recognize oneself and be encountered and recognized by others (Bracher, 1993, Butler, 1997, Taylor, 1992) within a community engaged in specific sociocultural and discursive practices. It seems to me that for not very proficient ESL speakers, encounters with Canadians who speak only English allow limited opportunities for the recognition of the identity positions these immigrants have lived with for years in other settings within other discursive practices. What are they left with then to fulfill the desire to be recognized other than to attempt to identify with these Canadians they meet in their new environment? But, as Fuss (1995) asks, "what is identification if not a way to assume the desires of the other?" (p. 12). At the same time, however, desire as a type of identification, "is precisely a *desire to*

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employing these cultural tools. In other words, in employing these discourses the students most likely engage as well in cultural production. However, processes of cultural creation/production and human agency are not the focus of my theoretical interest in this particular study and for this reason I simply acknowledge them here.

*be a subject"* (Borch-Jacobsen quoted in ibid.). Similarly, as already pointed out in the theory chapter, Butler (1997) explains that

> Where social categories guarantee a recognizable and enduring social existence, the embrace of such categories, even as they work in the service of subjection, is often preferred to no social existence at all.... Bound to seek recognition of its own existence in categories, terms, and names that are not of its own making, the subject seeks the sign of its own existence outside itself, in a discourse that is at once dominant and indifferent (p. 20)

If we transpose this argument to the situations of ESL learners with a limited command of the language they have to live in for at least some (if not all) of their social existence in the new for them Canadian environment, the discursively produced desire to be recognized may entail the desire of these students to change their thinking, i.e. master some of the new cultural discourses/tools they encounter. This is a process that, it seems to me, entails as well relations of (accepting or resisting) appropriation and, in fact, cultural tool normalization.

## Conclusion

I started this chapter with an inquiry into the constructions of culture(s) present at the two sites in my study. It seemed that whereas culture(s) were defined in somewhat essentialized terms by the students, culture(s) were, nevertheless, lived as ambiguous. I also suggested that the teachers' awareness of the fuzziness of culture(s) and their presence in every instance in the classroom

were seldom translated into practices that take into account this fuzziness because the discursive character of culture(s) did not seem to be a tool available to the teachers in their classrooms. This chapter also attempted to offer glimpses into how the students I interviewed engaged with Canadian culture(s) by problematizing SLA theories of acculturation and employing theoretical constructs that offer more nuanced probes into how people and culture(s) interrelate. The story I told presents these adult immigrants' engagements with the cultural discourses thrown in their paths as affected by the variety of their social positions and discursively constructed desires. It also points out that language proficiency may have played a significant role in the desire to (dis)identify with Canada and Canadians especially as related to the possibilities for identification afforded to these immigrants by the language learning and employment discourses that surround them. In addition, I am left wondering if an initial desire to identify with Canadians in order to satisfy the basic human need to be recognized by other players in a given social and discursive space (which was evident among some of the lower-intermediate students in this study) may trigger cultural tool normalization.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

I started this dissertation with the desire to learn more about culture(s) and texts in adult ESL classrooms and about a process I call cultural tool normalization, which I view as linked to engagements with culture(s) and texts. This desire was triggered by my own immigrant experiences with texts, culture(s) and CTN. In this chapter, I will summarize what I have learnt through my data analyses, suggest recommendations for classroom curriculum and practices, and explore directions for further research.

## The story in my data

In chapter 4 I enquired into the role of texts as tools for classroom activities on cultural topics in two adult ESL classrooms, the perceptions of the two teachers in these classrooms on their use of instructional materials, and the perceptions of the students in the classrooms on the usefulness of materials on cultural topics for their life in Canada. With regards to the first question, I was particularly interested in whether instructional materials which I, following Bakhtin (1984), perceived as monologic or dialogic would make a difference with respect to possibilities for negotiation of students' understandings of the cultural discourses embedded in them.

Based on my lived experiences/habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) in relation to texts in classrooms, I have for long fully embraced theoretical assumptions that suggest that instructional materials play a paramount role in shaping classroom

interactions and students' understanding and learning of the world around them (Apple, 1990a, 1990b; Byram, 1989, Damen, 1987; Olson, 1989). Even though on an intellectual level I have also been aware of the fluidity and uncertainty of cultural forms as an inherent part of all encounters with texts (Ilieva, 2000) and of assertions that people can potentially respond to a text in dominated, negotiated or oppositional ways (Apple, 1990a; Sunderland et al., 2002), I was relatively confident before beginning my data collection and analysis that "dialogic" (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984) or open texts would undoubtedly allow greater opportunities for students' negotiation of their cultural experiences than "monologic" (ibid.) or closed texts. However, what unfolded during my classroom observations and analysis of classroom interactions around texts suggests that the way instructional materials get presented and discussed in classrooms varies to such a significant extent as to make it impossible to rely on the discursive features of the texts as a reasonable ground for assuming how the text could be used. My analyses point to a complicated picture of the interaction between texts and their users, to occasions when students' knowledge and views could be ignored as well as powerfully evoked when both dialogic and monologic classroom texts were interacted with. These analyses confirm the idea that textual meaning is in the text-reader encounter within a broader and sequentially significant sociocultural context (Smith, 1990, Threadgold, 1997) regardless of the features of the texts themselves and that of chief importance in how that interaction plays out in educational settings are the teachers who orchestrate classroom activities (Luke et al., 1989). In sum, I observed that monologic and

dialogic text features did not seem to make a big difference in possibilities for students' negotiation of their meanings as the roles of the teachers as mediators of the discourses embedded in the texts was paramount.

In further inquiring into the teachers' use of instructional materials I observed that the wider discourses within which these teachers' work was situated limited the possibilities for students' negotiation of the discourses embedded in the texts they interacted with in their classrooms. In the case of Joanne, who was working within the structures of a government funded program which seemed to punish more language proficient students by limiting the amount of hours of language instruction they could take "for free", the possibilities for students' negotiation of cultural discourses they came across in the classroom had to remain to a large extent "incidental" (TI 14.12.00) because of time constraints.

In the case of Carol, who worked within a context where the aim of the course was to prepare students "to compete with native speakers of English in Canadian education institutions" (Instructor's guide, 1994, n. p.), the opportunities to engage with students' negotiations of the cultural discourses in instructional materials seemed even more limited amidst test after test on the functional skills of the students assumed to enable the learners' competitiveness and thus reproducing the discourse of competition and ranking pervading North American educational settings (Kramsch, 1993, Varenne & McDermott, 1999). As Varenne and McDermott (1999) observe, this discourse turns performance into educational settings "into an ever ready institutional tool for the creation of success and failure as an event to which everyone [i.e. teachers, students and the

wider community]... must somehow orient, with which everyone must struggle, and about which everyone must seemingly make a decision" (p. 163).

Further, the educational settings I observed did not seem to allow critical discussions of the discourses embedded in instructional materials, but rather operated in ways echoing transmission models of instruction (Au, 1993). Such arrangements limit the resources available to students "when they contend with new texts ... and social institutions" (Luke, 1995, p. 21). As Bourdieu (1991) would argue, access to particular discourses may make a difference in students' life trajectories by expanding (or limiting) their linguistic and other forms of symbolic capital and thus affecting their maneuverability and positioning in a range of social fields.

My inquiry into the usefulness of instructional materials for the immigrant students in my study offers a good example of my unfounded assumptions to be able to act as the students' representative. While the instructional materials I interacted with when wondering about a topic for my MA did not acknowledge struggles of the types I was experiencing as an immigrant in making sense of Canadian contexts, nor invited me as a reader to be more than a learner of cultural "facts", these students found the classroom materials on life in Canada they worked with overall helpful for their life outside the classroom. This observation led me to wonder about the role of my engagement with theoretical readings on texts[84], in assuming that other immigrants might read texts similarly. Thus, my being an immigrant does not warrant that other positions and discourses I have

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[84] See, for example, Talbot's (1992) discussion of the identities an author sets up for herself and for her readers in different segments of a text.

lived with (e.g. graduate student) will not affect significantly how I conceptualize immigrant experiences. In a sense, this inquiry points to the instability of identifications as "Other" and of possible limitations of "Others" in academia to represent "Otherness" lived outside its confines.

In Chapter 5 I inquired into the constructions of culture(s) in the two classrooms I observed as well as into the students' engagements' with culture(s) in and outside their classrooms. Of the four broad re-conceptualizations of notions of culture I was able to discern in current theoretical work on culture, i.e. culture's entanglements in discourses and power relations, enactment in practices, slippage into identity politics and possibilities for identification, and ambiguity, only two seemed present in the teachers' discourses on culture – culture's ambiguity and culture's enactment in practices. Within the focus group activity I set to inquire into students' views on culture, their discourses ventriloquated understandings/discourses of culture(s) as core stable characteristics. These understandings seem to indicate familiarity with the acculturation model of cultural instruction (Kubota, 1999) which entails learning about dominant forms of culture. There was some evidence in the data, however, that culture(s) were lived ambiguously by at least some of the students in the study.

The assumptions of culture played out in the two classrooms I observed presented a picture of culture as an entity fixed by the teachers on most occasions and, sporadically, as open to negotiation or slippery. I concluded that for culture(s) to be more fully engaged with explicitly in these classroom settings, culture(s)' discursive character needs to be among the resources available to

students and teachers, or, as Kubota (1999) would argue, a critical multiculturalism model of cultural instruction entailing the addition of "a discourse of power to the repertoire that students bring to the mainstream society" (p. 29) needs to occupy these spaces.

Taking up the territory of culture(s)' slippage into possibilities for identification (Bhabha, 1994a, 1994b), territory little explored in the field of second language study, I inquired into the identificatory possibilities of the cultural discourses thrown in the students' paths. Whereas most of the lower-intermediate students in this study seemed keen on identifying with the cultural discourses in their new environment, many of the advanced students seemed inclined to dis-identify from Canada and Canadians. This observation gives some situated responses to one of the questions Toohey (2004) deems important to address in second language study research: Who do learners of ESL want to be in their new community? My inquiry into the reasons behind the advanced students' desires suggested that some of these students experienced as constraining some of the discourses of language learning and employment they were interacting with in their new environment. Such constraints seemed to provide for them limited options for identification with Canadian culture(s) by not allowing them to perform identity positions linked to their prior socioeconomic status in their native countries.

My inquiry into students' engagements with culture(s) allowed me as well to gain further understanding of the process which I termed CTN. The pervasiveness and availability of particular discourses for some of the students'

appropriation of these discourses (e.g. parenting for Jessica and independence for Lorna[85]) confirmed my own experiences of cultural tool normalization. In addition, I was able to trace the discursively constructed desires that entailed CTN (of parenting and independence/value of career discourses) for these particular students and thus processes of reproduction of cultural discourses available to them. For Jessica this process seemed linked to the desire to continue to occupy the identity position of a loving parent she has lived with in another cultural discourse on parenting. For Lorna the process of CTN of the discourse of independence seemed to entail acquiring the desire to inhabit a particular positioning associated with this discourse, i.e. becoming a career woman. I also end this work with a specific question on the basis of how some of the lower-intermediate students responded to my inquiry into CTN: could an initial desire to identify with Canadians in order to satisfy the basic human need to be recognized by others in a given social and discursive space trigger cultural tool normalization?

The observations on CTN in this study have allowed me to gain a better understanding of the material effects of my own discursively constructed desires to get recognized in Canadian settings. These desires, coupled with the availability, pervasiveness, and my access to given cultural discourses within Canada (also available in instructional materials intended for adult immigrant

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[85] As I already mentioned in chapter 3, my focus on the experiences of CTN of only two of the advanced students does not mean that others did not share experiencing changes they have undergone since their arrival to Canada. However, as most offered brief responses or responses that allow limited opportunities to be analyzed through the lenses of CTN I chose not to refer to them since, at this stage, my primary interest into processes of CTN is from a theoretical perspective. The effects of CTN on adult immigrant ESL students' discourses, practices and identities necessitate longitudinal studies that I may entertain in the future.

learners of ESL) have led to my being normalized to these discourses and thus to hindering my ability to research and write as the "Other" and not about "Others" in an academic context. This to me means hindering my ability to work towards subverting "business as usual" in institutions providing ESL instruction to adult immigrants like myself. In sum, these discursively constructed desires are linked to my participation into the reproduction of the very cultural discourses I have resisted.

Whereas I was unable to gain a wide range of insights into processes of CTN from my data for reasons suggested earlier, I continue to argue that inquiring further into CTN is of significance because, as Wertsch (1998) points out, "almost all human action[86] is mediated action" (p. 25), i.e. action involving agents (inter)acting with cultural tools. Of particular importance in this interaction is that the use of cultural tools results "in changes in the agent" (ibid., p. 31). Moreover, cultural tools "are inherently situated culturally, institutionally, and historically" (ibid., p. 24), and new tools transform action by setting off changes in the agent through processes of mastery and appropriation. Appropriation of cultural tools itself "may serve as an identity resource" (Wertsch, 2002, p. 120). In this context, the changes in adult immigrant ESL learners interacting with new cultural discourses/tools in new settings are likely to involve, as this study contends, mastery and appropriation of discourses that imply changes in these learners' identities.

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[86] Drawing on Burke's (1969) approach to analyzing human action through inquiring into a pentad consisting of "what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency [instrumentality]), and why (purpose)" (cited in Wertsch, 1998, p. 13), Wertsch (1998) argues for the need to focus in sociocultural research on two of these elements, agents and the cultural tools/instruments they employ.

In the context of CTN, the views of some of the lower-intermediate students discussed in the study seem to confirm Butler's argument that claiming an identity (or more precisely a variety of identity positionings) in a given setting entails entering the world of preexisting discursive categories in this setting. In other words, desire to be recognized in a new sociocultural environment involves subjection to the cultural discourses operating in this environment. The desire to be recognized is an important aspect of human life as well according to the philosopher Charles Taylor. Taylor (1992) argues that "due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need" (p. 26). He also argues that identity is vulnerable to the recognition given or withheld by others since as social beings "we define our [identities] always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us" (ibid., p. 33). In the context of education Bingham (2001) takes up Taylor's notion of the politics of recognition (as well as Hegel's philosophical work among others) to claim the need to inquire into the implications of recognition in educational theory and practice. Bingham argues that recognition (defined as the act of acknowledging and coming to be acknowledged by others) needs to be conceived as part of what it means to be a good teacher.

## Classroom curriculum and practices

But what could all this mean for adult ESL classrooms? Looking back to the data in Chapter 4, I am wondering what could be done so that negotiations of students' experiences with the culture(s) they encounter in texts (and teachers' discourses around them) would/could be more prominent than in my study? A

first step might be to take a hard look at the texts themselves[87]. For example, in

Chapter 4 I first looked into classroom interactions around a text which I termed

monologic and discussed as allowing limited opportunities to ESL adults to

negotiate their own understandings of the cultural phenomenon of volunteering[88].

I believe that texts like this one could become more dialogic if linguistic

structures inviting students' answers on their understandings of cultural constructs

like volunteering replaced the "ultimate word[s] [that may currently close] down

the represented world" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 293). Here are my suggestions of words

that could allow a greater "plurality of equal consciousnesses and their worlds"

(ibid., p. 6) with respect to the text on volunteering:

> Would you consider doing some volunteer work in your community? To
>
> help you think about this, you may write answers to these questions:
>
> What does volunteering mean to you? Have you been engaged in
>
> volunteering? If yes, what has it been like for you? If no, what has
>
> influenced your decision? What are some kinds of volunteer work that you
>
> can think of? Where might you go if you are interested in helping as a
>
> volunteer in your community? Do you think volunteer work can help you
>
> as a newcomer to Canada? If yes, how? If not, why not?

I then presented an analysis of work with a dialogic text in an adult ESL

classroom and pointed out that a racist discourse on First Nations people in

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[87] As Sunderland et al. (2002) suggest, there is the possibility that more open texts are easier to work with by teachers interested in equity issues.

[88] Here is the text again: "Consider doing some volunteer work in your community. To help you think about this, write answers to these questions: What are some kinds of volunteer work that you can think of? Where might you go to help as a volunteer in your community? How can volunteer work help you as a newcomer to Canada?" (Open Learning Agency, 1995, p. 2).

Canada was introduced by a student, Connor, in the classroom space and was not successfully reinterpreted there by the teacher. Given the space the teacher afforded in the classroom to a dialogue between Connor and herself on this discourse (see pp. 110-111 above), I wonder if it would not have been possible for the teacher to invite other student opinions on this racist discourse as well as to bring the reality of the effects of stereotyping and racism on a given group of people more closely to the minds of her students. This could perhaps be achieved by engaging students on a reflection of the stereotypical and racist comments that may be addressed to immigrants like themselves in their engagements with Canadian cultural discourses.

Further in Chapter 4 I inquired into the teachers' choice of instructional materials and observed that it was linked to the pressures of curriculum mandates and other related constraints. Whereas it would have been naïve to assume that teachers could ignore curriculum mandates when selecting instructional materials, coming from a totalitarian educational system where a teacher had no choice over texts, I had somehow assumed that teachers' choice of materials would be more indicative of personal preferences with regards to the range of available cultural discourses to familiarize students with. The discourses of testing and ranking, however, dominant in North American education (Varenne & McDermott, 1999), seemed to operate as powerfully on these teachers as the curriculum discourses I had inhabited in a non-democratic state had operated on me. These discourses of ranking and testing constrained Joanne and Carol to act as agents of the state who view their role to assist students in preparing them to "function" (a term both

teachers used occasionally in the interviews) in English. I will discuss alternatives to such "teacherliness" (Varenne & McDermott, 1999, p. 17) further in this section, but here I want to point only to what that might mean for the negotiation of instructional materials in classroom settings.

Given current limitations to teachers' maneuvering within the curriculum mandates and structural constraints of the institutional settings they work in, it seems to me that teacher education which focuses on enabling teachers to question the discursive character of instructional materials would be a step in the right direction. In addition, if social, cultural and political diversity in views on a given topic is part of texts themselves, i.e. if a greater variety of discourses are allowed to inhabit instructional materials, alternatives could thus be brought into the classroom which could perhaps open the space for a greater negotiability of students' cultural experiences. Besides, a simple way to invite negotiability in classrooms is perhaps to ask students whenever possible what a particular cultural construct/event encountered in texts means to them. In that context what I believe needs to be part of classrooms is numerous occasions when the materials' constructedness from a given social position is highlighted and students are invited to explore other possible constructions of what a material presents for their consumption.

The data in Chapter 5 pointed further to the necessity for both teachers and students to become aware of the discursive character of culture(s). When presenting analyses of the constructions of culture(s) in the two sites I studied, I observed that these constructions are reminiscent of the acculturation model of

cultural instruction identified by Kubota (1999). This model which entails the perpetuation of dominant cultural norms[89] can be powerfully subverted if a model of critical multiculturalism (ibid., Kachi et al., 2003) occupies the classrooms space. The critical multiculturalism model, within which "representations of culture are understood as the consequence of social struggles over meanings that manifest certain political and ideological values and metaphors attached to them" (Kubota, 1999, p. 27), aims to enable language learners to "appropriate the dominant linguistic and cultural codes in order to advocate cultural and linguistic equality in the wider society" (ibid., p. 29). Given reports of critical multiculturalism as a successful model for classes in cross-cultural communication and second language teacher education (Kachi et al., 2003), the possibilities for its application in classrooms with adult immigrant ESL learners seem hopeful. Critical multiculturalism can also be perceived as an example of a teaching model that could liberate ESL teachers from the "teacherliness" referred to above.

In her book "Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom", bell hooks (1994) offers further examples of practicing pedagogy in ways that liberate teachers from the "teacherliness" imposed on them by dominant discourses on schooling. Drawing on Freire's (1970) vision of pedagogy which contributes to human liberation, hooks (1994) sees classrooms as arenas for exploration, different cultural ways of knowing, self-actualization and dialogue between teachers and learners. As hooks observes,

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[89] Another model identified by Kubota (1999) as limiting is the pluralist model which involves "apolitical celebration of [cultural] differences" (Kachi, Lokon, Wong and Kubota, 2003, p. 116) in classrooms of language instruction.

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The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (1994, p. 207)

Within such classrooms ESL teachers would build on students' cultural experiences, identities and desires and see themselves as giving the gift of thinking critically as an inherent part of developing language skills in their students. Examples of such classrooms in higher education settings are provided by Beynon and Dossa (2003) who explore the narratives of three educators whose dialogic "'subaltern practices' (Kumar, 1994) ... broaden and challenge conventional pedagogy and thus, potentially, ... benefit all students." (p. 262). For teachers to engage in such practices however, it would be very helpful if they were afforded the opportunity to experience them themselves in teacher education settings[90] and this is a point I will take up shortly.

Finally, with respect to implications of my study for classroom curriculum and practices, Chapter 5 also offers insights into how some new Canadians position themselves and are being positioned in the cultural discourses circulating around them. Such insights seem important for language learning classrooms because these settings are much more than sites of acquiring a linguistic code. If in classroom settings students find themselves more and more often in situations

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[90] For examples of such possibilities in the field of ESL teacher education see Norton and Toohey (2004).

where specific discourses/cultural tools are the norm and for all practical purposes become "the horizon of the taken-for-granted; what the world is and how it works" (Hall, 1988, p. 44), it seems to me that it would be difficult for them not to be "socialized ... into appropriating" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 175) them. Whereas Wertsch is interested in psychological processes of appropriation of cultural tools, I would like to claim the importance of the nature of the discourses/cultural tools to be appropriated. The appropriation of particular discourses and not others may affect the students' life trajectories. In addition, Canagarajah (2004) accords importance to practices of language learning as shaped by learners' struggles to "negotiate competing subject positions in conflicting discourse communities" (p. 117). He argues that "how we resolve these conflicts [of competing subject positions linked to diverse discourse communities] is at the heart of becoming a successful language learner" (ibid.). I believe that learning more about CTN can help us towards 'resolving', or rather I would prefer the term living more comfortably, with such conflicts.

## Suggestions for further research

With regards to suggestions for further research, I can only engage with this question with respect to my own research explorations. Whereas my belief in the significant role the textual features of instructional materials play in mediating students' negotiations of the culture(s) they engage with has been shattered, I would still like to inquire further into the effects of instructional materials in classroom settings. After all, my belief in the importance of texts in ESL classrooms is still firm as texts have been documented to have effects on students'

positionings in classroom discourses (Duff, 2002) and students' participation in communities of readers (Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004). Thus enquiring further into how texts are mediated by teachers and students in the context of classroom practices continues to be an important question for me. As I already pointed out, despite the variability in readers' responses to instructional materials, "whose knowledge it is that students are learning, negotiating, or opposing and what the social/cultural roots and effects are of such processes" (Apple, 1990, p. 30), continue to be very significant issues.

Given the unpredictability in interactions with texts (Canagarajah1993, Sunderland et al., 2002), the focus will be on the *range* of ways specific texts could be talked about and thus on the range of constraints and affordances of particular textual resources. Such a study might involve selecting specific texts and observing their use in a large number of classrooms with students of comparable language proficiency. As already pointed out, Sunderland et al. (2002), drawing on Abraham (1989), suggest in their discussion of gender representation in textbooks that there is the possibility that such representation in "texts representing a wider range of gender roles" may be easier for "equality-minded teachers" to endorse than "subverting 'traditionally gendered' texts" (p. 249-250). Such a study would thus inquire into the qualities of specific instructional materials as cultural tools in language learning classroom settings.

Another avenue for future research that I envisage is to probe further into processes of CTN as played out through students' participations in classroom settings. Perhaps it would be useful to engage in longitudinal research on the

cultural discourses an adult ESL learner comes across in a number of classroom settings and the effects of these discourses on processes of CTN for this learner. Such work could involve student journal entries, classroom observations as well as interview sessions with the student to discuss the student's journal reflections on cultural discourses in these classrooms and how these discourses reflect or contradict discourses the student interacts with in the wider world. These seem important questions because, like Ibrahim (1999), I wonder, "whom do we identify with, and what repercussions does our identification have on how and what we learn?" (p. 352).

Such longitudinal study would also allow greater opportunities to enquire into the effects of students' entering discursive spaces where they are already constructed as immigrant and ESL on the identity positions they may occupy in their classrooms and the wider society. As Morgan (2004) observes, "when forms of social representation ... become normalized, minorities who have been so represented often come to fashion themselves – even in terms of their *otherness* and the forms of resistance they might develop – through the positions that a dominant discourse establishes" (p. 171). A third avenue of research could be an inquiry into the constraints and affordances in teacher education programs with respect to the discourses on instructional materials and culture(s) that circulate in such settings.

**A coda to my story**

I would like to conclude this dissertation with views that point to the importance of the questions I have been grappling with here as they relate to

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access, learning, classroom practices and teacher education. I see the textual resources available to students in their classroom settings, and the teachers' discourses in mediating these texts, as implicated in the conversations students are allowed to enter in a new culture, as a subset of the "powerful question of what conversations are around to be had in a given culture" (McDermott, 1993, p. 295). These conversations are cultural tools/resources that affect what identity positions are possible for these students and how these relate to identity positions that have been available previously to these adults. In addition, as Wenger (1998) points out with respect to learning,

> Reconfiguring relations of identification and negotiability is as significant for learning as is access to specific pieces of information.... Access to information without negotiability serves only to intensify the alienating effects of non-participation. What makes information knowledge – what makes it empowering – is the way in which it can be integrated within an identity of participation. (p. 220)

Further, with respect to questions of classroom practices, I side with Ibrahim who argues that

> if learning is an engagement of one's identity, a fulfillment of personal needs and desires (of being), and an investment in what is yet to come, any proposed ESL pedagogy, research, or praxis that fails to culminate in these ...is ...bound to be unsuccessful, if not plainly damaging. (1999, p. 366)

To conclude, my study indirectly engages as well with issues around the affordances and constraints of ESL teacher education programs. In mapping out

inclusive and equitable pedagogy practices in a higher education setting, Beynon and Dossa (2003) illustrate the relationship between pedagogy, teacher identities, and social transformation. What this relationship suggests is that teachers' dialogical relations with their students and "ever newer ways" (Bakhtin, 1981 cited in ibid., p. 251) of being pedagogically inclusive are linked to the identities these teachers choose to perform in their classrooms. It seems that teacher education practices that link work on teacher identities with issues of social change may allow prospective teachers to break away from discourses of ranking and testing and to believe with hooks (1994) that "to educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn" (p. 13).

Here ends the story I cobbled together in this dissertation.

# Appendix A

## Handout for presentation to teachers at Suburban University College

### Life in Canada: Cultural Issues and Instructional Materials in Adult ESL Classrooms

Roumi Ilieva, SFU

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### 1. Questions to investigate:

- what issues beyond language structure and skills, or what I would call cultural issues, are part of adult ESL classrooms
- what teachers find important to communicate about life in Canada to their students
- what instructional materials (texts from textbooks or other sources, newspaper articles, videos, songs, games, etc.) teachers find useful in addressing life in Canada
- how students interact with materials that address life in Canada

### 2. Methods of investigation:

- classroom observations on occasions when materials addressing life in Canada are used (perhaps once a week for 1-2 hours for the duration of an ESL course). During observations I will take notes and make audio recordings of the activities in the classroom.
- taped one-on-one interviews with teachers early in the course (about 30-45 min) and at the end of the course (about 45min-1 hour). The initial interviews will enquire about the teachers' goals in an adult ESL classroom and what they feel important to communicate to their students about life in Canada, why and how. The course-end interviews will address the same questions in greater depth and will focus on specific materials used in the classroom at times I have observed.
- taped one-on-one interviews (about 20-30 min) or focus group interviews (about 1.30-2 hours) with students at the end of the course. The interviews with students will enquire about students' reasons for taking the course and focus on what about life in Canada they are interested in becoming aware of in an adult ESL classroom as well as how they feel about some materials used at times I have observed.

### 3. Focus of data analysis:

- how life in Canada, or what I would call culture, is constructed by teachers and students in adult ESL classrooms
- what is the role of instructional materials as tools for classroom activities on cultural issues

- how materials used in adult ESL classes help students with their life in Canada outside the classroom
- what cultural issues teachers and students find to be of most importance to adult learners of English in their life in Canada.

# Appendix B

## Handout introducing research project to study participants

### Life in Canada: Cultural Issues and Instructional Materials in Adult ESL Classrooms

**Roumi Ilieva, SFU, Phone & fax: 299-5268; email: rilieva@sfu.ca**

This research project will examine what issues beyond language structure and skills, or what I would call cultural issues, are part of adult ESL classrooms. More specifically, it will investigate what teachers find important to communicate about life in Canada to their students and what instructional materials (texts from textbooks or other sources, newspaper articles, videos, songs, games, etc.) they find useful in that respect. It will also examine how students interact with materials that address life in Canada.

The study will consist of classroom observations on occasions when materials addressing life in Canada are used, perhaps once or twice a week for 1-2 hours, during the duration of an ESL course (usually about 3 months). It will also involve taped one-on-one interviews with teachers early in the course and at the end of the course and one-on-one or focus group interviews with students at the end of the course. During classroom observations I will take notes and make audio recordings of the activities in the classroom when materials related to life in Canada are used. In the initial interviews with teachers I want to get a sense of what their goals in an adult ESL classroom are and what they feel important to communicate to their students about life in Canada, why and how. The course-end interviews will address the same questions in greater depth and will focus on specific materials used in the classroom at times I have observed. The interviews with students will enquire about students' reasons for taking the course and focus on what about life in Canada they are interested in becoming aware of in an adult ESL classroom as well as how they feel about some materials used at times I have observed. Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and any reports of the research will change individuals' names to assure confidentiality and anonymity. All data will be transcribed and coded transcriptions will be made available to participants for review following course completion and submission of grades.

The data gathered in the study will provide valuable information on how life in Canada, or what I would call culture, is constructed by teachers and students in adult ESL classrooms as well as on the role of instructional materials as tools of classroom interaction on cultural issues. The data will be analyzed to ascertain how materials used in adult ESL classes help students with their life in Canada outside the classroom and what cultural issues teachers and students find to be of most importance to adult learners of English in their life in Canada.

I will identify teachers interested in participating in this project through personal contacts and/or by making short presentations of the goals of the study at staff meetings at institutions providing instruction to adult learners of English in the Lower Mainland. I will then identify interested students among those in the

teacher's classroom where I will conduct observations. Participants will need to sign consent forms and data collection will begin after official approval for the project has been received from the adult ESL program coordinator/administrator. Observations will be conducted in the classroom and interviews will be conducted at the same venue or at other places convenient for the participants. Data collection will take place for the duration of an ESL course (about 3 consecutive months) between September 2000 and September 2001 depending on teachers' preferences.

# APPENDIX C
## PERMISSION FORMS

### SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

### INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

### PERMISSION FORM FOR TEACHERS

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received a document which describes the procedures of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project. The document is entitled: "**Life in Canada: Cultural Issues and Instructional Materials in Adult ESL Classrooms**". A copy of this signed form will be given to you to keep.

Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. Knowledge of your identity is not required. You will not be required to write your name or any other identifying information on the research materials. Materials will be held in a secure location and will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Having been asked by Roumiana Ilieva of the Faculty of Education of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project, I have read the procedures specified in the document entitled: "**Life in Canada: Cultural Issues and Instructional Materials in Adult ESL Classrooms**"

I understand the procedures to be used in this project. I understand that the data, collected through audiotapes, will under no circumstances be used in an audio format. I understand that data from the transcriptions of the audiotapes may only be used in a written format in the researcher's PhD dissertation and conference presentations or scholarly works based on the dissertation.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this project at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the project with the researcher named above or with Dr. Robin Barrow, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University at 291-3148.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting:
Roumiana Ilieva, Principal Investigator at 299-5268

I have been informed that the research material will be held confidential by the Principal Investigator. Audio tapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Any published or unpublished reports of the research will change individuals' names to assure confidentiality and anonymity.

I understand that my supervisor or employer may require me to obtain his or her permission prior to my participation in a study such as this.

I agree to participate by partaking in interview(s) and classroom observations
as described in the document referred to above, during the time period
_____ at my classroom.

**NAME (please type or print legibly):** _____

**ADDRESS:** _____

_____

**SIGNATURE:** _____ **WITNESS:** _____

**DATE:** _____

## SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Consent Form for Student Participants

I have read the attached research proposal: **"Life in Canada: Cultural Issues and Instructional Materials in Adult ESL Classrooms".**

I approve of this research being conducted in my classroom and agree to participate by partaking in classroom observations as described in the document above. I understand that I am not obliged to participate in an interview.

I am aware that participation in this project is voluntary and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

I also understand that confidentiality will be protected and neither the transcripts nor the research reports will reveal my name, the teacher's name, the names of my classmates and the name of our institution and program. I understand that the data, collected through audiotapes, will under no circumstances be used in an audio format. I understand that data from the transcriptions of the audiotapes may only be used in a written format in the researcher's PhD dissertation and conference presentations or scholarly works based on the dissertation.

I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about the research, I may contact Dr. Robin Barrow, Dean, Faculty of Education at 291-3148.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Witness:

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Permission Form for Adult ESL Program Coordinators or Administrators

I have read the attached research proposal: "**Life in Canada: Cultural Issues and Instructional Materials in Adult ESL Classrooms**".

I approve of this research being conducted in our ESL program with the cooperation of _____, teacher in the program and his/her students.

I am aware that participation in this project is voluntary and I understand that I may withdraw my permission at any time.

I also understand that confidentiality will be protected and neither the transcripts nor the research reports will reveal the teacher's name, the names of our students and the name of our institution and program. I understand that the data, collected through audiotapes, will under no circumstances be used in an audio format. I understand that data from the transcriptions of the audiotapes may only be used in a written format in the researcher's PhD dissertation and conference presentations or scholarly works based on the dissertation.

I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about the research, I may contact Dr. Robin Barrow, Dean, Faculty of Education at 291-3148.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Witness:

# APPENDIX D
## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS

### Initial interviews with teachers

1. Could you tell me for how long you have taught adult learners of English?
2. Who do you perceive your students to be?
3. What are your goals in an adult ESL classroom?
4. Do you think it is worthwhile to attend to culture in an adult ESL classroom? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. What does culture mean to you? What about Canadian culture?
6. Would you say that culture is part of your classroom? If yes, what do you find important to communicate to your students about life in Canada? To what extent and how?
7. What is the role of texts/materials in addressing culture in your classroom?
8. Where and how do you choose materials to address culture in your classroom?
9. What features are you looking for?
10. How do you use these materials?
11. Do you think culture can be taught? If so, how? If not, why not?
12. What experience has this interview been for you?
13. Are there other things you want to share or discuss?

### Questions for final interview with Joanne

1. Questions on specific materials (Community Volunteers, Halloween, Remembrance day, video "The Neighbours", Rick Hansen, Slang, Granola, Blue Jeans):
-       Why did you choose this particular material instead of others on the same topic? What features in the material made you select it?
-       What were your goals in using the material? What did you intend to convey to the students with this material?
-       How do you feel about how the material was used in the class?
2. Why do you feel it's important to talk about the news in class? How do you feel about the class discussions on the news?
3. Are students tested on anything that has to do with life in Canada when exiting the program?
4. Is there anything on the general questions of what culture means to you or how culture is a part of your classroom that you want to add to what you already told me in the previous interview?
5. What experience has it been for you to have someone do research in your classroom?
6. Are there other things you want to share or discuss?

# Questions for final interview with Carol

1. Questions on specific materials (Growth of a Nation, The Loons, the videos 'Pioneers, oh Pioneers' and 'Forming a Nation', A Bird in the House, text on Women's Movement):
-       Why did you choose this particular material instead of others on the same topic? What features in the material made you select it?
-       What were your goals in using the material? What did you intend to convey to the students with this material?
-       How do you feel about how the material was used in the class?
2. What were your goals in using supplementary materials/activities in relation to some of the above materials (e.g. worksheets, quizzes)? How do you feel about testing students on the content or other features of materials that broadly have to do with life in Canada?
3. Is there anything on the general questions of what culture means to you or how culture is a part of your classroom that you want to add to what you already told me in the previous interview?
4. What experience has it been for you to have someone do research in your classroom?
5. Are there other things you want to share or discuss?

# Interview questions for students at Suburban University College

1. Could you tell me for how long you have lived in Canada?
2. What other languages beside English do you speak or have studied?
3. What did you do before coming to Canada? Do you work outside the home now?
4. Could you tell me what is your educational background?
5. For how long have you been studying English?
6. Why did you decide to take this course? What are you learning in it?
7. What do you feel should be the role of your teacher in the classroom?
8. Are there things about life in Canada or Canadian culture that you want to learn in an ESL classroom? If yes, can you give me examples?
9. What does culture mean to you?
10. Would you say that culture is part of your classroom? If yes, could you give me examples of situations where cultural issues have come up in your classroom?
11. Can you think of materials used in your classroom which have to do with life in Canada?
12. Have you found such materials useful for your life outside the classroom? If yes, can you give me examples?

13. Can you give me examples of materials about life in Canada that you didn't like or didn't find useful and why?

14. How do you feel about the practice of discussing the news in class? Does this help you with your life outside of class? If yes, how? If not, why not?

15. Could you tell me what you want for your life in Canada? Do you think this course can help you in realizing some of your wishes?

16. Do you feel that since you came to Canada you have changed how you think about some things that you find important in life? If so, can you give me examples? What factors do you think could account for such change(s)?

17. Are there other things you want to share or discuss?

## Interview questions for students at City Community College

1. Could you tell me for how long you have lived in Canada?

2. What other languages beside English do you speak or have studied?

3. What did you do before coming to Canada? Do you work outside the home now?

4. Could you tell me what is your educational background?

5. For how long have you been studying English?

6. Why did you decide to take this course? Are you paying for it? What are you learning in it?

7. What do you feel should be the role of a teacher in a class like this one?

8. Are there things about life in Canada or Canadian culture that you want to learn in an ESL classroom? If yes, can you give me examples?

9. What does culture mean to you?

10. Would you say that culture is part of your classroom? If yes, could you give me examples?

11. Can you think of materials used in your classroom which have to do with life in Canada?

12. Have you found such materials useful for your life outside the classroom? If yes, can you give me examples?

13. Can you give me examples of materials about life in Canada that you didn't like or didn't find useful and why?

14. Do you have a chance to read most of the materials you work on in class beforehand at home? How do you feel about being tested on material that has to do with life in Canada?

15. Could you tell me what you want for your life in Canada? Do you think this course can help you in realizing some of your wishes?

16. Do you feel that since you came to Canada you have changed how you think about some things that you find important in life? If so, can you give me examples? What factors do you think could account for such change(s)?

17. Are there other things you want to share or discuss?

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