In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Centre of Curriculum & Instructional Studies
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Oct 12/79
This inquiry focused on what it means to live and learn in linguistic diversity. Using action research, I involved senior secondary students in the Social Psychology 11 classes that I taught from 1994 - 1997 in an investigation of their lived experiences and my pedagogical practices in linguistic diversity. A description of the first two cycles of this action research project are given to develop an understanding of the context which gave rise to the events and outcomes of the third cycle which is the major focus of this inquiry. The voices in tension surrounding the use of different languages by students at Central High initiated this inquiry. In reaction to this tension, I used a global perspective to remodel a traditional unit on team building, and relationships to include the question of diversity. From this remodeling, I developed specific teaching activities to address the tension caused by linguistic diversity. The three research questions that guided this research project are related to learning to live in linguistic diversity. They focused on the students’ way of being in linguistic diversity, my pedagogical practice in linguistic diversity and what ways might a linguistically diverse classroom be affirming to all.

Narratives and critical reflections were used to increase the understanding of the complex dynamics that are at play in linguistic diversity and to seek out ways to improve my pedagogical practices in this situation. Collaborating with students, colleagues, “critical friends” and academics enabled me to reach a better understanding of the students’ lived experiences in linguistic diversity, to challenge the status quo, and to explore ways to create a more socially just classroom. Throughout this inquiry, the need to educate students to live in linguistic or other diversities bellows out loud.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER I</strong> LIVED EXPERIENCE INVITES INQUIRY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Echo of a Lived Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beckoning of Voices in Tension</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inviting Voice of Research Literature</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER II</strong> INQUIRING THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Place of Change</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The School and its Student Population</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Classroom Setting</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Context for Change</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Global Perspective Summoning the Research in the Teacher</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Psychology 11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with Other Voices</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER III</strong> VOICES LEADING TO THIS ACTION RESEARCH STUDY</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooding Voices Bellow Out Loud - Cycle One (1994 - 1995)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV</td>
<td>PEDAGOGICAL VOICES RESOUND IN CYCLE THREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An Agenda Accommodating Many Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue in the Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewing Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Research Focus: Communication and Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing Perspectives on Classroom Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insiders and Outsiders Dialoguing on the Media White Out Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing Narratives on Exclusion Experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER V</th>
<th>STUDENT VOICES ACROSS LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media Voices Renew the Challenge of Linguistic Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racism or Rudeness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speech Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stereotyping English Language Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linguistic Imperialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressing Meaning through Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER VI</th>
<th>INTIMATE DIALOGUES WITH STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisa - Numbers Determine Language Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandy - Multilingualism Helps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anne - Motivation and Involvement are the Key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cela - Ethnic Identity from Lived Linguistic Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stephen - Linguistic Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vader - Tension Affects Language Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael - Alienation by Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VII</td>
<td>RECONSTITUTING MEANING FROM VOICES HEARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' Way of Being in Linguistic Diversity</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Becoming” through Language Choice and Competency</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language - A Tool for Belonging or Isolation</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for Linguistic Etiquette and Rights in Diversity</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Practice in Linguistic Diversity</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Global Perspective</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Opportunities for Interacting</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Linguistic Classroom Affirming to All</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialoguing in Public</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Obligation of Witnessing Testimony</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a Sense of Community</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Bibliography | 143 |

| Appendix I | Concept Clarification Terms | 149 |
| Appendix II | Analyzing Diversity Issues Worksheet | 150 |
| Appendix III | Interview Questions Guide Sheet | 151 |
| Appendix IV | Gender and Ethnicity of Social Psychology 11 Students in Cycle III | 152 |
| Appendix V | First Language of Social Psychology 11 Students in Cycle III | 153 |
| Appendix VI | Heritage Language of Social Psychology 11 Students in Cycle III | 154 |
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the students and staff at Central High for sharing their lived experiences throughout this inquiry. I am especially indebted to the students in the Social Psychology 11 classes over the three years of this inquiry who shared their stories with such passionate voices. A special thank you to the students who agreed to be interviewed and who contributed to a deeper understanding of the diversity that lives within a linguistically diverse classroom.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my advisor and mentor, Dr. Linda Peterat for her constant support and encouragement. She has provided me many opportunities to enrich my professional and personal growth. Our conversations taught me so much about home economics education and its potential for the students and myself. It has been a honour to work with someone so learned, caring and inspiring.

Thank you to Dr. Gale Smith, my committee member who encouraged me to inquire about linguistic diversity through action research and a global perspective. She has been an exemplary role model in this field, and her continuous help and support have contributed greatly to my learning and this research.

Thank you to Dr. Ted Tetsuo Aoki, my committee member who taught me about the wealth of insights gained from writing and rewriting. His encouragement and thoughtful feedback during my initial return as a student helped me overcome my lack of confidence to write. Dr. Aoki demonstrates how subversiveness can be a powerful and positive experience.

I am indebted to Darren Lund who was so kind to share his ethnographic reports on the classes that he observed. Our dialogues have reinforced the importance of making a difference in the multicultural landscape of our schools and classrooms.

Many thanks to my partner in crime, Nina Ho who joined me on this journey of enlightenment as a fellow graduate student, colleague and best friend. As one of my critical friends, she shared her thoughts and feelings through many a late night conversation.

I am indebted to Shelley McPherson for showing how global education can enrich the learning experiences for the students and myself. I greatly appreciated your comments and edit suggestions. Thank you, Shelley.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends for their patience and support during my struggles to become a teacher/researcher. I can finally say to my two nephews - “Yes, I can now come out to play.”
An Echo of a Lived Experience

On my first day of school, I entered the classroom with only a handful of English words. The rest of my eager young classmates had a multitude of English words to express their thoughts and feelings, and to understand their kindergarten teacher. I was the only student who did not speak English fluently, and the only Chinese Canadian. There was no program to learn English as an additional language when I started school. I learned English through immersion at school and with the luxury of black and white television at home. It was a considerable challenge to pronounce words in English, and to master all the grammatical rules and exceptions. There was also the trial of spelling words that contained silent letters, and letters that sounded differently because they stood next to a certain consonant or vowel.

However, language is not only the collection of sounds and symbols that we spill out of our mouths and pens. It is much more complex than that. My developmental gap in English created a space of silence between my peers and me, and between my teachers and me. My silence at school came from a fear of being different that was easily identified by my lack of competency in English. My silence in the classroom gave me the illusion of blending into the classroom of my peers, but what illusions did my silence
create for my peers and teachers about me? It was little wonder that I was labelled a “quiet and conscientious student” throughout my public school years. What social meaning does one’s level of fluency in a language have on one’s life in the classroom?

My parents interpreted my very predictable report card comment of being “quiet and conscientious” to mean that I was obedient and did my work at school. It was also a sign of their good parenting skills to raise such an obedient daughter. It reflected well the Confucian ideology of the importance of listening and saying nothing in haste. There were times when I was called upon to respond to a question or debate in class. I found myself unable to respond immediately as I was still digesting the essence of what was said. My hesitation in responding usually ended with the teacher calling upon another classmate who gave the desired quick response. I always wonder what my teachers thought of me when my immediate response was silence.

TRANSLATING MYSELF by Suzi Mee

Translating myself into English:
meanings, of course, suffer in a strange tongue,
grow bitter, exacerbating,
where they should be lyrical.

In my own language,
the language of infantilism,
a cry is not taken so seriously:
anguish means, rather... impatience,...

(Wand, 1974, p. 156 -7)

Today I teach at a Vancouver secondary school. The educational scene has changed since I was in grade school. I wade into a sea of black heads with the babble of Cantonese, Mandarin and English echoing in the background. Many of these students have come from abroad and either are, or have been in English as a second language.
(ESL) classes. Yet I hear the echoes of my childhood memories in their struggle to master the English language, and I hear the frustration among all students and staff in trying to understand and communicate effectively with each other. What are the implications for teaching and learning in a classroom full of students who possess different home languages and share English as the common language but at various fluency levels? What are the lived experiences of the various members of this community?

**The Beckoning of Voices in Tension**

With an increasingly mobile world population, most countries have a linguistically diverse population despite official national language(s) and policies (Paulston, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). In fact, situations can be found throughout history and geographically where a number of language varieties are workable. Although Canada has English and French as its two official languages, Canada is considered a "core English-speaking country" because the native speakers of English are the dominant group (Phillipson, 1992). Within the last decade, the changes in Canada's immigration laws and the economic and political climate in Asia resulted in the immigration of mainly economically advantaged Asian people. The majority of these immigrants are from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other parts of Asia, and many of them settled in large urban centres. Vancouver became a popular choice because of its proximity to their former homeland. Many children of these immigrants either are limited English proficient (LEP) and/or ESL
students. They are generally proficient in their native language that for many is a dialect of Chinese -- a language that is structurally different from English. According to Wong (1988), there is a consensus that the phonology and morphology differences between Chinese and English may cause problems with English acquisition. However, Wong (1988) felt that the research into the syntactic and discourse levels is still inconclusive.

Recent statistics of the primary language used at home by Vancouver students showed that 31.6% spoke Chinese at home while 44.5% used English as their primary home language (Balcom, 1995). In many Vancouver secondary schools, the sounds of Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese and English drift through the halls and classes. This diverse language landscape has caused some to feel more comfortable, and others to feel less comfortable at school. As our world moves toward a global society, many Vancouver public schools are struggling to create an environment that will be accepting of this diversity of languages and cultures. At the same time, these schools are aware of their responsibility to prepare students adequately for the dominant "public" language of English.

Meanwhile, in the hopes of finding a predominately English-speaking school atmosphere, many English-speaking students have left Vancouver secondary schools for schools in the suburbs. Some believe their education is compromised by ESL students and the multilingual setting. This emigration of English-speaking students has been labelled the "white flight." The native English-speaking students are uncomfortable with the amount of Chinese languages being used in the school. On the other hand, ESL students, currently and formerly, who are very competent in their native language, feel
awkward when they need to speak English in front of their classmates and teachers. They feel that their English is not good enough.

McGregor and Li (1991) who surveyed language choice among Chinese university students in Newcastle Upon Tyne reported that the high concentrations of Chinese-speaking students in schools provided numerous opportunities for them to use Chinese rather than English to communicate with each other. They acknowledged that the Chinese community is linguistically and socially diverse. Given the similarities between the group they studied and Vancouver’s Chinese population, it is likely that their conclusions apply here. McGregor and Li (1991) found that the choice of language used by Chinese university students was dependent on the ethnic identity of those they were addressing. If the ethnic identity of the third party was not identified in the survey, then these students were willing to negotiate the choice of language used. Chinese is the popular choice when all parties were of Chinese ethnicity. This explains the “ESL flight” to schools with smaller ESL populations to facilitate the use and practice of the English language.

The majority of Vancouver secondary teachers are not fluent in any dialect of Chinese. Thus it is difficult for teachers to monitor on-task group work of these multilingual students if their language choice in the classroom is not English. This situation has led some teachers to feel uncomfortable with the language diversity in the classroom. Students and teachers noticed a growing tension with language diversity within the school. Although there are many other differences that can create tension in the classroom, language diversity has emerged as a current focus of classroom tension.
Language cannot exist without culture, and culture cannot be acquired without language. This being the case, the multitude of languages used by secondary school students at school creates a culture with which many of us are not familiar (Rogers, 1993; Thomas and Willinsky, 1997). In a survey of high school students from several Pacific region countries including Canada, Thomas and Willinsky (1997) found that most students reported the presence of racial and ethnic tensions in their schools. This was reflected most prominently in areas with high levels of recent immigration. They found the students’ responses provided “insight into how such tensions affect their daily lives in school” (p. 361). Of the students surveyed from Vancouver and Richmond, British Columbia, 82% reported racial and ethnic tensions present at their schools. However, the students’ comments clarified that the source of this tension was due more to immigrant status and language proficiency than race.

By the early 1990's, Central High’s 1 student population reflected the city’s high Chinese immigration trend. Like the British Columbian survey results of Thomas and Willinsky (1997), tension was voiced regarding the use of different languages in the school. In the spring of 1992, some of Central High’s English 10 and 11 students reflected this tension in their responses to the question - what do you see as a way to improve communication and integration in the multicultural society of our school?

I find it frustrating to be standing among a group of friends and someone says something in Cantonese and everybody starts laughing. They explain to me that it is hard to translate into English and they can’t think of a parallel word. (Student)

1 The pseudonym for the school where I teach.
Since the main barrier to real communication is the different languages spoken, methods to improve students' English skills are urgently needed. (Student)

Being a new student from an Asian country, I find that it is really hard to get along with people here. In our school there is a huge number of Chinese students. Because we have the same background and language, we tend to form our own society, excluding foreign people. At the same time, white people don’t seem to like us. The widest gap is in the language. (Student)

If we are to get along, speaking languages other than English in the hallways, only separates us more. Personally, even though I am open to new friends of various backgrounds, I wouldn’t feel comfortable approaching a group of students who are communicating in another language. (Student)

Language provides "an indispensable bridge for accessing knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes within and across cultures" (Ovando, 1993, p. 215). The ability to speak a certain language can either gain, limit or deny one's access to education, work, and/or a social network of family and friends. Being fluent in the majority language empowers one to easily access education, careers, a myriad of governmental services, and social settings. Educational institutions are where the majority of Canadians learn and refine their use of English -- the majority language. Given Canada's historic immigrant roots, multicultural Canada is also multilingual. With this background, there is a need to explore how language diversity affects the education and relationships of native and non-native English speaking students in the regular classroom setting.

I feel like a foreigner again walking down the hall. (Student whose first language is Hebrew)

It's language that divides [name of school] students. (English Transitional Student)
When I learned about the language issue during our class discussions was that in certain situations some people feel embarrassed, annoyed or feel disliked. (Student)

I've learned that some people feel uncomfortable hearing other people not speaking English. I don't agree with that because like I was saying, it's none of their business to listen to other people's conversation. (Student)

The Inviting Voices of Research Literature

The voices in the research literature invited me to re-search my linguistically diverse classroom and my practices as a teacher. The research literature identified some issues raised in a multilingual school setting, and established the need for more research at the secondary level. The following review deals with teaching multilingual and multicultural students. What challenges face a teacher of a diverse linguistic student population and what pedagogical practices may be helpful for teaching this type of student population?

Reflecting on his past teaching experiences in multicultural classrooms in the United States, Puerto Rico, San Juan, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand, Bintz (1995) reconceptualized the consensus model of education as a diversity model. The theory of sameness drives the consensus model of education to make learners fit the same established mode. On the other hand, the diversity model is based on the theory of difference that recognizes, values and supports individual differences. He uses the human actions of seeing, hearing and thinking differently to illustrate his point. Bintz stresses
that the teacher should see what learning really is there by learning "about the life experiences, histories, current interests, and aspirations of students" (Bintz, 1995, p. 40). It is also important to hear the "plurivocal" communities of learners in the classroom where all voices must be heard, and to think differently by pursuing what we do not know as opposed to what we do know. It is this process of seeing, hearing and thinking differently that will initiate the process of inquiry, and open the door to new opportunities, directions and potential to explore. Although simplistic in nature, Bintz's diversity model of education challenges teachers to change and explore the opportunities that can enrich the multicultural classroom.

Cohen (1992) explores teaching in a multicultural or what she labels as "heterogeneous" classroom. Her article raises diversity issues in more detail than Bintz (1995), and substantiates these issues with findings from various studies done in the United States. She identifies three main problems for teachers of the multicultural classroom: (i) some cultural groups have lower status than others; (ii) monolingual teachers facing students of limited English proficiency and (iii) teachers' concerns about how students from different groups relate to each other. Cohen uses the results of sociological and psychological theory and research to formulate an alternate model. This model organizes classes into small groups or learning centres, delegates authority to groups and individuals and engages multiple ability curricula. In addition, the alternate model involves organizational support for teachers in its implementation, and training teachers to use several status treatments to prevent domination by high-status students in the groups. She notes that status problems are more severe in secondary school
Cohen's alternate model provides technical ways to deal with problems facing heterogeneous classroom teachers. However, techniques alone may not be adequate to deal with deeply embedded prejudices of students and teachers alike. These techniques are teacher-initiated, but what happens if the teacher turns a blind eye to these problems? Cohen claims that teachers working interdependently can deal with the uncertainty of implementing new techniques. If working interdependently is successful with teachers, could the same apply to students? There must be a larger role for students to play in this model beside being the recipient of these techniques. This limited student role seems to be contradictory to the stated aims of empowering students. Since most of the cited studies were conducted at the elementary school level, would this alternate model work at the secondary school level? In her conclusion, she briefly mentions global education and cooperative learning that need to be expanded upon as viable approaches to teaching in a heterogeneous classroom. The strength of this article lies in identifying some inherent problems within the system such as inadequate teacher training for dealing with a heterogeneous classroom, and proposing a model to cope with the crisis facing many heterogeneous classrooms.

Like Bintz (1995) and Cohen (1992), Faltis (1993) offers a model for teachers to organize their all-English classroom environments so that all students have the opportunity to participate equally in the learning process. Most classrooms are recitation-oriented - the traditional straight rows of student desks with the teacher at the front of the classroom. This arrangement permits unidirectional teaching (from teacher to student),
and creates a no-talking zone for students unless requested by the teacher to respond. The alternative to the recitation classroom is what Faltis calls joinfostering. Joinfostering “is the organization and implementation of conditions to promote two-way communication and social integration within the linguistically diverse all English classroom” (Faltis, 1993, p. 1). Both the social and physical environment are considered in order to achieve a joinfostering classroom. Faltis provides a philosophically grounded framework for native English speaking teachers to follow. The framework establishes the need for two-way communication, social integration, second language acquisition (SLA) principles, and parental participation in all classrooms. Faltis recognizes the situation of native English speaking teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms but does not challenge the authority of English, the primary language of instruction. Educators are invited to re-visualize their classroom space and to develop a set of rules of participation which achieve the balance-of-rights classroom atmosphere for joinfostering.

One of the few articles concerning secondary students in a multilingual setting is by Faltis and Arias (1993). By examining the United States’ Bilingual Education Act of 1968, they explain why school districts have focussed on bilingual education at the elementary rather than the secondary level. Students with limited proficiency in English at the secondary level receive minimal English as a second language (ESL) instruction because the instruction is organized and driven by subject matter curriculum. A major impact on the American multilingual secondary setting is the significant increase in the number of secondary students with limited proficiency in English (LEP). Many of these LEP students come from countries with poor social and economic conditions. Most of
these secondary students face the problem of adjusting to an American school system, and
the academic gaps in certain content areas and in English. Faltis and Arias (1993)
identify five types of secondary level LEP students that reflect the diversity within this
student population.

In spite of the favouritism toward elementary school level bilingual education,
Faltis and Arias (1993) located and summarized the limited literature on effective
secondary level schooling for LEP students. Some of this work has been done by Faltis
and Arias as well as others. The two accomplishments at the secondary level for LEP
students are: (i) the development of an effective schooling knowledge base by having
access to a wide range of academic courses and school services in English and in their
native language; and (ii) the development of secondary school bilingual education
programs and curriculum due to staff development in this area and its acceptance by the
community. However, Faltis and Arias (1993) identify three major struggles within
secondary bilingual education. They are: (i) the issue of mixing preliterate with literate
English learners; (ii) the problem of segregating English learners from the native English
speaking students; and (iii) preparing secondary level bilingual education teachers.

It is refreshing to see a focus on the multilingual secondary school educational
scene. It is distressing, however, to learn that the needs of secondary LEP and ESL
students have been neglected for so long in both the educational system and in research.
Like much of the research and literature in this area, the authors of this article support
bilingual educational programs for LEP and ESL students, and the development of
techniques and models for teachers to implement more effective teaching techniques in
multilingual classrooms. Faltis and Arias (1993) should be applauded for encouraging more research at the secondary level and trying to stimulate interest in bilingual education issues in this article. However, they should include a plea to secondary school teachers in multilingual classrooms to reflect critically on their own practices and to become advocates for more support and resources for the students of multilingual secondary classrooms.

This literature review establishes the need for more research at the secondary school level in multilingual classrooms, not only from the teachers' perspective but from the students' perspective. Much of the research focuses on the acquisition of English by language minority students. While research by Cohen (1993) supports the use of small group work in multilingual classrooms, there is little if any research that focuses on the strong peer group influences in high school multilingual classrooms. Students who are native English speakers are ignored in this research. It is assumed that they are doing well socially and academically. However, it is important to understand how these native English speaking students are or are not adjusting to the increased number of LEP and ESL students in the classroom.

The majority of the research and theories on multilingual classrooms originates from the United States where the majority of their LEP and ESL student populations are native Spanish speakers. Since Spanish and English are structurally more congruent than Chinese and English, there is a need to study how this difference may affect the multilingual classroom especially when most secondary school teachers in Vancouver are either only English speaking or not fluent in any dialect of Chinese.
Due to the increase in the diversity of student population, and the increase in the ESL student population, Rogers (1993) invites educators to provide a more inclusive and equitable school culture, as well as ways for community and district initiatives to be involved. This means "giving up what is familiar and comfortable in favour of learning new strategies and working more collaboratively with teams of other educators and members of the community in the best interests of the student population" (Rogers, 1993, p. 46). However, she fails to recognize the important contributions that students could give to a collaborative educational team. After stressing the importance of democracy in the learning process, it is incongruent to overlook students' participation and contribution to this process. The strength of this article lies in Rogers' invitation to rethink and change educational practice to meet the needs of the increasing diversity of the student population.

It is this invitation that I take up in this research project. The lived experiences of students and me, their teacher, as a diverse language community in one large urban secondary school in British Columbia, created the tension that beckoned inquiry. The questions that beckoned from this tension and guided the research were:

1. In what ways do students experience being in this diverse language community?
2. In what ways can I rethink and change my practice as a teacher to meet the needs of an increasingly linguistically diverse student population?
3. In what ways might a linguistically diverse classroom be affirming for all?
CHAPTER II

INQUIRING THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

My experience in learning English, and my heart felt desire to make a positive difference at the linguistically diverse school where I teach motivated me to dwell in the research questions for three years in an action research project. It is difficult to separate the languages of this diverse student population from the diversity of the cultures associated with these languages. Banks (1994) sees language "as a mirror of ethnicity, reflecting a person's values, beliefs and attitudes" (p. 272). Due to the complex nature of this diverse linguistic community of secondary school students, a qualitative research approach was employed in an attempt to capture the students' experiences in a non-ESL but linguistically diverse classroom. The intent of re-searching the lived experiences of the students, and myself, as their teacher, is to contribute to the understanding of what it means to learn to live in a linguistically diverse school.

A Place of Change

The School and its Student Population.

Central High is a large urban secondary school whose student population embraces approximately 1,700 students. It is situated in an upper-middle class neighbourhood. Although the school is in an affluent area, its student catchment area
covers a broader range of socioeconomic levels. Central High’s impressive academic reputation, its academically enriched program known as Challenge, a vibrant music program, and unique Career Preparation programs draw students from outside its catchment area. Many of Central High’s graduates continue their studies at universities. The school is easily accessed by three major bus routes, however, many students are driven to school by family members.

The composition of Central High’s student population reflects the changing immigration and demographics of the city. Historically, there has been a strong Asian presence in the student population, but within the last decade, the Chinese portion has increased sharply. Approximately 75 - 80% of the student population is Asian, and the majority of the Asians are of Chinese ancestry. The remainder of the student population is of European, Japanese, Korean, Filipino or Indian ancestry. There are more than forty-two languages spoken among the students, indicating a strong presence of students who are fluent in two or more languages. Students who are only fluent in English are in the minority. Mandarin and Cantonese are the popular Chinese languages among the ethnic Chinese students. The backgrounds of the students range from being in Canada for several generations to recent immigrants -- many who are economically advantaged.

The ethnic and language backgrounds of the student participants in this inquiry represented the composition of the larger school community as described. Gender, however, is not representative of the school population because the Social Psychology 11 classes are predominately female. Their ages range from sixteen to nineteen years old, generally an age of readiness to handle sensitive issues appropriately. The language of
instruction in this school is English. Both the students and their parents signed consent forms to participate in the study. During the 1996 - 1997 school year, twenty-four out of a possible fifty students consented to participate in the study, and nine students granted me the privilege to interview them on an individual basis. Student participants had the option of leaving the research at anytime without any penalty or disclosing their reason, but no one did.

**The Classroom Setting.**

I teach Social Psychology 11 in a home economics foods lab on the ground floor of the school. This classroom is situated in the middle of the Grad Hall and by the central stairwell of the school. In the student area of the classroom, there are four distinct spaces for tables and chairs, separated by the protruding counters of the kitchen units. On the window side of the classroom, cupboards hang from the ceiling which impede the full view of that side of the classroom. Obviously, this is not the ideal physical arrangement for whole class discussions, but having students move tables and chairs can facilitate better eye contact positions for this type of activity. The configuration of the room does have the advantage of giving small working groups of students a minimal sense of privacy from other groups. The front of the class houses the teacher’s desk, laundry facilities, refrigerators and storage cupboards. The blackboard on the front wall is too distant for students sitting in the middle of the room to be used. A ceiling screen and overhead projector replace the blackboard. The lack of large open space gives a sense of being somewhat crowded, but depending on the social atmosphere, it can be perceived as cozy. Darren Lund, a doctoral student described the “kitchen lab classroom . . . [as]
casual and non-academic” during his first observation visit on February 17, 1997.

The students are allowed to choose their seats at the beginning of the year, and I reserve the right to move students if their proximity to certain students impedes their learning. However, the students are randomly put into temporary work groups for a number of class activities. I have a variety of random grouping methods, but I tend to favour students picking a card with a coloured geometric shape from a bucket. When the students are picking their card, they do not know if they will be grouped by colour or shape. This method shows that group assignment is truly by chance, and not by design. Occasionally, the students are allowed to pick their own groups.

The Context for Change

A Global Perspective Summoning the Researcher in the Teacher.

I received my undergraduate degree in home economics in the general program. The general program provided education in all the major areas of home economics: foods and nutrition, family management, consumer studies, and clothing and textiles. This type of training is an asset in teaching at the secondary level, because home economics courses are elected, not mandatory for students from grades nine to twelve. I followed my home economics degree with a year of teacher training. Since the beginning of my home economics career, my teaching assignments have commonly involved more than one of these specialized areas. I have been the Home Economics department head and a teacher at Central High for the past ten years. Since my arrival at this school, I have been
the sole instructor of Family Management 11, into which I have gradually added a social science perspective. This is reflected in the course title I now use. This social science trend is also practised by a number of other Home Economics departments in the province.

After teaching at Central High for about five years, I was invited to join the British Columbia Global Education Leadership Development Program with nine other home economics teachers from British Columbia. The aim of this program was to nurture and encourage the growth of home economics global educators. I was eventually trained as workshop leader in this project sponsored by the Canadian Home Economics Association in British Columbia. The need for all human beings to have a greater understanding of the world and their interrelationships has been expressed by a number of home economists (Duncan, 1990; Frazier, 1983; Mumaw, 1988; Peterat, 1989; Peterat & Smith, 1989; Smith, 1989). According to Hanvey (1986), education for a global perspective is "learning which enhances the individual's ability to understand his or her condition in the community and the world and improves the ability to make effective judgements" (p. i). Brown and Paolucci (1979) define the home economics as:

enabl[ing] families, both as individual units, and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of action which lead 1) to maturing in individual self-formation and, 2) to enlighten, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them. (p. 23)

Using these definitions of global education and home economics, Peterat and Smith (1989) build a strong rationale for linking home economics education with global education because each share the same vision and goals for their learners. Smith (1993)
furthers this rationale by showing that global education “is presented as the moral and ethically defensible position to hold” (p. 21) with the mission of home economics as defined by Brown and Paolucci (1979).

A global perspective has greatly influenced my approach to teaching. Its appeal lies in the space that it creates in the curriculum to raise students’ consciousness about local and global issues and their responsibilities as global citizens. It raised my awareness about the interdependencies and connectedness of the world, and gave me a philosophical framework to raise and deal with issues related to everyday life such as linguistic diversity in my classroom. By dealing with the interdependencies of global issues, students can see what roles they play in the world, and how their actions can cause reactions in the lives of others, and in the environment. It challenges their perspective of what is "right" and "wrong", and for whom it is right or wrong. This task of taking a stand on an issue whether personal, or global in nature, is part of real life decision-making. This brings the relevancy of the curriculum to the students, and leads them to generative knowledge.

My global leadership training introduced me to a group of like minded Home Economics teachers. We collaborated in producing and delivering a series of workshops to promote the use of several resource files on home economics related global issues such as food security, children and work, clothing, and global consumerism. My interest in multicultural and anti-racist education led me to volunteer with two other members of the global leadership group to produce a workshop for teachers called Counting Everyone In: Toward Inclusivity for the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation “Program Against
Racism”. The classroom activities used in these workshops were tested in our classrooms. Testing these activities inspired me to develop some of my own class exercises on diversity issues. While I was testing these activities, I started to make informal notes on their effectiveness and to share these insights with workshop leaders and participants. This started my journey of inquiry which I would later come to know as action research.

One part of the workshop concentrated on teaching participants the vocabulary associated with racism (stereotyping, bias, discrimination, prejudice, etc.) in order that they may accurately label and describe their experiences (for example, “you have just expressed a stereotype, a stereotype is ...”). This section of the workshop concluded with asking participants to describe situations where they have felt excluded and why. . . . [she referring to me] used it at the beginning of the year in her Social Psychology course. The result of this lesson was a year-long investigation on that she called the language issue. (Smith, 1996, p. 114 - 115)

**Social Psychology 11.**

Social Psychology 11 is an elective course in the Home Economics Program at Central High. The Ministry of Education calls this course Family Management 11. I chose to use Social Psychology instead of Family Management for a title as it has more appeal to students in an academic oriented school, and is more descriptive of what the course is about. Social psychology is the study of human social behaviour which is the main focus of this course. The nine major course objectives for the students are to:

1. develop an understanding of self in relation to others
2. practise and improve interpersonal communication skills
3. practise and enhance team building skills
4. understand ways to build and maintain rewarding relationships
5. learn to distinguish between love and infatuation

21
6. learn about the causes of stress and how to effectively manage it
7. understand the importance of sleep and its profound effect on our lives
8. understand different theories on intelligence and how intelligence shapes our perception of ourselves and others
9. learn about the field of psychology and some of its related careers

The course is shaped by lectures, discussions, individual and group work, role playing and instructional videos. Class participation is worth 30% of each term’s mark, demonstrating how much participation is valued in this course. Students are given an opportunity to evaluate their participation on an evaluation form which I review before I do the final evaluation. One significant component of participation is contributing to class or group discussions. The rationale for emphasizing oral participation is given on the course outline and expectations sheet in the form of the following quote:

Dialogue is an activity directed toward discovery and new understanding, which stands to improve knowledge, insight, or sensitivity of its participants . . . Dialogue represents a continuous, developmental communicative interchange through which we stand to gain a fuller appreciation of the world, ourselves, and one another.

(Burbules, 1993, p. 8)

The first two months of this course concentrate on team building skills and strengthening the students’ understanding of group dynamics. The investment of time on this unit generated a certain level of trust and commitment among the students. With this atmosphere, the students showed increased willingness to volunteer their stories or opinions for richer class discussions on human social behaviour. Many of the activities required the students to interact and problem solve in large and small groups. For instance, I use the “Mr. Kelly’s Murder” exercise in which each student receives a slip of paper with a clue of the crime. The students are only allowed to share their clue orally
with the whole group. They must come to a consensus as to who was the murderer, what the motive was, and how and when the murder was committed. The class must have all the correct answers at the same time before the game is over. This activity illustrates the need for cooperation, organization, good communication skills, leadership and collaboration for an effective team. The students enjoy the challenge that these activities offer. During the debriefing, they identify the group processes and qualities that bring these activities to a successful conclusion, as well as the impediments to an earlier resolution. These class activities are interspersed with students taking notes on factors that influence group dynamics.

The team building unit is followed by six weeks on self-concept and the classic personality development theories. Then the course moves onto communication skills and how they relate to building better relationships. The next unit on dating relationships is considered one of the highlights of this course. This unit typically deals with attraction theories, what qualities are in a healthy romantic relationship, the differences between infatuation and love, how to meet a variety of people, and dating violence. Gender stereotyping is usually dealt with during class discussions on attraction theories. The balance of the course covers the remaining topics listed in the course objectives.

Using a global perspective enabled me to transform a traditional unit on group dynamics and relationships. Traditionally, the group dynamics unit includes the technical side of communication, what impedes and enhances communications, the roles and decision-making styles used by groups, factors that build teams, and the effects of competition and cooperation on team outcomes. The relationship unit traditionally dealt
with friendships and dating. Generally speaking, broader social issues such as racism and diversity are not included. By integrating parts of these units within a global context, I was able to engage students in dialogues about diversity, meet the curriculum requirements, and deal with a topic that not only was relevant in our school but in our community.

In the fall [of 1994], I did a unit on group dynamics with my Social Psychology class and in the unit on stereotyping and prejudice, I had them brainstorm what behaviours they saw as inclusive and exclusive in our school. It was during this brainstorming that they identified that the number one priority was the use of different languages in the school and how they were feeling left out, lonely, isolated, frustrated, sometimes angry. (Chan, May 1995 in her presentation at the Imaging a Pacific Community Conference cited in Smith, 1996, p. 116)

At first some of the same feelings of isolation and frustration plagued me as I tried to decide what my research topic would be. As I considered my interests and options with much angst, I found a way to lessen my frustrations and rid myself of feeling isolated through action research -- a collaborative process.

**Action Research**

I was introduced to action research when I agreed to participate in a doctoral student’s project (Smith, 1996). Observing Smith’s approach and receiving her encouragement, made me curious about action research. I decided to take an action research course from Dr. Linda Peterat to learn more about it. The more I learned, the more I could see the possibility of integrating my role as teacher and researcher. The
expertise and support that were provided by both Peterat and Smith motivated me to frame this inquiry as action research.

Teacher action research is “a systematic intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work” (Pine, 1992, p. 657). Although action research can be described in many ways, it can be generally defined as an investigation or:

An inquiry process with an intent to change professional practice or social institutions through the active and transformative participation of those working within a particular setting. A major aim of most action research projects is the generation of knowledge among people in organizational or institutional settings that is actionable - can be used as a basis for conscious action. (Crawford, 1995, p. 239)

The process of action research “follows a cycle consisting of moments of reflection, planning, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning, etc., which take place in a spiral fashion” (Carson, 1990, p. 168). The repetitive cycles of reflection, planning, acting, and observing suits projects that “aim at the transformation of practices and understandings of the situations where the participants work” (Carson, 1990, p. 168).

Action research aims to build an interdependency between theory and praxis in such a way that the process improves praxis and develops better theories to guide it (Elliot, 1991). Praxis is “informed committed action” as a result of personal knowledge - “a rational understanding of practice (that) can only be gained through systematic reflection on action” by the practitioner (Kemmis & Carr, 1986, p. 189). This personal knowledge can develop through “rational discourse between action researchers and other people with whom they interact” (p.190). Through the collaborative self-reflective inquiry into their practice, action researchers “can identify and explore the contradictions
of their own practices, understandings and situations” (p. 194).

Cohen and Manion (1994) state that action research “is appropriate whenever specific knowledge is required for a specific problem in a specific situation; or when a new approach is to be grafted onto an existing system” (p. 194). Both these conditions apply to my inquiry. I was looking for a way to create a linguistically diverse classroom affirming for all, and I was infusing a global perspective into existing curriculum units to do this. In fact, Cohen and Manion (1994) used “modifying pupils’ value systems with regard to some aspect of life” (p. 194) as a concrete example of when action research is appropriate.

Action research also “attempts to bridge the gap between educational research and practice” (Ladwig, 1991, p. 111). The research question is derived from the practice of the teacher or practitioner, making the understanding and knowledge generated from action research relevant in that setting. Action research validates the “generalisability of outcomes . . . grounded in prior experience of teaching” (Hart, 1995, p. 230). Since my literature search failed to locate any significant findings in this particular area, action research may stimulate more research from the academic community.

What drew me to action research was the opportunity to change my practice, and to actively engage my students in their learning as well. Berthoff (1987) sees teaching as REsearching, and REsearching as looking again and again which is consistent with the three cycles of action research where I looked again and again at my practices. Winters (1989) defines action research as “the study of a social situation, with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (p. 3). It is the increasing diversity within the
ever changing student population such as Central High’s which necessitates change in the practices of teachers and others involved in the education system. Calhoun (1993) claims that action research can “revitalize the entire learning community, as well as aid teachers in their changing or reflecting on their classroom practices” (p. 62).

Action research recognizes that knowledge can be generated by teacher/researchers outside universities and other outside agencies (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; Berthoff, 1987; Boomer, 1987; Elliot, 1991). It allows participants to acknowledge and value their own experiences to come to a better understanding of the situation. As a teacher action researcher, I see myself as a teacher who uses self-reflective inquiry that is undertaken with others in social situations "in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out" (Kemmis & Carr, 1986, p. 162).

**Collaborating with Other Voices**

In this action research inquiry into linguistic diversity at Central High, the use of collaboration is most appropriate. Collaborating, literally means to work or toil together. Kemmis and Carr (1986) see that through collaborative self-reflective discourse between action researchers and other people, personal knowledge of the action researcher can be enhanced. By engaging in collaborative dialogues about the inquiry, action researchers can either validate or further question their observations with others who are teachers and yet researchers. Together, they can explore their own practices, understandings and
situations. Teacher action researchers can learn from each other especially when they are studying similar topics. Winter (1989) points out that collaboration takes everyone's point of view as a resource for understanding. I was fortunate to have several graduate students (outside the students in my class) who filled this role of a "critical friend" for me during my inquiry.

Mary Gale Smith had already completed her masters on what a global education perspective would mean for home economics when I first met her at the British Columbia Global Education Leadership Development Program. Needless to say, she made a great leader for this program and inspired us all to infuse a global perspective into our classroom curriculum. Being an experienced teacher made her even more credible as she understood what it means to be a teacher. The leadership development program was a success as the group produced several workshops on a variety of global home economics topics. She was the source of many ideas for these workshops and became a role model for all of us. Her encouragement, support and knowledge were never-ending. She is one of the co-developers of Counting everyone in: Towards inclusivity workshop, along with Shelley McPherson and myself.

Gale (as I will refer to her from now on) became involved in teacher education and then enrolled in doctoral studies. She describes what she wanted to study like this:

... I wanted to continue my exploration of what global education means for home economics teaching. In my search for a mode of inquiry I had three criteria: (a) it must not be research on others; (b) it must include what it is like to be a global home economics educator; and (c) it must be dialogic, involving the characteristics of Jaggar's feminist practical dialogue. I gravitated to what is called action research. (Smith, 1996, p. 19)
I was invited to join her doctoral studies inquiry which provided me the opportunity to engage in critical self-reflective dialogue with her. We shared global education and action research as part of our own inquiries. It was to be a symbiotic relationship that would help us both to enhance our personal knowledge about praxis.

As I was continuing my graduate studies, a professor linked me with Darren E. Lund, a doctoral student who was doing research in anti-racist education. He was on an educational leave from his high school in Red Deer, Alberta where he teaches English Literature. His research focussed on what motivates teachers to include anti-racist/multicultural curriculum in their teaching and what sustains their interest in this area. When we first met at a Centre for Studies in Curriculum and Instruction open house wine and cheese on a Friday evening in September 1996, we quickly connected with our common passion for anti-racist curriculum and its benefits for students. We exchanged stories about our projects and experiences at school with anti-racist education/activities. I was impressed with his S. T. O. P. project that had earned him the first annual Alberta Human Rights award in 1987. S. T. O. P. stands for students and teachers opposing prejudice. He gave a copy of a paper about this program that was published in the *Multicultural education: The state of the art national study, report #1* (1993). After exchanging phone numbers, I did not realize that our research paths would intersect in a symbiotic relationship similar to Gale’s.

About four months later, I received a phone call from Darren (as I will refer to him from now on) who was requesting my help in an ethnographic project that was a course requirement for him. He explained that he would need to observe me teaching a
class, and to interview me for several reports required by the ethnography course. I agreed to do this, cleared it with my principal, and signed the consent form. Darren observed one class on February 5th, 1997, interviewed me on February 28th, observed the same class during another lesson on March 11th, and interviewed me on March 28th. Due to his schedule, he observed two of the lessons that I had prepared for the unit on diversity (the name I gave to the unit) before continuing with the traditional relationship unit on dating and love. Darren was willing to share his four assignments with me so that I might benefit from his insights on the dynamics of the class and myself as their teacher. The students were used to others observing their classes as they had student teachers and teacher aides doing the same.

In addition to Gale and Darren, I had the benefit of dialoguing with Nina Ho, my colleague who is also engaged in her own research on a different topic. Although we did not share similar research topics, she shared her unique perspective on linguistic diversity at Central High. First, Nina (as I will refer to her from now on) is a former student of Central High, which gives her a sense of the school's demographic history. Secondly, she is not a native speaker of English. Her first language is Mandarin, one that is popular with many of our students. Thirdly, Nina is a certified ESL teacher in addition to her home economics background. Lastly, she was also a member of Gale's collaborative action research project on global home economics. During the 1996 - 1997 school year, she taught two ESL courses and five Home Economics courses. Her perceptions helped me to check my thoughts in progress and to reconstruct a more complete picture of the social realities surrounding linguistic diversity at our school.
These relationships among teacher/researchers were extremely beneficial in keeping me in tune with the realities of the classroom and the students. I was most fortunate to have them. Collaboration intends to create an atmosphere where "everyone's point of view will be taken as a contribution to resources for understanding; no one's point of view will be taken as the final understanding as to what all the other points of view really mean" (Winter, 1989, p.56).

I must also acknowledge my "collaborative" relationships with all the Social Psychology 11 students throughout the three years of this inquiry about linguistic diversity. Corbett and Wilson (1995) made a plea to researchers and educational reformers to make a difference WITH, not for, students. They believe that students must be participants of the change process, and not just the beneficiaries of change when improving education. The issue that Corbett and Wilson raise "is not whether students know how to do what they are expected to do, but whether students view what they are expected to do as valuable and appropriate aspects of being who they are. That is do they accept constructing and introspecting as 'regular ways of acting' as students in school?" (Corbett & Wilson, 1995, p. 13). With this plea in mind, collaboration with the students seemed natural. At the beginning of cycle three, I intended to invite the students to become co-researchers in this inquiry. However, after reflecting on the perception of power that a teacher has over students whom the teacher is grading, true collaboration seemed unrealistic to achieve. Instead I chose to work with them, acknowledging and being highly aware of my position of power as their teacher. I tried my best to create a trusting atmosphere between the students and myself by pointing out that it was not their
position or opinion but how they supported and defended their position that was important, as well as fulfilling my duties as an ethical researcher.

People's understandings are deformed by the habits and routines created by the relations of domination. A continuing critical reflective discourse is necessary to root this out in the process of creating communities based upon reason and democratic decision making instead of the authority of unequal power. (Carson, 1990, p. 168)

Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) state that collaboration "seems to have been aligned with the idea of equal participation, responsibility, and representation - - all subsumed within a comfortable, friendly community of persons engaged in a mutually interesting project or endeavor" (p. 393). Yet they also state that collaboration occurs "often under conditions of distress or trouble; to exert body and mind in ways which are sometimes painful" (p. 393). Although these definitions of collaboration are dichotomous, they amply describe the states that collaboration creates. Peterat and Smith (1996) also support the notion of tension, frustration and distress in researching collaboratively. In this inquiry, I experienced both comfort and friendliness, and the tension and distress of exploring linguistic diversity with the students. By collaborating with others, a multitude of voices can resonate in the text of this inquiry, and help to create a better understanding of what it means to live and learn in a linguistically diverse classroom.

By highlighting the importance of collaboration in the process of action research, I found an ethical context to research with the students, rather than to research about the students. Collaboration provided an opportunity for the students to engage in a process that will help them learn to live in a linguistically diverse community -- a reality of their
global future. As students shared their insights with each other and myself, this interplay is acknowledged. Calhoun (1993) indicates the benefits of mutual support when engaging in a collaborative action research relationship between school and university partnerships, and that collaborative action researchers are more likely to share their results with others. The teacher benefits from the guidance and expertise of university professors and graduate students, while the university professors and graduate students are able to access classrooms for field study purpose. By sharing the results of collaborative action research with others in a more public forum, others can benefit from this research. Many parties could benefit from the input of each other creating a learning environment for all. If a community of learners is to be formed in a classroom, then all humans are learning together -- teachers, university affiliates and students alike.

This action research project involved Central High senior secondary students whom I taught in Social Psychology 11 (a.k.a. Family Management 11) classes over three school years from 1994 - 1997. As part of a remodelled unit on team building and relationships that I teach, these students explored the issues around diverse linguistic student communities within their school. A description of cycles one and two develop an understanding of the context which gave rise to the events and outcomes of cycle three. The third cycle of this action research project is the major focus of this inquiry.
CHAPTER III

VOICES LEADING TO THIS ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

Brooding Tension Bellows Out Loud - Cycle One (1994 - 1995)

By 1994, the murmurs and rude stares grew into a bellow when students used languages other than English at the school. An uneasy tension permeated the school climate about the diversity of languages students used. When students were randomly put into small discussion groups, students showed more reluctance and resistance to working with students unfamiliar to them. When students were allowed to chose their own groups, I consistently observed students grouping themselves by their common first languages. This also applied when students chose their lockers. There was no visible or audible evidence of the ideal multicultural interaction. There was only what looked like language camps or what some of the staff and students labelled as language "ghettos."

Our first professional development day, on September 26th, focussed on identifying issues and possible "solutions" to the fast rising ESL student population and the linguistic diversity at Central High. The program for the day was called Changing Demographics/New Changes: Language Acquisition. The following quotes were collected anonymously during this professional development day, and reflect the voices of tension at Central High in the fall of 1994:

Less willingness by students to speak out, question.
- Teacher
At first it didn’t bother me, but now, the numbers and frequency irritate me. - Teacher

I feel that the language issue is a problem which exists in every school with different languages dominating. - Grade 11 student

When people speak another language in the classroom, it is quite rude and makes you feel left out and angry. - Grade 11 student

Learning another language is a very difficult thing. There is nothing wrong about speaking one’s mother’s tongue along the road of learning. - English Transitional student

As the school population and the languages heard in the hallways changed dramatically, I could not ignore the tension I felt within the classroom and the school. I started to explore this tension with the students in my Social Psychology 11 classes. I remodelled some traditional lessons on team building/group dynamics relationships to include a more global perspective. In the remodelling process, I introduced the concept of being inclusive and exclusive, and the concept clarification of terms associated with exclusion and racism. Terms such as stereotyping, bias, discrimination and racism gave students the necessary vocabulary to describe their experiences of exclusion in a more precise manner (see Appendix I). The students were asked to brainstorm about experiences in the school which made them feel excluded. Then these experiences were classified according to the terms used in the concept clarification exercise if appropriate. The students were then asked to rank order them as a class. The most prominent factor was the use of different languages other than English in the school, and their second...
-ranked factor was racism, followed by exclusion within the same race but by a different culture or country of origin. The students’ number one choice reaffirmed my sense of tension about the use of languages other than English in the school.

During class discussions that followed this exercise, students, many who were usually quiet in class, volunteered to express their viewpoint on this topic. The stories shared were about the fear of being ridiculed in another language they did not understand, or being ridiculed because their English was not perfect. Each voiced their experiences very poignantly in class. A few students who spoke English without an accent surprised many of us when they confessed about their English as a second language roots. During the passionate telling of their stories, I realized that I had not said a word, nor did I need to. The students were doing a magnificent job of showing how good group dynamics worked.

Through the sharing of their stories, the students and I found CONNECTION. This connection which reverberated across culture and time challenged the students’ previous notions to learn about each other’s lives as well as to reflect on their own. Once they became more aware of how people hurt, once they shared their pain and laughter, they could not so easily treat each other as objects to be mocked or ignored. When students’ lives are taken off the margins, they do not feel the same need to put someone else down.

Shelley McPherson, one of the co-developers of Counting Everyone In: Towards Inclusivity workshop and a Home Economics teacher, observed one of the class discussions for a university course that she was taking. In her observations of the
discussion which she also audio taped and made notes on, she identified various themes which I have re-organized into these four categories:

1. **The Role and Responsibility of the Classroom Participant**
   - “Friends should help others speak English.”
   - “Do you ever make an effort to speak to ESL students?”

2. **What is the appropriate use of different languages in the classroom?**
   - “Why does it matter to you if we speak another language?”
   - “I feel left out and want to be included.”

3. **The difficulty of acquiring English as an additional language and the lack of empathy for those undergoing this process**
   - “It saves embarrassment, people make fun of your accent.”
   - “It’s easier to speak your first language. English is hard [to learn].”

4. **Concerns about Canada as a multicultural country and not being as open to different languages and cultures as its philosophy implies.**
   - “Parents spoil their kids, send them to Canada and give them their business. If they are not going to try to learn English why don’t they just drop out and save the taxpayer money.”

A stronger sense of community was created when students struggled together to achieve a common goal. Sometimes the opportunity spontaneously arises out of the conditions or contents of the classroom, school and community. The momentum of our class discussions about exclusion and language went beyond our classroom doors. An ESL teacher heard about our class discussions and approached me about the opportunity to work with her English Transitional class on a newsletter about the use of different languages at school. My class agreed to this and the two classes came together to engage in activities and discussion about language. The students were passionate in their sharing of language experiences in their school lives. Whether they were English as a first language, or as an additional language, they all expressed the fear of being mocked,
and of being left out and isolated. Both classes were asked to give written feedback on their class discussions on linguistic diversity experiences. I was astonished to find how prolific they were. Here are some examples of their thoughts that were shared in a class discussion:

**You’re cutting off opportunities to be friends with others if you don’t try to speak English.**
- Grade 11 student

In Brunei, there was severe punishment at school if you did not speak Malay during school time.
- Grade 11 student

It’s hard to make friends with ESL students, they are not very friendly. Another student responded with “Do you welcome them?”
- Grade 11 students

But I don’t think speaking other languages in the hallways is a problem. The problem is people who do not want to talk with those whose mother tongue is different.
- Grade 11 student

I feel proud of my first language. I speak English as much as possible in school but English will never be my main language.
- Grade 11 student

To reduce language tension in our school, I think more English should be spoken during school. As soon as school is over or at home, it’s completely fine to start conversing in your first language. Encouraging English will improve everyone’s communication skills in a country where English is the first official language.
- Grade 11 student

. . . when using one’s first language, the time, the place, and other people around you should be taken into consideration.
- Grade 11 student

In keeping with action research’s requirement for critical reflection, I asked my class to answer three questions on a feedback sheet on the effects of the classroom activities on linguistic diversity. Basically, the class learned what an ESL student was
capable of saying in English even though the Social Psychology students found the ESL students in general to be withdrawn or non-participatory. The Social Psychology students were able to differentiate the feelings associated with being included and excluded. Being included meant to feel useful, needed, involved, wanted, important, good, and appreciated. Being excluded meant to feel like an outsider, unwanted, lonely, ignored, sad, depressing and lower self-esteem. The final question was what message would you give to the students of the English Transitional class. The Social Psychology students wanted the English Transitional class to know that they: 1) enjoyed working with them, 2) better understood the difficulties and uncomfortableness of learning English, and 3) encourage the English Transitional students to practice their English by talking to them in the halls.

Sometimes the opportunity spontaneously arises out of the conditions or contents of the classroom, school and/or community. The momentum of our classroom dialogues about exclusion and the use of different languages went beyond our classroom. An opportunity arose to work with a English Transitional class on a newsletter about the use of different languages in the school. The two classes engaged in dialogues and activities about this issue. The students were again passionate in their sharing of language experiences in their lives. Student volunteers from both the English Transitional and Social Psychology 11 classes collaborated on the newsletter Counting Everyone In, and put together a showcase to highlight how students and teachers felt about the use of different languages at school. The showcase featured different quotes from staff and students taken from the survey under the title How do you feel about the use of different
languages at Central High? The purpose of the showcase was to raise awareness of some of the different perspectives on the use of different languages at school in a more public forum.

As word spread about the joint class discussions on linguistic diversity within the school, the students were offered the opportunity to share their viewpoints with the staff on a professional development day on January 31—Chinese New Year’s Day. This session was called *Language and a Sense of Community at Central High: A Student Perspective*. I became involved in organizing this event with the district ESL principal. The students now became very keen to learn about how their teachers felt about the use of different languages in the school. They developed a questionnaire and then polled the teaching staff for their opinions on language diversity in the school. Here are some of the teachers’ comments which were collected anonymously and shared in a document for discussion:

I sometimes give up — anything “abstract” seems hopeless to teach.  
-Teacher

If I have trouble, another student can always translate for me.  
-Teacher

No sense of our [meaning Canadian] heritage, humour or tradition.  
-Teacher

Challenges. It makes me more aware of needs of students.  
-Teacher

Angry, even though I know I shouldn't. I want to strike out and tell them to speak English in public. If they can’t be bothered to try to learn English, they should not come to Canada.  
-Teacher
Some do not understand English. I feel powerless to help.  
-Teacher

I would love to know some basic Cantonese, Mandarin or Fukinese to understand the kids at times.  
-Teacher

A panel of six students was chosen to present a variety of students’ perspectives. All the student panelists agreed to speak to the whole teaching staff. Each focused their presentation on different aspects and points of views on the use of different languages at school. Their focus and backgrounds were as follows:

- Asian female described an immigrant’s viewpoint and shared reasons for some students’ reluctance to use English at school.
- Caucasian female described feelings of uncomfortableness about the lack of English used at school.
- Asian male voiced the need for immersion and mainstreaming in English classes rather than detouring into ESL classes.
- Caucasian female described her non-Asian English Transitional student experience in an Asian dominated English Transitional class.
- Asian female described what it was like to acquire English as an additional language.
- Caucasian male described his thoughts and feelings on language use after his classroom experiences about being excluded by language use.

The student panel generated much interest among the teachers and the students present for this day. Additional students volunteered to discuss linguistic diversity with the teaching staff in small groups. Approximately forty students had given up their day off from school to participate in this event.

The comments and ideas were recorded on newsprint and collected. A committee of teachers and an administrator identified major themes from them. I was a member of this committee. Three categories were identified by the committee: issues, guidelines and actions. This data was then circulated among staff and the students who were interested
in continuing their work on linguistic diversity. The following professional development day was devoted to formulating a language use philosophy statement based on the previous collectively data. Teaching staff, interested students and two parents used the morning to share their thoughts and feelings about the data and what they would like to see happen next. In the afternoon, the teachers gathered by their departments with the parents, while the students met in their own group to draw up a rough draft of their philosophy on the use of different languages in the school. A English Language and Heritage Language working committee reviewed the data from all the departments and student group and drafted the following mission statement:

While respecting all languages and cultures in our community, English is the language of instruction, communication, and classroom interaction at Central High for the following reasons:

i. to build a sense of community
ii. to enhance social inclusion
iii. to ensure safety
iv. to foster respect and cooperation
v. to increase proficiency in English

The committee also had five recommendations for implementation in September 1995 that were gathered from the input of teachers and students on March 14th. The five recommendations were:

1. Include department philosophy on language as part of course outline, and have the Administration encourage departments to do this.
2. Have Administration at first staff meeting in September encourage all staff to promote the use of English in the classroom.
3. At the September grade assemblies, have counselors, Administration & Student Council make reference to the mission statement in the Student Handbook & invite the Drama class to put on a 2 to 3 minute skit based on the school mission statement.
4. Encourage staff to mention language mission statement during the Parent Walkabout in September.

5. Write an article for the August newsletter about Central High’s mission statement about English being the language of instruction.

Through the sharing of their thoughts and feelings, the students and teachers opened up to each other, creating a bridge between their worlds. I saw a sense of community growing among teachers and students who wanted to make a positive difference about living in their linguistically diverse community.

Although flyers and telephone communications were used to seek parental input into this process, only two parents attended and participated in this event. The lack of parental involvement concerned me so much that I reached out to one of the parents in attendance. After a brief conversation about my concerns, she offered to arrange a meeting of some interested parents at her home shortly afterwards. Several factors affected the low attendance of parents at this community interaction day. The time of our event was not convenient for many parents to attend as it was their working day. Other parents were too shy or afraid to come and participate at school.

My private meeting with a small group of parents on the afternoon of May 1, 1995 lasted two hours. The parents were all Chinese females, and of immigrant background. We discussed their perception of language use at school, the process that the school had undertaken on language use, and what they expected the school policy/expectations to be. They had heard from their children that there were language cliques at Central High. The parents were aware of some nick names given to some of these cliques according to their language or cultural background. They expressed their concern about the lack of social
intermingling amongst Central High’s diverse student population, but felt uncomfortable approaching the school about it due to their lack of English proficiency. In some cases, the parents relied on their children to interpret interims and report cards. Unfortunately, they heard of a few cases where the students were not truthful about the report’s content, and it took some time before the parents became aware of the situation. However, parents found it helpful when they learnt about the school system from relatives and friends who shared the same first language and were more familiar with the Vancouver school system. The parents were supportive of the school’s effort in dealing with the use of different languages at Central High as they felt that it would be beneficial to all parties. The parents had several suggestions. Some involved the use of bilingual parent volunteers to act as liaisons which they found worked well at the elementary school level. They also thought that some parents would appreciate some practice with their conversational English with reliable students who are proficient in English. I brought their suggestions back to the language committee at school.

In June, I sought feedback from my Social Psychology 11 class on the mission statement. The class raised the question of “When can we use our language?” This was something we as a school did not address. Central High became focussed on an English language policy which was the agenda of the staff and students whose first language or working language was English. In an dialogue with Gale, I said:

So, basically, it became an English language policy. A policy that would encourage a common language in terms of the classroom but when do we allow for this diversity. The students picked up on it but the staff never had any problem with it because they are all English speaking. I can see the staff point of view and I can see the kids’ point of view. So, I was given the number of the human rights commission and I faxed them a copy
and I told them a brief history and they said we’re not really violating anything but it could be challenged. What you need to do is expand on it and really stress academic purposes for the use of English, so now I’m rethinking this. (Smith, 1996, p. 122)

During the next meeting of the English Language and Heritage Language Committee, I presented the opinion of the Human Rights Commission. The policy was redundant as the expectation of the school was to teach in English with the exception of the Modern Language classes.

I felt a sense of relief when the language policy and recommendations fell to the way side because it was not exactly what the students and I were looking for. I also felt a sense of loss because of all the work that everyone had done and the risks they took to open up and share their feelings and experiences had ended with nothing concrete and lasting. It was like we went through all of this for nothing! Perhaps I had expected too much once the momentum of linguistic diversity left the walls of our classroom and became the property of the school. Gale used the following quote from Romanish (1989) to describe my experience:

> Critical thought in its emancipatory form requires more than skill acquisition and technical reasoning. Purposeful dialogue between and among teachers and learners, for instance, is seen as basic to the development of critical thought by virtually all modern theorists. Yet ample evidence exists to indicate that such encounters are truly the exception. (Smith, 1996, p. 54)

Gale saw my experience as one of these exceptions. The students and I engaged in critical thought and tried to take an opportunity to transform our school community about linguistic diversity. Emancipation of silent voices was unsettled by the domination of potentially oppressive policy. By the end of the school year, the staff felt disheartened by
the lack of action after the investment of significant time. In the anonymous course evaluation sheets, two out of 17 students who did the evaluation on the last day of class identified the language issue as the most mind-sticking moment of the course.

A student from Central High wrote an article, "Newcomers no longer feel compelled to speak English" which was published in the Voices column of The Vancouver Sun on June 20, 1995:

... The bottom line? It hasn't been reached - - we're still at the top of the page. Views have yet to be voiced and action has to follow. The ultimate goal is not just a resolution of what we should speak at school, but a definitive answer to how we should live together. An answer that would benefit everyone, the Canadian-born and Canadian-to-be, alike. ... Perhaps a less noticeable phenomenon can provide us with a little assurance. Look around you. Hasn't karaoke become a household word? (Chow, 1995, p. A4)

Perhaps all was not lost when he described what Central High had undergone about linguistic diversity, as he ended the article with this:

Haven't friends been made and barriers plummeted? ... Haven't we made way in understanding each other's cultures and values? We have and will continue to do so. Someday, maybe the minorities will exist not as separate tributaries of the mainstream, but as contributing parts of the whole stream, one stream, strong and free. (Chow, 1995, p. A4)

This student saw the inroads that we had made -- social change does not happen overnight or within a year but over long decades, centuries or more. This was just one small step towards his and our vision of the future.
With the start of the new school year, and a new class of Social Psychology 11 students, I decided to repeat my lessons on inclusion and exclusion in September as part of the group dynamic/team building unit. A few students from the previous Social Psychology class who took up the cause of diffusing the uncomfortable tension surrounding Central High’s linguistically diverse student population encouraged me to continue. I decided that the investigation would only take place if the students of this year’s class identified linguistic diversity as the most excluding factor at Central High. I did not want to impose my research question on the class. It would have to be their question as well.

I started the second cycle of my action research project with caution, after learning about the larger implications that inquiring about linguistic diversity may have. I suspected that there would be little if any opportunities to involve the whole school community, as last year’s outcome was disappointing to many. There were no quick fixes or solutions to the “language problem” as many saw it. With this in mind, I felt the need to have the students think of ways that they could contribute to easing the tension that still surrounded the linguistic diversity of our school population. After reflecting back on cycle one’s events, I felt the most effective activity was the use of dialogue and narratives or stories for dispelling stereotypes and prejudices that students had of each other in regards to the use of different languages at school. The narratives or stories allow the individual the freedom to “create a space for conversation, reflection and critique”
Towards the end of the team building/group dynamics unit, I repeated the class activities and lessons on concept clarification and situations of inclusion and exclusion. Again, the use of different languages was voted the most excluding factor at Central High. During our classroom dialogues, the students suggested getting together with an ESL class to hear their point of view. One ESL teacher volunteered her class and we set up some ice-breaker activities before the classes entered into dialogue with each other about the use of different languages at school. To accommodate both classes, we met in my room -- the foods lab. I approached one of my former Social Psychology 11 students who was passionate about the “language issue” to come in and speak to both classes about last year’s events and how the different school communities felt about the use of different languages in the school. She titled her presentation “How to be Fair to All Students”. She reviewed the range of thoughts and feelings of both students and teachers on this issue and some of the suggestions made about the use of different languages at school. She ended her presentation with an invitation for all students to speak up when they feel left out of a conversation because someone is using a language that they do not understand.

To encourage more participation from all students, small dialogue groups of four or five were used as recommended by Cohen (1993). There were nine groups in total. A group member reported back to the larger group and any further comments or insights were shared with the large group of both classes. In order to help students deal with the use of different languages in a manageable fashion, I decided to use a problem solving
chart from Bellanca's *The Cooperative Think Tank II* (1992). The purpose of this chart was to enable students to pose and solve problems or challenges. Four key words were reviewed with all the students:

- **ISSUE** - a point in question or a matter in dispute.
- **PROBLEM** - any question or matter involving doubt, uncertainty or difficulty.
- **ALTERNATIVE** - a choice limited to one of two or more possibilities.
- **CRITERIA** - standard rules or principles for testing something.

(Bellanca, 1992, p. 84)

The chart was shown on the overhead and the instructions and an example were given. The students were randomly grouped so that there were at least two students from the ESL class, and two students from the Social Psychology class per group. After each group dialogued with each other, pondered over the requirements of the chart and filled it in, they shared their outcomes with the rest of the groups. The chart used the acronym I. D. E. A. S. to think through the language issue:

- **I** = Index facts as you see them.
- **D** = Define the problem.
- **E** = Expand on ideas or possible alternatives.
- **A** = Adopt a criterion.
- **S** = Select and sell your idea to others involved.

I collected all of the charts and had a student assistant type out all the charts from their oversized newsprint format. I shared this with the ESL teacher so that she could do some follow-up activities with her class on this joint exploration of linguistic diversity.

Basically, the students felt that too many people spoke in different languages other than English at school, and the problem was that it caused socialization challenges among the students. The most common possible alternatives suggested were to use only English at school and to encourage and help ESL students acquire English fluency. One group
out of the nine did suggest that other languages used at school such as Cantonese should be taught. Possible solutions would be to allow only English being spoken in the school, or to allow languages other than English to be allowed once a month at school. One group suggested having English contests with prizes every month. The most popular solution supported by five groups was to increase opportunities for students to socially intermingle especially with the ESL student population. Some groups hoped that the school could timetable social interactions into their scheduled classes. Was the school system unconsciously isolating ESL students from mainstream students and limiting their interaction with each other? Is there a need for ESL students to witness former ESL students participating competently in mainstream classes? Is there a need for mainstream students to develop more empathy for ESL learners?

About a month after our session with the ESL class, their teacher approached me to report that the feedback from her class was very positive, and that it raised their awareness about the importance of learning English in their lives. She thought that she observed more English being spoken in her ESL class since our joint class sessions. The students in Social Psychology acknowledged their heightened awareness of the difficulties of learning another language during adolescence. As one student pointed out that she had four years of high school French and was not fluent in French at all. So she summarized that the experiences of ESL students learning English is similar to mainstream students’ experience with French or Spanish. Her point was well taken by the class as they took a long silent moment to reflect on their own experiences in learning another language.
Their silence propelled me to reflect upon my early language learning experiences. The struggle to find the words, the right intonation, and the pace of a “normal” conversation echoed in my head along with the feelings of embarrassment and frustration. The need to fit in and to sound “smart” in another language broke into this silence, along with the snickers and laughter by an audience secured in their own language, but not mine. This silent reflection would take on a new meaning in cycle three -- focussing on ways to change my pedagogical approach to the so-called “language issue”.
CHAPTER IV

PEDAGOGICAL VOICES RESOUND IN CYCLE THREE

An Agenda Accommodating Many Needs

The third cycle of this action research occurred during 1996 to 1997, a busy school year. My duties were stretched by the Ministry of Education's accreditation process of Central High. This was also the year that I welcomed two student teachers, and planned a fashion field study tour of New York with my colleague for the fashion design and merchandising career preparation program students. Amidst all these demands, I struggled with my role as teacher/researcher. In spite of the many demands and needs to be met, I continued my inquiry in linguistic diversity. In this cycle of my action research, my role as researcher was made public to the students in the two Social Psychology 11 classes because I was now committed to using my experiences as the basis of my master's research. I enlisted the students to form a collaborative partnership to explore linguistic diversity at our school.

Research ethics forms were submitted to the university and school board for approval in September 1996. The school board approved the research within a month. Meanwhile I had finished the traditional part of my team building/group dynamics unit, and since I had not received university approval, I decided to delay the exclusion and inclusion lessons and activities until the friendship part of the relationship unit. The
diversity lessons were integrated with the lessons on friendship. When I received university approval in February, I distributed letters of consent to the students in both Social Psychology 11 classes. I explained to the students that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that their marks would not be affected in any way by their decision to participate or not in the research. All the work involved for the students in this inquiry would be what I would normally assign in class with the exception of the students who consented to be interviewed. I started the relationship unit with the diversity lessons near the beginning of February and ended this part of the course before mid-March to accommodate my student teacher's assignment on dating and love.

When I began this particular cycle, I used an activity that I had developed to demonstrate to the students what they may not see regarding race preference. It was a carousel brainstorming activity requiring small groups of students to look at a black and white picture of a person and guess what this person may be like. The pictures were gathered from various magazines. I deliberately chose a variety of pictures to illustrate a range of ages and both males and females. Each group circulated through each picture and wrote their opinions of each person in the picture. Then we debriefed as a whole group. The students checked to see if there was a general agreement about the person and how the group or groups came to their conclusion about the person in the picture. This activity also reinforced their lessons on social perception leading to the topic of stereotyping. The question -- “What do the people in these photos have in common?” was asked of the whole class to determine whether they saw a pattern, and to test their social perception. The people in all the photos used shared the same skin colour -- white.
I thought this exercise may be useful to help others see something that they have not seen or noticed before. I named this exercise Media White Out. This exercise came about when I noticed how some people demonstrated some discriminatory or racist behaviour or attitude, but they were not aware that their behaviour or attitude was offending to others.

Since I had added notes on social perception to integrate diversity with the friendship lessons more smoothly, it did not leave enough time to dwell on the issue of linguistic diversity with the two Social Psychology classes of this cycle. Instead I planned to continue with this after the student teacher finished her unit with this class near the end of April. Both classes ranked linguistic diversity as the third rated cause of exclusion in the school, ranking gender and age as the leading causes of exclusion. I was very cognizant that I did not want to impose my research agenda upon the students, and that I would lose the momentum of the unit with such a long delay. However, the teacher side of me prevailed even more as I delayed this dialogue on linguistic diversity until the last class of the school year. I felt compelled to complete the remaining topics on the course outline before the end of the year even if it meant sacrificing a critical part of the research that I was conducting. What if the students decide to skip class to study for provincial exams? What if the students were not into discussing linguistic diversity in June when they would be leaving this environment in a few weeks?

Again, I was blessed by a turn of events. At the end of March 1997, there was an incident about the use of Cantonese in the provincial Legislature by Jenny Kwan, a new Member of the Legislature (MLA) and the reaction to this by Ted Nebbeling, another MLA. The issue of using a language other than English where English is the working
language was hitting the headlines of the local papers, echoing some of the same concerns that Central High faces. Kwan had responded at length in English to the throne speech on March 25th, 1997. Then she announced her intentions to summarize her comments in Cantonese which took about four minutes. During this time, other MLAs noticed that Nebbeling appeared to be making fun of her Cantonese, while two Liberal MLAs were trying to stop him. At first Nebbeling denied he said anything resembling Cantonese or Chinese and stated that he did not know any Chinese. He did say that he was offended by the use of Chinese without anyone knowing what she was saying. By March 27th, 1997, the legislative tapes revealed that Nebbeling had said “gong dye wah” during Kwan’s speech which means “You are telling a big lie” in Cantonese. On the same day, Nebbeling apologized in the legislature for using unparliamentary language and delivered a written apology to Kwan, saying he hoped that she would accept it. The day after, Kwan held a news conference where she fought against tears and called for Nebbeling to apologize to the whole Chinese community. Her tears were aroused from the painful memories of childhood experiences that Nebbeling’s action provoked. As a child, Kwan’s different looks and inability to speak English had been made fun of by other children.

This incident gathered much debate in the local newspaper. News reporters and editors were prolific as were the general public who wrote in volumes to the editors. I collected a number of newspaper articles and editorials on the incident, to be used for stimulating the dialogue about linguistic diversity with the students. I made copies of the articles for the students to read and overheads from parts of two articles. I even
developed a worksheet - *Analysing diversity issues in the print media* (see Appendix II) which I did not have sufficient time to do as a written exercise with the Social Psychology classes.

Shortly after the Kwan/Nebbeling incident, I was approached by a reporter from CBC (Canadian Broadcast Corporation) français who was doing a story about Asian immigrant students. He was interviewing a student from Central High, and heard that I had involved students in discussing the issue of linguistic diversity at the school. He thought it would be interesting to hear what students thought of the Kwan/Nebbeling debate, and wanted to video a class discussion as part of his series on Asian immigrants in Canada. With the school administration’s approval, I approached both Social Psychology 11 classes with this proposal and the students agreed to a secret ballot vote on their class participation. Although there were some students in each of classes wanting to do this, both classes voted not to participate. I was disappointed, but I honoured their choice and did not try to change their minds.

The students who wanted to do this persisted and eventually I asked another class who agreed to the video-interview. Consent forms were distributed and collected from all but one student. Some of the persistent Social Psychology 11 students were also in this class and were able to participate in the class discussion that was videotaped by CBC on April 23rd, 1997. Some students were individually interviewed at the end of class. The segment aired on *Ce Soir* - CBC français in early May 1997. The televised class discussion on linguistic diversity sparked renewed interest from students in the Social Psychology 11 classes. They began to see the implications of linguistic diversity
Psychology 11 classes. They began to see the implications of linguistic diversity affecting life beyond the classroom. By the time the Social Psychology 11 classes began their discussions and conversations about linguistic diversity in June, I felt and heard more passion in their voices again.

Noting how strong peer pressure can be for secondary school students, I planned to interview some students individually after classes for the school year ended. The private interview may yield some understanding that would not have been revealed with their peers present. The students who volunteered for this part of the inquiry had parental consent and were selected by a school administrator at the school. The administrator collected these consent forms for the interviews and selected students to represent a variety of linguistic backgrounds to reflect the make-up of the diversity found among the students. This way I would not know which students did not volunteer, and this ignorance would not colour my perception of the students who were not on the interview list. For all I knew, all the students could have volunteered, but only these students were selected for the interview process. The interview appointments were made with the selected students over the last two and a half weeks of June, and lasted between 30 minutes to a little over an hour.

Strategies

I envisioned this inquiry to be filled with the voices of others in order to capture as much of the classroom realities about linguistic diversity as possible. Throughout this
inquiry, I employed dialogue or conversation to explore this topic with others and myself. I see dialogues as a non-authoritarian way to learn and understand the situation, because dialogue is “directed toward discovery and new understanding, which stands to improve knowledge, insight, or sensitivity of its participants . . . [It] represents a continuous, developmental communicative interchange through which we stand to gain a fuller apprehension of the world, ourselves, and one another.” (Burbules, 1993, p.8). These dialogues or conversations enabled students’ thoughts and feelings to be shared and to create new understandings about the dynamics of linguistic diversity. The use of dialogues, stories, and narratives is a growing trend among teacher/researchers conducting research in the field (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The stories within the dialogues have the power to touch our hearts, affect our attitudes, and in turn change our behaviour (Noddings, 1991). To reach a better understanding about the effects of linguistic diversity in the classroom, I used three different personal experience methods for collecting data:

1) dialogues or conversations with others,
2) research interviews, and
3) journal writing.

All three different methods involve dialogue or a variation of it. The “lived experiences” that are revealed in these dialogues have been transformed through writing and re-writing -- to reap “not only the a thoughtful telling but also a way to come to be” (Aoki, 1993, p.1) in the “space between the curriculum-as-planned and the lived curriculum” (Aoki, 1993, p. 3).
Dialogues in the Classroom.

How can one have a dialogue in a classroom full of students when “dia” implies two”? According to the Random House Dictionary (1978), dialogue is “a conversation between two or more persons” or “an exchange of ideas, especially on a political issue” (p. 251). This definition reflects the other meaning of “dia” as across or between. This implies the idea of connecting or bridging which I wanted to do with all the collaborators in this inquiry. It also reinforces the meaning of “logos” - root for “logue” to “situates meaning and truth . . . in the practical attainment of understanding and agreement between persons” (Burbules, 1993, p. 15). Through understanding and agreement comes connections among the participants of the dialogue. Smith’s (1996) research into the origin of the word - dialogue revealed a Latin and a Greek root (p. 56). The Latin version led to dialectics while the Greek root is linked to conversation or discourse. She also found that other sources saw dialogue as speaking across or between which is “perhaps explains the notion of dialogue across difference as commonly used in the literature of identity politics” (Smith, 1996, p. 56). This revelation about dialogue speaks to the heart of this inquiry in that students came to link the use of different languages to their identities.

According to Burbules (1993), there are four forms of dialogue: as conversation, as inquiry, as debate, and as instruction. All these forms are found in this inquiry. In the Freirian vein, dialogue is “the sealing together of the teacher and students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of the study” (Shor & Friere, 1987, pg. 14). This definition echoes my desire to have students be active participants in this research, and it
acknowledges the collaboration. We would all be learners in this process.

There are many dialogues between and among different people and groups that form this inquiry. They can be grouped into four main categories:

1. Classroom dialogues about linguistic diversity issues by two classes of Social Psychology 11 students.
2. Dialogues between individual students and the teacher/researcher in the form of interviews at the end of the school year.
3. Dialogues among teacher/researchers in particular two graduate students - one who was investigating my practice as a global home economics educator, and other who share his ethnographic observations of my classes which were done as a requirement for EDUC 503 course.
4. Dialogues with myself as a teacher/researcher in the form of journal writing

The classroom dialogues on linguistic diversity, and student interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The dialogue between teacher/researchers (referring to Gale and Darren) and myself were audio taped by the teacher/researchers and shared with me in a written format - either in transcribed format or quotes within the text of a document. Notes on the content of dialogues with Nina, my colleague, are made in my journal.

My dialogues or conversations with others are less formal forms of interview as it allows the participants “to establish the form and topics important to their inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.422). Conversations allows for “in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other” (p.422). These “conversations or dialogues” are a “way of participation. Hearing, speaking, and silence will cross and create the possibilities of the conversational space I explore” (Gurevitch, 1995, p.97).
Interviewing Students.

Research interviews are widely used for collecting data (Mishler, 1986). Interviews are more formal than conversations in that “the kinds of questions asked and the way they are structured provide a frame within which participants shape their accounts of their experiences” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 420). While Smith (1996) sees the interview as “one way discourse, a giver and a receiver of information or knowledge (p. 54), my concept of interview with the student volunteers is a way of developing my relationship with the students while exploring and gathering new or enhanced understandings of their lived experiences in a linguistically diverse classroom. This is congruent with van Manen’s understanding of interviews in a hermeneutic phenomenological study. The interview serves as a means to “[explore] and [gather] experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon” and as “a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 66).

Interviewing a few students on an individual basis was another way to gather more details about their lived experiences in a linguistically diverse student population. Some students will disclose different types of information and experiences in a private conversation with their teacher than in a class discussion with their peers. Interviews questions (see Appendix VIII) were used as a guide to gain some uniformity in the type of data collected. However, I attempted to give the student as much leeway as possible to tell their own stories and ideas that they were willing to share with me. Doing the
interviews after their final grades were completed, made me feel more comfortable, and I hope that it demonstrated to the students interviewed that they had nothing to lose -- eliminating some of the power I held previously in our relationship.

**Journal Writing.**

My initial difficulties in learning English left me with a lack of confidence in my writing abilities. However, as student, I would always take copious notes to ensure that I understood classroom lectures. Taking notes gave me security and the opportunity to review them later in order to digest their meaning. Writing my thoughts and perceptions on my lived experiences would be a challenge for me. I reluctantly started a journal in order to keep accurate track of my lived experiences that revolved around linguistic diversity, in part due to my participation in Gale’s collaborative action research group. Journals are personally kept records of practices and reflections on those practices which “weave together [teachers’] accounts of the private and professional, capturing fragments of experience in attempts to sort themselves out” (p. 422). Writing in a journal allows me to dialogue with myself as a teacher, researcher and as a person with a history of experiences.

I developed a better understanding of the value of journal writing from a course that I took from Dr. Aoki. He taught me the how to keep a journal which fostered critical reflection on my lived experiences in the classroom. It involves a technique of layered writing where the original journal entry is re-visited reflectively through re-writing. Aoki (1992) describes narrating as an interplay of storying and “theming” -- where the story is told and then a theme is identified and written about. In essence, this technique focusses
on the “writing of experiences which touch our being” and “open ourselves to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the lived experiences we experienced, to a deepened sense of what it is to be human” (Aoki, 1992, p.30). By “theming”, I began to deconstruct the original phrase -- “language issue” as a divisive label which would not build the linguistically diverse classroom that is affirming for all. This created a space for me to change this label to linguistic diversity, and to seek a linguistically diverse classroom that is affirming for all with the students.

**The Research Focus: Communication and Relationships**

Using dialogues, interviews and journalizing lived experiences, this inquiry explores how linguistic diversity affects our relationships in a classroom or school setting. More specifically how does linguistic diversity affect the lived experiences of students and teacher in a classroom? Would integrating the real life experience of this tension about linguistic diversity into an existing unit of the curriculum on communications and relationships have any effect in diffusing the tension? How might a linguistically diverse classroom be affirming to all? My research methods mirrored the focus of this inquiry because the use of dialogues, a form of communication, was used to explore the relationships in a linguistically diverse classroom.

Since dialogue explores human thoughts on an issue, and probes into the values and beliefs behind the thoughts (Burbules, 1993), dialogue can reveal how students construct their identities and interactions in a linguistically diverse school environment.
Dialogue can create a possibility to bring students together by building a better understanding of their own and each other's linguistic conditions and relationships. My pedagogical objective for developing more awareness about diversity is to demonstrate how communicating through a dialogue or conversation can build relationships to foster a stronger sense of community for all. As I witnessed from the testimonies by teachers and students in the first cycle, the power of sharing a personal experience story can create more empathy, tolerance and appreciation for linguistic diversity. Acknowledging the multiplicity of linguistic diversity in a classroom, I also examined how my pedagogical practice might reinforce the power of personal narratives to create a linguistic diverse classroom that is affirming to all.

**Sharing Perspectives on Classroom Experiences**

**Insiders and Outsiders Dialoguing on the Media White Out Lesson.**

On February 17th, 1997, Darren Lund, the doctoral student observed Class A of Social Psychology 11 during the Media White Out lesson, which illustrated the power of sharing a personal experience story. It was the first class of the day which saw twenty-four out of twenty-five students present - two South Asian females, two Caucasian female students, one black female, two Asian males and fourteen Asian female students. The absent student was a white female. Darren noted that when he entered the classroom, the number of white people increased by 50%. The ethnic diversity of this class contrasted his "homogeneous group of white kids of Central Alberta" (Lund, 1997a, p. 8) (see
Appendix IX for ethnicity composition of class A). One third of these students' first language is English while one quarter of the students had Mandarin as their first language, and another quarter of the students had Cantonese as their first language. The remaining students' first languages included Tagalog, Punjabi and Russian (see Appendix X and XI for exact break down of the first and heritage language of the students). The students were seated in groups of eight, six, six and four at tables situated in each of the quadrants of the kitchen units. The most enthusiastic and committed students commanded the front of the class while the less committed chose the back of the room to either distance themselves, or resign themselves to the back due to the lack of seating at the front of the room. Darren had “suspected that race would figure large in this observation exercise, especially in light of [his] interest in engaging students in addressing diversity” and also due to the “lesson itself is all about people’s attitudes to images of people in the print media”(Lund, 1997a, p.9).

This lesson started with the students quietly and diligently copying notes projected from the overhead projector. Their diligence impressed Darren as “knowing that this is an elective [course], [he] also understood that students can place less emphasis on the work they do in these classes” (Lund, 1997a, p. 10 ). He noted that I as the teacher “had a very quiet way in class” (Lund, 1997a, p. 10) - using a soft voice, smiles and hand gestures to reinforce my oral instructions to the students. According to his observations, I was very respectful of the students as I did not use any controlling or commanding language. My “low-key style” (Lund, 1997a, p. 9) appealed to him. The students were divided into random groups by drawing a card with a coloured geometric shape on it.
They moved quickly into their groups as I announced that today their group members
would have the same colour, rather than shape. Darren noted that is a great way for
varying group compositions (Lund, 1997a, p. 12). Each group was given a different
coloured felt marker to record their impressions of the person in the picture on large
sheets of newsprint. The group had about three minutes at each picture and then were
asked to move to the next station and repeat the task for that picture. This was repeated at
each of the eight stations.

While this was happening, I monitored the activities and comments of each group
without intruding on them, and Darren became absorbed in the discussion at the station
where he was seated. At this station, a student who was looking at the picture of a
woman with a shiny new car, described her as a “typical prairie housewife” (Student as
quoted by Lund, 1997a, p. 12). Darren asked her why she said that. She explained “well,
you know those Saturn ads on TV, they always have some white person and their car ...”
(Student as quoted by Lund, 1997a, p. 12). Darren was taken aback by this Asian
Canadian student’s ability to notice something obvious that he had overlooked as he
commented “I hadn’t noticed that all those Saturn ads are racially loaded like that ...”
(Lund, 1997a, p. 12). It was this kind of ignorance that I was aiming to deconstruct with
the exercise “Media White Out”.

When the group ended at the picture where they began, they were instructed to use
specified shapes to circle certain words or phrases. For example, put an oval around any
phrases to do with age, or use a cloud to identify all descriptors that are concerned with
sexiness and so in order to summarize the comments in several categories. I selected
three pictures that I had on overhead transparencies and had a group member summarize
the class' description of what that person might be like. I recorded the statistics on the
overhead projector. In a large group, I attempted to probe why the students thought that
the person might be like that. Much discussion was generated by this. Darren observed
at least one third of the class offered their comments during the discussion with the front
half of the classroom being the most keen to contribute (Lund, 1997a, p. 14).

In order to bring the main point home to this exercise, I asked the class if they
noticed anything special about all the pictures used for this exercise, specifically what
they had in common. There were several guesses which Darren described as “aren’t
really supportable” such as “They’re high class?” (Lund, 1997a, p. 15). This riddle-like
question had the class baffled. Finally, Darren who suspected my purpose, whispered to
one of the girls at the table, “Are the people in the photos all white?” He described her
eyes lighting up as she quickly and eagerly shouted out “They’re all white” (Lund, 1997a,
p. 15). To my relief and excitement, I congratulated her while her friends commented on
how smart she was. Darren noted this showed how twenty four students studying racism
and representation, “were unable or perhaps unwilling to see an obvious physical
difference like skin colour in advertising” (Lund, 1997a, p. 15). He wondered if this
“might speak of the hidden ways in which people of colour are ignored or manipulated to
a large extent by the mass media” (Lund, 1997a, p. 15).

In reflecting back to the first cycle, I experienced the same blindness myself with
the language mission statement that was really a language policy. Initially, I thought that
clear expectations were needed to improve relationships among a linguistically diverse
school community. I felt that the use of more English would empower students in Canadian society whose first language is not English, but I failed to recognize that language is an integral part of our identities. When the students asked when it would be appropriate to use their first language, it finally dawned on me. How could I be so blinded earlier? Where was there room for “otherness” in the classroom and the school? This has not been addressed and that was when I decided to call the Human Rights Commission for their opinion. Our failure to recognize what is happening everyday to us motivated me to find ways to raise students’ awareness of what we had become numb to. Was the babble of Central High’s linguistic diverse community becoming their white noise, or was it really not an issue for them, or was it that they no longer care?

This classroom’s lived experience speaks for the need to address what Bakhtin (1981) would call an all-pervasive monologism in our world. Bakhtin (1981) suggests that dialogism - a theory of communication which connects social context, ethical values and authority and how these factors affect our relationships with others, is a way for us to alter our thinking, and deconstruct this pervasive monologism. He also asserts that dialogism salutes the hope that the influence of individuals can lead to societal changes.

**Sharing Narratives on Exclusion Experiences.**

Darren returned on March 11, 1997 to witness class A in the de-briefing of another round-robin carousel activity that the students did the class before. This activity was developed by Gale Smith, Shelley McPherson and myself for the *Counting Everyone In: Towards Inclusivity* workshop. We called this activity concept clarification and its purpose is to provide students with vocabulary associated with racism so that they may
described or identify their own or others' experiences with the appropriate terms. The pictures of people were replaced with the words of bias, stereotype, prejudice, discrimination and racism on the top of large pieces of newsprint. I reviewed all the student-generated definitions and descriptors and praised the students for their ability to define and distinguish between the given terms with comments such as “I was really impressed with you guys for getting this one. I gave it to a group of teachers and they didn’t even get the ‘acting’ part of the definition [of discrimination]” (Chan as quoted by Lund, 1997b, p. 4). Again, Darren noted the attentiveness of the students while I continued the lesson. I then had the students record the ‘so called’ typical expert definitions used in anti-racism education.

While I was in the “teacher directed” talking mode of the concept clarification lesson, Darren enjoyed the opportunity to continue his audit of the physical classroom. He noticed a poster by the door whose slogan is “Racism — If you don’t stop it, who will?”. Otherwise, he did not notice any thing else that would indicate that “this kitchen room has often been the site for social justice and diversity education”. Perhaps his preconceived notions of a home economics teacher and home economics did not allow him to see the Canadian International Development (CIDA) map on the back wall of this classroom or the two posters promoting multiculturalism from the provincial government. I hoped that his visits to this class would help to deconstruct his stereotype of home economics and open the possibility that social justice and diversity education are for every classroom and not just those in humanities.

As the students recorded the definitions from the prepared overhead
transparencies, Darren commented on the “numerous pages of written notes” (Lund, 1997b) in most students’ notebooks, which contrasted his “pedagogical guilt of never giving students enough notes” (Lund, 1997b) which he attributes to his poor hand writing, and his love for class discussions. As I read this comment in his ethnographic observation report of the lesson, I realized that this classroom filled with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds could not rely so heavily on class discussions alone. Darren whose first language is English, I presumed, is teaching a basically “white” student population who are competent in English. He could almost solely rely on oral discussion for delivery of his lessons. These linguistically diverse students of Central High needed those notes to “level the playing field” and make the objectives of the lesson accessible to all students.

Nina, my colleague has always commented on how I loved to take notes and that she would always rely on me to have them if she needed to refer to them. I believe that my reliance on notes came from my childhood experiences of learning English as a second language. Those reams of notes that I took gave me the security of having that information to refer to later, and allowed me the opportunity to digest their meaning later if I did not understand the lecture during its delivery. To this day I have continued with this habit even though my English language competency does not require me to do so for comprehension purposes. Do any of the students’ experiences echo my reliance on notes for comprehension?

Reliance on note taking was noted by Firching Cardoza (1994) in her class of ESL adult learners. The four women who were silent in her class unless called upon to
respond orally to a question were conscientious note-takers. Upon collecting a journal writing assignment on an issue that drew passionate debate in the class, she found that the most vocal students tended to write less although they had much to say during the debate. The four silent women did talk amongst themselves during the debate but did not address the whole class. Firching Cardoza found that these four silent women were “probably the ones who gave it the most thought and reflection, as evidence in their writing” (p. 27). When it came turn for these women to share their writing with the class, their work was appreciated by their classmates as they read their writing.

On the other hand, Nina also has English as her second language, but unlike me, she did not take notes on her own. By not taking notes on her own, she eliminated the possibility of having to lend her notes to other students in the class who may see her lack of competency in English. No notes — no proof of English incompetency, and thereby preserving the ability to blend into the classroom. This fear led her to only take notes she could copy from the board. Copying teacher notes and being asked to lend those notes would not be her fault if there was a mistake. If there was a mistake, it would be the teacher’s mistake. Considering these two different perspectives, having teacher-generated notes for students may also help those students whose English language skills are still developing, while giving English competent students a chance to reflect on the material outside of class. In our discussion of this, a question was raised about whether providing teacher-generated notes would perpetuate some students’ reliance on these notes, and stall their own development of independent note taking.

It seems strange to be able to relate the early education experiences of teachers to
their current students. So much has changed in the world since I was in grade 11 compared to the grade 11 students in this class, especially technology and lifestyles. The use of computers has become commonplace in schools and cell phones and e-mail are the way to communicate instead of hand written letters and telephones. Yet, with all these high tech changes in communications, the feelings of linguistic inadequacies still linger. Why is this so?

My lesson delivery techniques caught Darren's attention more so on this second visit. Besides heavy note-taking, he noticed my pace was slow compared to his. I left each definition on the overhead projector for at least a few minutes and then asked “Is everyone finished with this one?” before moving on with the next one. Darren noted that I would move closer to a few students and asked them if they were finished “in a quiet voice” (Lund, 1997b, p. 6) before continuing. As Darren considered this observation, he soon realized that “this is one simple way in which a teacher might show sensitivity to the differing linguistic needs of students in a class” (Lund, 1997b, p. 6).

For both classes that Darren observed, he was fascinated by the “silence” and “quietness” of the students when doing their seat work. He mentions this numerous times — even when students are in large group discussion mode. The students who do not have the floor are seen as quiet and attentive in most cases with the occasional very quiet whisper. Darren claims at one point that “It is so quiet that often, the only sound I can hear is the room is the hum of the overhead project fan, the scratch of pens on paper, and the buzz of the fluorescent lights. I find it relaxing.” (Lund, 1997b, p. 6). When he revisited this comment, he finds that it originated from his comparison of his own classes
where there is constant noise, “a lot of lively dialogue and laughter and an almost boisterous sense of community” (Lund, 1997b, p. 14). Being open to a different way of teaching, Darren wrote that he is “finding value, a privilege almost, in observing a rather quieter classroom environment from this perspective. It is opening me to note different ways of interacting with students in school settings that I can’t really envision on my own” (Lund, 1997b, p. 14).

Darren’s focus on the “quietness” of this class caused me to reflect on why this was so. There are several different factors that could account for this:

1. The presence of an adult observer in the classroom could cause some students to be more restrained especially since the students did not have the opportunity to develop a relationship of trust with him. Or did the students think their quiet and compliant behaviour would reflect more positively on me, their teacher in front of a guest? Darren did make the comment that there was “a tacit compliance with the teacher’s expectations for the classroom and the students today seem to be behaving in ways which are expected of them.”

2. My seemingly quiet manner in these lessons might influence the class to be quiet as well. Was my seeming quietness in part due to having an observer in the classroom? I did not think so because I felt that I trusted him and that we shared the same goals of anti-racism and social justice.

3. Did the topic of racism play a major role in quieting students as they may not want to be depicted as racist or politically incorrect? There is always some social pressure to conform to what is expected or socially acceptable. At the moment, society does not look favourably on racist attitudes. The fear of being labeled racist may have a quieting effect on the class.

4. The linguistic and cultural diversity of the students could also have a quieting effect on the class. The Asian culture values silence as a sign of thoughtfulness and respect whereas Western culture sees silence as a weakness or sign of ignorance or apathy.
The personalities of the students and the combination of students in this class may lend itself to a quieter climate in this classroom. As I compare this class to the other class of Social Psychology 11 students, I would describe this class as quieter although they are generally not this quiet. I have witnessed more “boisterous” interactions from this class of students on other topics.

I am sure all these factors played a role in the “quietness” of the classroom. However, I also wonder if the time invested on the team building and group dynamics exercises at the beginning of the school year may have some influence. Generally, the team building activities are one of the favourite activities of the Social Psychology 11 students. It provides opportunities for the students to interact and work collaboratively in building a sense of connection with everyone in the class. Whether this connection is small or large, it is this connection that might give rise to students having more empathy with each other. The Mr. Kelly exercise described earlier exposes students whose English language skills are not strong. The students who have competent English language skills may subconsciously or consciously realize that these students need an atmosphere that would enhance their ability to comprehend the English used in the classroom. That might mean that everyone is quiet so that every student can hear.

Another factor would be that some students who are competent in the English language were once in the same position of those in the process of acquiring English themselves. Again, increasing the likelihood of students having empathy for those in the process of learning English.

As the students finished recording the definitions from the overhead screen, I asked the class, “Why do you think I taught you these terms? Was it just busy work for you?” After a moment of reflection (which Darren describes as silence), a student asked,
“Is there going to be a test on them?” I had to admit that this was a possibility but not the main purpose. After several other student responses, I revealed,

“I really wanted you to have these terms so you can talk about these things with some knowledge. Sometimes discrimination impacts on our opportunities and we need to address it, and that means knowing what to call it, so you can talk about it. If there is no word to describe it how can you share your feelings?” (Chan, as quoted by Lund, 1997b, p. 8)

Darren identified the word “feelings” as the “trigger to the next activity” (Lund, 1997b, p. 8). I distributed small pieces of yellow paper which I instructed the class to write about an experience where they felt left out or exclude. It was done anonymously. The student who was observed swearing during the Media White Out lesson asks to go to the washroom. She hands in her slip of paper as she leaves the room. This student will be referred to as Mona (not her real name). Meanwhile, another student asks, “What is this for? You’re not going to read these out are you? This could be embarrassing!” I confirm that I would read the slips in order to assemble some general examples which I would share with the class without identifying any student in particular. Since it was done anonymously, I would not know whose story it was and I assured them that I would not try to match their handwriting as I claimed that I did have a life outside this classroom. This response from me elicited laughter from Darren and a few students. A student then asked me if I would share an example of an experience where I felt left out.

I collected their slips, and when the class was quiet again, I began to share my elementary school experience about consistently being the last person to be picked for a team activity in gym classes. This was probably due to the fact that I was never very coordinated in sports. I admitted that I dreaded being picked last. As I shared my story,
Mona returns from the washroom and tries to catch up on the story. To emphasize the feelings that I felt, I pointed to two students seated close to me and asked, “Imagine if I appointed you and you as captains in this class, and you began to select students for your teams. You would probably first select the students who were the most able to do sports in this case” (Chan as quoted by Lund, 1997b, p. 10). Then I asked who might pick me and Mona loudly exclaims with laughter, “We’d lose for sure!” (Mona as quoted by Lund, 1997b, p. 10). A few moments later, another student asked me what grade this happened in and I replied, “Grade four, I guess, but really it was every year. I really got sick to my stomach about going to that class. You know, I supposed I have avoided playing sports on any sort of team for my whole life” (Chan as quoted by Lund, 1997b, p. 10). It was then that Mona’s face turned very red from embarrassment as she apologetically blurted out, “Oh my god, was this about YOU? I’m so sorry!” (Mona as quoted by Lund, 1997b, p. 10). I acknowledged her apology with “No problem.” and continue with another personal example. Then I moved onto what it is means to be included and share a definition of inclusivity on the overhead which the students dutifully copied into their notebooks. I used a few examples of inclusion that the students would have witnessed at school. I wrapped up the lesson by connecting the concept of inclusivity with globalization and issues that we had discussed in their previous classes. As the students started to shuffle and shift in their seats because it was near the end of class, I managed to squeeze one last question in, “Would you all like to be treated ‘equally’ and why?” (Chan as quoted by Lund, 1997b, p. 11). Several students offered their responses and they managed to identify exceptions to this rule for students with
special needs or those who needed more attention than others.

The incident with Mona demonstrated how vulnerable one can be when one opens up to others. As a teacher, I am willing at times, to take that risk to make a point that I feel is fundamentally important. I know from my previous experiences of sharing personal stories with the students that the stories are very compelling and tend to move students emotionally. Presenting just the facts or opinions may not be strong enough to make a lasting impression as there lacks an emotional link to the topic or point a teacher is trying to make. Noddings (1991) supports this notion and emphasizes that the power of the story can change behaviour as well. As Darren described this scenario in his observation report for his professor, the professor made this comment in the margins about vulnerability:

"... we have an obligation to try to anticipate our own reaction to and our willingness to be vulnerable so we don’t make ourselves vulnerable in ways we can’t handle." (Professor as quoted from Lund, 1997b, p. 15)

This issue of vulnerability also applies to the students in the class. Do the students understand the risks, and are they able to evaluate whether they are able to handle their vulnerability? As a teacher, I feel it is my responsibility to make students aware of this especially since I teach some sensitive issues in family studies, one field of home economics. What have I done to ensure that students are aware of their vulnerability? At the beginning of the school year, I reviewed disclosure expectations orally which is reinforced in print on their course outline and expectations handout. For this particular cycle, I also reviewed the concept of ethics and how it applies to doing research with both classes. They seemed appreciative of this information and the
openness which I shared about the research process. I wanted to engage in a democratic and cooperative research relationship with the students like Gale had developed with her collaborators. However, my relationship as their teacher did not replicate the same equitable collegial relationships in that study. Realizing this, I did my best to inform students of their rights to pass in sharing personal experiences, and the right to not participate in this inquiry. Under these circumstances, I attempted to create the most equitable research relationship with the students. This was demonstrated in their opting out of the CBC interview on linguistic diversity.

The issue of vulnerability can be minimized in the classroom if procedures and classroom expectations are in place to minimize the risks involved for teachers and their students. Establishing a degree of trust among the students and the teacher through team building exercises at the beginning of the school year can lay the foundation for fostering a democratic and respectful classroom community for all. Laying out the expectations about what is shared in class is meant to be kept within the confines of the classroom is helpful. The person who shares a personal experience in class did not share this story with the rest of the school. It is the story teller who has the option of sharing their story with others, not those who are privileged to listen to it. This point is reiterated with examples of how rumors get out of hand, and what are the rights and responsibilities of the story teller and the recipient of the story. Establishing and nourishing a democratic, ethical and respectful classroom community will reduce the risk of being vulnerable in sharing personal experiences in the classroom. This lesson would hopefully be applied by the students in all their relationships, and in particular in their linguistically diverse
classroom and school community.

In this chapter, I have narrated the experiences of cycle three outlining the data collection methods, the usefulness of what Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh (1993) would call a "critical friend" (Darren), and specific teaching activities designed to address the research questions. In the next two chapters, I will highlight the voices of the students.
CHAPTER V

STUDENT VOICES ACROSS LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

The etymology dictionary traces the origin of the word voice as:

**VOICE n.** Probably before 1300, sound made by the human mouth; ... Latin vocem, accusative of vox, voice, sound, utterance, cry, call, speech, sentence, language, word ... Old Icelandic vätta to testify, vattr witness fr. Indo European

(Barnhart, 1988 p. 1210)

The use of the word -- voice is symbolic of how I see students collaborating on dialogue across linguistic diversity. Students witnessed their lived experiences in a linguistically diverse school environment, and then choose to testify about their experience in front of their classmates and their teacher -- me. Their sounds flowed into words and these words created a narrative which storied the students’ lived experiences in linguistic diversity at Central High.

**Media Voices Renew the Challenge of Linguistic Diversity**

Teachers commonly use current events in their lessons to draw students’ attention to what is happening in the world. I generally use newspaper articles to bring the world into the classroom, but this current event topic was bringing the world and the classroom together. As I read about the legislative incident between Kwan and Nebbeling on the use of language other than English, I could not help but draw parallels to some of the
linguistic diversity issues that face Central High. This current event is unique to me because it directly reflected a part of our lives at Central High. It brought the issues of linguistic diversity into the public eye, and elevated the relevancy of linguistic diversity in real life -- not just in school.

In order to remain true to a global perspective, I collected a number of different points of view published in the newspaper. The letters to the editor were a very good source of divergent opinions which informed me in order to facilitate the classroom dialogue on linguistic diversity. Copies of a newspaper article which described this incident were distributed to the students for reading (see Appendix H). Since our classroom dialogue took place a little over two months after the legislative incident, the articles refreshed the students' memory of the event.

The two classes seemed eager to speak on the topic. Soon the dialogue left the legislature and focussed on living in a linguistically diverse school. The students echoed the same feelings of frustration, isolation and anger as the students from the previous two cycles. Class A which had a slightly larger group of English competent students concentrated on how linguistic diversity affected their relationships at school, while class B which had the slightly higher concentration of ethnic Asian students searched for conditions which would allow the use of other languages in an English dominant community.

In the following analysis of the classroom dialogues, the students will not be referred to by their real names. All the students were given the opportunity to choose their alias. Some students chose the name they wish to be known as for this inquiry, and
other students allowed me to chose a name for them.

**Racist or Rude?**

Both classroom dialogues opened with an overview of the events surrounding the Nebbeling’s heckling of Kwan after she spoke in Cantonese in the legislature near the end of March 1997. The question of whether this incident was a matter of racism or etiquette was the immediate response from both classes. As the dialogue continued in both classes, they questioned what behaviour is appropriate when using a language other than English in an English speaking environment. The students considered the incident from both Kwan’s and Nebbeling’s points of view. In class B, Vader, a student whose first language is Cantonese and is very fluent in English illustrated this well as he said “I guess because -- it’s a really difficult issue. There are two sides to it. Either side could be recognized as being correct”. In class A, I responded to the students’ comments with this question, “OK, so you think that both sides are not exactly right or wrong, right?” They understood how Nebbeling could be intimidated by Kwan’s use of Cantonese since he did not know what she was saying. Could this be an issue of trust? On the other hand, the students felt that Nebbeling’s use of the Cantonese phrase “Ni gong dai waah” was inappropriate, and his initial denial of this made the situation worse. Linda, a young Chinese Canadian student whose first language is Cantonese and is fluent in English, quickly pointed the blame to both sides as she said:
but then I guess it's kinda of rude to speak another language when not everybody understands. I understand why that guy went to think it's rude, but then he has no right to say that she's lying either. Like she-- I understand that she's trying to do some good deed about trying to say it in Cantonese to help people who do not understand English but I guess she could have said it [in Cantonese] somewhere else and not during the meeting or whatever.

In their dialogues about the Kwan/Nebbeling incident, the students initially seemed fairly certain about whether this was about race or etiquette. As they continued to dialogue, the students delved deeper into why these actions happened, and in déconstructing this situation, they came to reconstruct the situation taking into consideration multiple viewpoints. They also developed empathy for both Kwan and Nebbeling, and realized that the situation was more complex than they had originally thought it to be. It was no longer a clearly black and white issue but one laden with lots of grays. The dialogues quickly slipped from Nebbeling and Kwan and into student’s lived experiences with linguistic diversity at school.

I walk down the hallways of the school and all I hear are different languages. It really BUGS me 'cause I don't know what they're saying. So I can understand his [Nebbeling's] point. . . . and not that it has nothing against themselves or nothing but I mean it's RUDE. But you know if you're gonna speak at home, it's actually like OK, BUT if you're walking down the street and when you don't understand what anyone is saying, like it's all around you, then it's like . . . [left out].

Much of the research literature (Faltis & Arias, 1993; Firsching Cardoza, 1994; Ovando, 1993; Trueba, 1989) focusses on the alienation of the ESL students, and little or no attention has been paid to the alienation of native English speaking students. Even a former ESL student whose first language is Cantonese described it as “Here the
The descriptor "bad" is not meant to be evil but is meant to convey the challenge of speaking English with your peer group when there are ample opportunity to speak your native tongue. Definitely the number of Chinese speaking students has created this atmosphere of alienation which is not represented in the research literature. It is not to say that feelings of alienation are not felt by ESL students. In this situation, alienation is felt by most students, regardless of their first or heritage language.

Perhaps Central High is reflecting a trend that has not been common place for research in the past. Most of Central High’s ESL students come from economically advantaged families. Being economically advantaged and educated, enables this group of immigrants to transplant much of their culture here. Technically, they can get by with very little English in daily life because there are Chinese language daily newspapers, Chinese language radio and television stations, Chinese language movies and videos, and Chinese speaking shop keepers providing a wide range of goods and services. Their experience differs from past immigrants who came in large numbers, such as the Vietnamese refugees, who for the most part did not have the economic resources that these Asian immigrants have, nor a large community for support.

Like the Kwan/Nebbeling incident, some students thought that using a different language in the presence of those who do not understand that language is a matter of etiquette.

Well, there’s nothing you can [do when someone uses a language other than English] ’cause obviously these people are rude and don’t have very good manners if they can’t help out like in other ways like understand the fact that I can’t speak another language and other people can’t or maybe even other people can speak another language but they don’t ’cause they’re at school ... (Student)
Their expectation was to be included in the conversation through a common language which in this case is expected to be English, especially at school. This argument was challenged by another student who saw the scenario differently:

WHY? I DON'T THINK IT'S RUDE BECAUSE IF THE CONVERSATION IS NOT DIRECTED AT YOU, IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS ANYWAY. (Student)

This raised the question of what methods of communication are considered acceptable in a private conversation in a school where English is the dominant language. Is the use of a language other than English meant to exclude someone or others from the conversation? Some students agreed that using another language prevents others from joining the conversation.

Then kinda like sometimes people speak another language 'cause they don't want other people to understand them in a group. Would it just be the same as like when you're passing a note or whispering or other things? (Student)

This student made an interesting analogy and caused the class to think about why one would use another language in front of students who did not understand that language or why one would whisper which many students who share the same language have used. Did whispering have a negative connotation like using another language? Whispering is a method of communication to convey a private message to a certain individual or to tell a secret. So, is using a different language other than English like whispering that is meant to be private or secretive? Could there be other meanings?

Most students agreed that using a language other than English could be like whispering but it was also pointed out by a student that the use of a different language
could mean that it is a more efficient and less frustrating way to communicate for some students who have not mastered English yet. Speaking in a language other than English is something that comes naturally if English is not the native tongue of the speaker and is not meant to be rude.

So, maybe you can all [hear] those people are whispering, or they talk not bad now but when you walk around the halls, you can still hear Chinese everywhere. So maybe if I were a Caucasian, may be I would get "pissed off" too. So I think -- not really a bad talking manner or something. I can’t deny some people are like that but then I think some of those people have good talking manners.
- Ken, a former ESL student whose first language is Cantonese

As I listen to this student’s comment, I decide to further explore this with my colleague, Nina. Her past ESL teaching experience and her ability to speak Mandarin have given her some insights into Mandarin speaking ESL students. In her experience, many former ESL students do not deliberately choose to speak their native tongue, but they think in Mandarin. Before they realize it, they are speaking in Mandarin, not English. The intent is not to exclude or be impolite, but that is an unconscious, automatic response. When I reflected back on my attempt to learn Mandarin one summer in Beijing, I recalled that I really had to think about using Mandarin when I spoke whereas English came out automatically. I think in English and I did not have to translate those thoughts into another language. There is an ease for me in using English, unlike the tension and frustration that I felt when I tried to communicate in Mandarin.

Students perceived teachers to be frustrated and left out when students used a language other than English in class. They felt that most teachers were understanding if the use of a language other than English was used in class to clarify or explain the lesson
to someone who could not follow it in English. As one student put it, “I think that they [ESL students] should try to speak English more - like as much as they can. When they really need to speak their native tongue to explain something, they should be able.” What students did not like was when students used a language other than English to talk about “SOMETHING ON THE WEEKEND” and the teacher was not sure if it was chatter or legitimate help and chose to ignore it. It was deemed unfair because the students thought “if I did that in English, I would’ve gotten in trouble.” In the previous cycles of this action inquiry, students had mentioned the same concerns in regards to swearing in different languages other than English.

Both classes also considered what happens when ESL students speak English in class. Cela, native Tagalog speaker who is now fluent in English described how an ESL student could feel:

Like if you’re ESL, right, then you don’t know that much English. It can be really, really hard and like sometimes when you want to get your message across, it can be very frustrating. Like you know [what you want to say but cannot find the words in English], like you’re embarrassed ’cause you seem stupid, like to them [native English speakers] you’re stupid ’cause you can’t speak the language.

Cela shared a personal experience of when she was in grade eight, a student shouted it out that she had a “stupid accent”. Although she claimed that she did not care, she and a few other students could still clearly recall this incident. Many students took this opportunity to express their sympathy for Cela and to put down name calling and actions that would embarrass others. One student even volunteered this compliment -- “Accents are really
beautiful.” while others pointed out that those who name call or put others down had low self-esteem and need to put someone else down to make themselves feel better and also especially when you’re dealing with languages, like there are lots of people who are monolingual [implying some insecurities felt by monolinguals].

This comment has the Social Psychology undertones of the personality development unit, and it also pleased me that the students made the effort to support Cela. As I listened to the dialogue travelling from one voice to the next, through the agreements and the challenges, I found that the students were searching for a set of circumstances that could give rise to the use of languages other than the dominant community language that would be acceptable to all. They discussed appropriate places (school versus home), the issue of privacy and the social and emotional effects of using a language that was not common to all. The students seemed to be in general agreement that the common language of English be used in the classroom unless there was a need to explain a concept that is related to the lesson. In the presence of people who did not understand a language other than English, then it was considered good manners to use English as a way to include everyone in the conversation. This is similar to the findings of McGregor and Li (1991) where the choice of language was dependent on the ethnic identity of those being addressed. Both classes did not have sufficient time to develop a complete guide of acceptable etiquettes in regard to linguistic diversity. However, their awareness of the need to be considerate of how their peers felt about the use of different languages in the school was definitely increased by these dialogues.

This generation will be the one who forges diversity etiquette as they enter a more
Language helps us link past and present experiences and place them in the mind in neatly structured categories, ready to be used. Human speech is an integral part of human social intercourse, and as such it cannot exist in isolation, independently from social interaction. Consequently it is regulated, changed, and interpreted through social intercourse. (Trueba, 1989, p. 29)

Speech Communities

As stated earlier, both classes were allowed to choose their seats in class. The students gravitated towards the people they knew which I noticed seemed to be influenced by the languages that they shared. Most of the Mandarin speakers sat together, as did the Cantonese and Tagalog speakers. Those whose had unique first languages generally sat together or with the students whose English was strong. When I asked the students why they chose to sit where they were, they claimed friendship and familiarity as the main reason. They did not mention language. However, these same students were able to point out that students choose their lockers to be by those who spoke the same language as they did. They talked about the “Hongers” (those from Hong Kong) having their lockers on the third floor, the “Flips” (Filipinos) over there, and the Taiwanese speakers at several different sites and so on. In class A, a female student claims “Everybody’s labelled in this school” as another student chimes in “they all stick to their groups” while many of the students express agreement with them.

These students had identified speech communities which not only shared a
common language but also common understanding or what linguists call “mutual intelligibility” (Cadzen et al, 1972, p. xxxvii). Not only must a student possess the same language as others to belong to a speech community but the student must also share the same understanding of how the language is used. It should also be noted that a student can belong to more than one speech community. Although all the students in the two Social Psychology 11 classes share English as a common classroom language, they may not be of the same speech community because they bring different ways of using the language and of interpreting the speech in the classroom (Cazden et al, 1972).

**Stereotyping English Language Learners**

How language is used or articulated in class and interpreting a common meaning were the challenges faced by students who were still learning English. This was noted by both classes in their dialogues. In class A, Mimi, a former ESL student whose first language is Cantonese, stated:

\[\ldots\text{'}cause the ESL group don’t want to try ‘cause sometimes the English speakers or whatever, everybody will laugh at them. They’re afraid that everybody will laugh at them ‘cause they speak so strangely ‘cause they don’t so good and not that good as English speakers.\]

The lack of competency and/or fluency in classroom English is seen as a lack of intelligence or a reason to ridicule, because the student cannot communicate his/her answers or comment that would have the same meaning to others as the student intended. The gap in classroom language development disables a student’s display of intellectual
competence. The slow speed of speech, and the hesitations while searching for words not only frustrate the speaker but at times the listener. A female student whose first language is English with Cantonese as her heritage language described the difficulty in achieving a fluency speed in speech like this:

If their English isn't good and they try to speak it, but they try to use English in their conversation -- like usually a comfortable conversation will only last like for a minute or less than a minute. But because it's so hard using English to explain it, it would take them five or six minutes just to explain it. Then finding the right words to it.

In class, I found that when a student was having difficulties expressing themselves in English, a English competent student would volunteer the words that were slow in coming. Other English language competent students would be finishing off sentences or offering a brief synopsis of what the student was trying to say in his/her halting English. It was not clear to me as to whether the English language competent students meant to help these students still mastering English or whether they were becoming impatient in waiting for the student to finish their answers. In the class discussions on linguistic diversity, several students mentioned the boredom they felt in listening to students still mastering English. This was especially noted during oral presentations in class.

Although many of these students had their speeches written out, the majority of students buried their heads into their paper and read out each word in a quiet or soft voice. This whisper-like quality in their voice seemed to be a way to attempt to hide their lack of English fluency. However, I have noticed displays of disinterest by students during oral presentations in class especially when a student was having difficulty with English. English competent students did not seem to show much effort in listening to these
presentations. Was it too much effort to listen? Or was it that it did not contain the type of “entertainment value” exhibited in the presentations by students who are competent in English and can cleverly use English to their benefit (i.e. play on words and meaning to derive humour or make a point).

**Linguistic Imperialism**

Little attention was focussed on the use of dominant language by native speakers in front of non-native speakers. Their complacent acceptance of English reminded me of the Media White Out activity where the students did not notice that all the pictures used were of Caucasian people.

The problem is not in the existence of multiple varieties of language nor even in the stratification of these varieties, from locally to nationally acceptable, from least to most present elaboration for literature and technical discourse. The problem is in the attitude held toward the varieties. Is it one of approval or disapproval? Are the several varieties judged in terms of appropriateness to situations, or categorically (bad or good per se)?

(Cazden, John & Hymes, 1972, p. xxxii)

Cazden and Hymes (1972) raised the question of what is a good or bad language variety? In the classroom dialogues, the vocal students indicated indirectly that English is the “good” or the preferred language in school.

Well, I think that people should at least speak English in class, in regular class, like they have ability to speak English and so if especially like, I mean, English classes or regular classes, whatever, because I don’t know like they know the language, and they don’t want like a bunch of people in the group like some Caucasian, Chinese or Cantonese and these Cantonese people keep speaking their language and excluding others. It’s unfair.

@student who is bilingual in class A

92
Is there a “good” language for schools and are there “bad” languages for Central High? Perhaps a more suitable question is which language is dominant and has power in our social interactions at Central High? There is a struggle between English and Chinese at our school that is exhibited in the tension that surrounds linguistic diversity. Who is offended by the use of which language? Why do ESL students sometimes feel intimidated when using their English in class?

You [referring to ESL students] are in Canada, right? By them coming to Canada, you should accept Canadian ways, you know. Maybe if you went to India, you accept Indian ways and try to speak Indian.

This statement by a student who is fluent in English and Cantonese echos the adage of “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” The use of English is easily defended because the students see it as Canada’s official language. Yet it is interesting to note that Canada’s other official language is not defended in this manner. The students in both classes commented on their French classes as expressed in this dialogue segment of our class discussion in class B:

S1 - . . . but to encourage English in the classroom.
S2 - But I don’t - I don’t think it would really work because in my French class everybody - our French teacher said, yeah, "everybody can only speak French for the next thirty minutes" Who does? Nobody does. I don’t think it would work. People still would do their own thing.
S3 - But it would be better for them ‘cause they get to practice their language [referring to English] . . .

This dialogue segment wisely used an example, that is common to most students, to illustrate how difficult it is to learn an additional language and develop a fluency. Since all these students in this dialogue segment are fluent English speakers, it is encouraging
that they are able to relate their own experiences to those of others learning English.

Phillipson (1992) describes English as the dominant language of the world, and it has been “equated with progress and prosperity” (p. 8). The promotion of English as the global language is seen as “commonsensical”, but for whom?

And the other thing is that there’s so many Chinese in the school. They uhm you know, Chinese gather together and they have to speak English rather than their uhm first language. They feel so uncomfortable or so strange. So that’s [why] they met [together].

It makes common sense for those who are native English speakers, but for others it may not make sense. Phillipson sees English as a commodity as it has generated a world wide business of teaching English to others. Our education system has benefited from English as a commodity with the creation of ESL programs, jobs for ESL teachers, English tutors, and those who prepare teachers to teach ESL. The students know how English is valued in the school system. They can tell by the way people interact with them that English is the language that counts. If they want to be accepted, they must learn English but they need to know how other languages are being valued, especially their mother tongue. Native English speakers do not need to learn minority languages in order to be accepted. This is evident in the low enrolment of non-Asians in modern Asian classes at Central High. How schools value languages other than English is not clear to students. The encouragement of the use of English by the school and discouraging other languages does not serve to build a value system for diversity (Wong Fillmore, 1991). It does not set a “good” example for the students whose norm is diversity.

The students raised the issue of race that is embedded with language choice and
attitude with dialogue like this:

SI - There's so much resentment in this school.
S2 - Yeah.
SI - It just floods. There just so much resentment 'cause
S3 - It's against the Chinese people versus the non-Chinese speaking People.
SI - Yeah.
S4 - Even within the Chinese people they're acting in smaller divisions like the
Mandarin division and Cantonese . . .

The students do not dwell on race much. Perhaps they did not want to offend anyone in
class, especially after our lessons on stereotyping, discrimination and racism. For them,
language was more a practical issue:

Like the thing is, . . . the only way we are all gonna communicate, like if we all
understand each other like. So like in this country, it's English and French, right?
And so like if you want to communicate to each other then, the way we do it here
is that you speak English, right? But then, at the same time that doesn't mean
you can't speak whatever else you speak. People should be allowed to express
themselves in whatever they want to, but at the same time, if you want to
communicate like if everyone wants to communicate with one another, then you
have to find something in common, like you know . . . yeah.
- Valerie, a native English speaker with Cantonese as 2nd language.

Valerie points out that we need something to communicate about -- a common or shared
need to initiate communication amongst the linguistic diverse student population. There
needs to be motivation to connect.

**Expressing Meaning Through Language**

There are idioms and stuff that they try to translate into English but it
sounds weird in English, but if you translate back into their language, it
sounds perfectly normal.
- student is who bilingual in English and Cantonese
Language is the primary instrument with which we express and transmit culture, maintain it, teach it, and adapt it. 

(Trueba, 1989, p. 29)

Effective communication involves shared meaning. As this student identified, meaning which is derived in language may not be easily translated into another language. For example, if the concept of diversity is not present in a culture, then there is no need to attach a word to what is non-existent in that culture. When the concept of diversity emerges, then there is a need to label it, so that people can share their thoughts and feelings about it. As I sifted through the transcripts of the classroom dialogues, I noticed the word “Chinglish” -- a term used to describe a hybrid form of the Chinese and English language, usually associated with one’s inability to express oneself fluently in either language. Therefore, the person is left using some Chinese and some English to express themselves. I am not sure when this term came about but it was used when I was growing up and I suspect that it might have evolved in Hong Kong where English and Cantonese are the working languages. The term “Chinglish” was born to describe a certain situation that evolved.

With the common use of Chinese languages among the student population at Central High, I noticed a slight infiltration of Asian concepts into the English language. The most recent term is probably bubble tea -- a flavoured tea drink with tapioca balls served in a plastic domed cup. Is this an indication of what a global or multicultural culture may sound like?

Language is very powerful and can shape our perceptions without our awareness. It is how we share ideas, thoughts and feelings. It defines who we are. Reflecting back to
the first cycle, the investigation into linguistic diversity was labelled the “language issue”.
This label is partially responsible for indicating there is a problem or issue with using
different languages other than English at school. What would have been different if it
had a different name? The words chosen can indicate respect and acceptance or it can
indicate contempt and disrespect towards a person, group or concept.

Over the period of these three cycles, I witnessed a growing acceptance of the use
of different languages in the school. When asked “do you think your generation is going
to be more tolerant of people who are learning to speak different languages?”, a student in
class B replied “yeah, ‘cause we’ve been around it for too long all the time.” This
response drew much agreement from the rest of the class. Is this part of a natural
adaptation process when different cultures and languages come together, or have students
become frustrated and exhausted in their search for a workable linguistic diverse
community and have settled into the uncomfortableness of the status quo?

There has been no great social change in regards to linguistic diversity at Central
High over the past three years. Social change is generally a very slow process — taking
decades, centuries or longer. Over this minute time of three short years, there has been a
subtle change in attitude over linguistic diversity. There is less public complaint about it
and what I sense is “a growing familiarity” to the linguistically diverse landscape.
Although the voices of over forty languages still resound at Central High and not all the
voices convey meaning to us, it is beginning to sound “normal”. Now the classroom
dialogues across linguistic diversity give way to the more intimate dialogues in the form
of interviews. These interviews serve to increase our understanding of the students’ lived
experiences in linguistic diversity.
CHAPTE R SIX

INTIMATE DIALOGUES

The interview setting allowed for an intimate dialogue that could be savored more attentively. Unlike the clamor of voices in the classroom dialogues, I focused on a single voice. Over the course of the last three weeks of June 1997, I interviewed nine students. Two of the interviews could not be used because of technical difficulties with recording equipment. I transcribed the remaining seven interviews, and made appropriate notes on any implied meanings that written words alone could not convey.

The contents of the interviews generally reinforced in richer text what was said during the classroom dialogues. They shared their personal stories and by the end of the interview I had learned something more about them — their accomplishments, challenges, and hopes. I felt more connected to each of them because they trusted me to share parts of their private lives and lived experiences. Of the seven students interviewed, there were three males and four females. I know all the students as members of the Social Psychology 11 classes. One female is a Friendship Club leader, a service club that I sponsor with Nina and another teacher. Two of the males would become members on the junior dragon boat team that I sponsored in the following school year. Here are their stories.
Lisa - Numbers Determine Language Choice

Lisa is a well respected honour roll student who is active on Student Council and a number of other school clubs. She describes her language history like this:

I speak English and I can speak Cantonese a little bit and I can speak French but that’s through school. So I learnt French from school so that’s not really fluent, I don’t speak it to people much. English and Cantonese I learnt at the same time when I was growing up. And when I was in kindergarten, I could speak both like equally. As I went through school, I kinda got more into English.

At school she uses English as her language of choice, and she occasionally will use Cantonese when she cannot "seem to say it in English" and "it comes out better in Cantonese". Although she grew up in Canada and is not fluent in Cantonese, she has learned enough Cantonese to express some cultural specific concepts. Her limited vocabulary of Cantonese words help to affirm her Chinese heritage in her Canadian life. She indicates that her English is more developed than her Cantonese language skills which typically reflects the school system’s requirement for students to be proficient and fluent in English. Assimilation is an one-way street.

Lisa sees the success of group work in Social Psychology and other classes dependent on the members who speak English because they are more likely to be the leaders and initiate the questions and interactions. Group members who do not have English fluency and are reluctant to speak with their accent are seen as non or low participators in group work when they are with English speakers. Students who are weak
in English but have outgoing personalities and are willing to take the risk to speak are the exception to this. Lisa would like to see students with weak English express their ideas and thoughts in group work "even if it doesn't come out right [because] you can still understand what they're saying". She feels that "if people don't want to like understand the other language or whatever then it will divide people."

From her experiences with students who are learning English as an additional language, she sees personal motivation as helpful in acquiring a working command of English. However, some students are seen as barely putting in the effort to be fluent in English, because "like in the world they're in, they are not going to use English in the future. They already speak another language . . . like it's not really important to them."

Lisa thinks that there is a need for a common language in order to reduce linguistic diversity tensions. She sees students socializing with others who share a common language. There are a few students who are multilingual which enables them to socialize in more than one language group. She ponders over this "solution" by saying:

kind of like a reflection of the society here any ways because we can't make everybody the same, right? And everybody has their own different cultures and different - the language is their own kind of thing right? To be able like function together and to be able to communicate we have to have a common language.

Lisa goes beyond the walls of Central High and looks to the future of Asia, especially Hong Kong to determine how linguistic diversity will be shaped. She feels the destiny of Hong Kong will:
affect people’s mentality for speaking the language they speak, whether they want to retain or whether they want to learn depending on how many more people come to the country and the number of people in ESL. If the number of people decline then it will be different because the people speaking English will you know what I mean and [there will be fewer opportunities to speak another language other than English].

MANDY - MULTILINGUALISM HELPS

Mandy is a conscientious student who participates on several sports teams at school. She has a good academic and citizenship record. Mandy’s languages are similar to Lisa’s except that her first language is Cantonese and her second language is English. She describes her language history as follows:

My first language was Cantonese and my second language is English. And I’m a little bit iffy on French but that’s just ‘cause I learnt in school... I was born and raise in [a family] that spoke Cantonese but I came to Canada when I was seven years old. And so after I came here to elementary school and so I began to learn English really quickly. So after a while I began to speak English much more often than I spoke Cantonese. So my fluency in Cantonese right now is obviously like it is sometimes I can’t get my message across. Like sometimes when I arguing with my brother, um you know all the idioms and those stuff, I can’t argue with him - so I have to use English sometimes... Mandarin - I understand it because my parents speak it to other people sometimes. But then I took Mandarin classes when I came here - like a few years ago.

Unlike the trend with first language maintenance described by Wong Fillmore, Mandy maintained her first language because as she puts it:
MY PARENTS FORCE ME TO USE CANTONESE BECAUSE IT'S OUR FIRST LANGUAGE AND WE SHOULD KNOW IT, AND IT'S AN ADVANTAGE TO SPEAK CANTONESE AND ENGLISH AT THE SAME TIME, RIGHT?

Mandy is not shy about using her English in class but she is hesitant to express herself in Mandarin, one of her additional languages. Although she can understand Mandarin, she feels that her "pronunciation is not great." Her high school acquired French is like her Mandarin. Her perceived lack of language competence in Mandarin mirrors the perceived lack of language competence in many of the ESL students. This lack of confidence in language performance is not limited to English as additional language learners, but seems to apply to other additional language learning.

Mandy feels comfortable with the linguistic diversity at Central High, and this is facilitated by the fact that she is multilingual, and can participate in major linguistic social groups at school. She sees the school being supportive of linguistic diversity in that there are opportunities to learn different languages and cultures in addition to English. In spite of her acceptance of linguistic diversity within the school, Mandy believes that "people should just speak English" because "it's not respectful and then it's kinda of like you speak another language, and the people beside you don't understand it." Besides being unfair and rude when using a language other than English in class, she is upset by the loud volume which accompanies using languages other than English at times. She thinks only English should be used because of the people who do not understand those [other] languages, which reflects her image of English speakers bearing no responsibility to learn the languages of others - a very imperialist view. On the other
hand, outside of the classroom where students can socialize, Mandy is not bothered by the use of languages other than English. She chooses English as her main language of communication at school, and finds that if she is addressed in Cantonese, then she will respond in Cantonese. This is similar to the findings of McGregor and Li (1991).

Mandy observes frequent use of Cantonese and Mandarin in her classes which she finds:

```
KINDA OF DISTRACTING BECAUSE YOU TRY - LIKE
SOMETIMES IF YOU'RE TRYING TO DO YOUR WORK AND YOU
CAN'T BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE TALKING BESIDE YOU IN
DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, AND YOU KNOW YOU UNDERSTAND
IT - LIKE SOME PEOPLE DON'T, SO THAT'S KINDA OF BAD
SOMETIMES BECAUSE THOSE PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT WHILE THEY'RE TRYING TO
DO THEIR WORK. SO WHAT HAPPENS IS BASICALLY THE
SAME AS SPEAKING IN ENGLISH, RIGHT? [ESL STUDENTS]
HEAR ENGLISH AROUND YOU AND YOU'RE TRYING TO DO
YOUR WORK BUT YOU CAN'T BECAUSE IT'S DISTRACTING
YOU.
```

When ESL students do not try to use their English in class even if they are not very fluent, Mandy feels that it is to their disadvantage because they deprived themselves of the chance to practice their English and gain competency in it which her teachers encourage in class.

Mandy believes that oral presentations are beneficial in a linguistically diverse learning environment. It provides English speaking role models for ESL students and provides a mandatory opportunity to practice English. She recognizes that ESL students may be frightened about doing oral presentations and that they may want to avoid it as much as possible. In her Social class, Mandy has witnessed many students "who really try hard for their presentations, like even though they know they have an accent." but the
students who are fluent in English find their presentation "like really boring but then -
sometimes you can't understand it because their accent is really strong." Perhaps her
ESL background makes Mandy more empathetic as she states:

Sometimes you don't want to ask them to repeat it
in a way because they'll think "Oh my gosh! They're
not understanding me. There's something wrong
with my accent or whatever. So sometimes it's
hard to understand the presentations in that
sense.

Mandy also suggested that group work with people who do not know each other
well is also helpful in a linguistically diverse class as it does not provide an opportunity
to speak in their native tongue with their friends. She acknowledges that students are
reluctant to be put into groups that do not have the security of their friends who share the
same language, because they fear the unknown. Ideally, Mandy envisions a linguistically
diverse class as a place where everyone attempts to speak English, but they can speak in
their own language for clarification of what they do not understand.

Anne - Involvement is the Key

Anne is a very independent and conscientious former ESL student who plays on
the volleyball team, and sings in the school choir. She has been in Canada since 1995
and is a strong academic student. Anne has an outgoing personality and describes her
language history as follows:
I speak Mandarin very fluently and I speak English. I started to study English since I were in grade six. Yep - two years before I come to Canada. So my English improved a lot but not very fluently but it’s OK. And I understand Shanghainese and Taiwanese because from my father’s side, my grandparents are from Shanghai, and my mother’s side, they’re Taiwanese. So - but I cannot speak [Taiwanese] ’cause they always talk to me in Mandarin so I can sort of understand. I can understand Shanghainese better ‘cause I spend more time with my grandparents...I learnt French for a little while [in Taiwan]- only one year and two weeks - I mean two times a week so I can understand a little thing like thank you and those kind of things - what’s your name but not really understand that...

I found it strange that Anne was taking French in a Taiwanese high school and she explained that she was chosen to participate in an experiment to learn a second foreign language in addition to English. She saw this opportunity as beneficial as she knew that she was coming to Canada where French was one of the official languages. She was surprised to find that not many people speak French in British Columbia. She is not required to take a second language at Central High as she is fluent in Mandarin. If she successfully writes the challenge exams for Mandarin 11 and 12, and the provincial exam for Mandarin 12, she can receive credit for grade twelve for Mandarin.

At school, Anne uses Mandarin and English and is accepting of the linguistic diversity of the school population as she understands that they come from different parts of the world. She relies on her Mandarin to express her emotions, as her English vocabulary is still limited. Her language of choice is Mandarin in school but not in class because she finds it easier to talk to her friends in their common language of Mandarin. She speaks Mandarin at home with her family. Her mother feels more comfortable communicating in Mandarin as her English is weak. Within the last year, she has
cultivated some English speaking friends through her volleyball team. Most of her friends in choir are Mandarin speakers.

Anne is somewhat unique in that she has sought out opportunities to participate in school where English is spoken unlike some ESL students who appear not to care less. She feels that their lack of motivation to learn English prolongs their stay in the ESL program. Her membership in the school choir has been beneficial in developing her English language skills both orally and in comprehension.

I think it's better if you understand what is the song talking about then singing it. It will be better. And I um I think Mr. R is very good to me 'cause he always lets me, I mean he lets me borrow the music [to bring] back home so I can check the words, find out what the word means.

She is now thinking in English when she speaks English. She has cultivated a group of English speaking friends who are casual friends as they do not socialize outside of school. Anne speculates that it is because they belong to a different social group.

I guess. Especially I come here late. I mean not - we come here in different times so they already have their group, you know people have their own group so - yeah. Most my close friends are people who come to Canada at the same time as me 'cause we don’t have any other friends at that moment so we get together and become a group. But I have some English-speaking friends more. And I try to join those clubs and sports team, yeah, 'cause people who play those things are usually English-speaking. You usually have the same topic or interest so you become friends easily.

Many Asian ESL students tend to gravitate towards the sciences rather than humanities in their course selection as there is generally less English language skill required and Anne describes her lived experience with English language and science:
I think I still can learn English well. But for some, like when I first get here, I got Physics 11. And for those calculation parts I got no problem at all 'cause you know just sub in the numbers and calculate, got the answer and that's right. But for, like in the um in the third part, we got atomic physics... So we start to have some names, and some theories to explain why it is so, or why it is not so. Then my problem starts 'cause I cannot explain it very well. When we're doing experiments in class... I rather find people who can speak Mandarin 'cause they can sort of explain it to me. Sometimes it's harder for me to understand but yeah if I pay more attention than I can understand. Still it's harder.

Anne sees no problem with group work if everyone can speak English adequately. If one or two of the group members cannot speak very well, they are usually ignored by the rest of the group. The students who lack fluency in English usually do not receive much help, or are ignored by the other group members unless they speak the same language as themselves. Anne does not interpret the silence of ESL students in the group as non-participating but as part of their quiet personality. However, for some students, they just need some time to watch the participation process and become acquainted with it before they feel comfortable enough to participate as in Anne's case. She prefers small rather than large group work because some people who can speak better can help me to adjust my mistakes instead of letting all the people in the classroom know - OK I made a mistake. I think it's better to let fewer of them [know].

She feels people are more willing to help each other in a small group. There are fewer witnesses and more comfort in a small rather than a large group setting.

Anne feels that teachers want their students to understand the lesson, and are comfortable with using their "own language" for explaining, as long as the student can answer in English on their test. She believes that teachers want ESL students to basically
think in English, and prefer their students to speak English frequently. The teachers do not like the students speaking another language frequently in class.

Anne feels that it would be helpful if both teachers and English speaking students would be patient with ESL learners and volunteer to help them learn English instead of ignoring this group of students. Our dialogue eventually led to the question of whether it would be helpful if native English speakers would learn Mandarin or another Asian language. Anne thought that it would be beneficial to all but it should come as personal commitment and not a mandatory requirement.

But they don’t have to, ‘cause it’s a choice they made. I prefer they study some Mandarin ‘cause that would be better for me and . . . I made a choice that I come to this country. I made a choice that I should try to learn my English and I should speak and write my English well. So, that’s my goal - I want to improve my English.

**Cela - Ethnic Identity from Lived Linguistic Experiences**

Cela is of Chinese ethnicity who was born in the Philippines. Her family ancestors are from Fukien province in China. She is on the honour roll and is a Friendship Club Leader who helps ESL students adjust to school life at Central High. Her language history is described as:

My first language is Filipino, although my parents spoke to me in Fukienese. Our Filipino maid spoke to me in Filipino and used Fukienese when she was angry with me. I started learning English in nursery and elementary school in the Philippines when I was about five or six. I came to Canada when I was about 12 - 13 years old. I was fluent in writing English but I had problems with pronunciation and I did not speak like a
Canadian. I spoke formal English with a Filipino accent. I spent three
months in grade seven at - - - elementary school and then I enrolled in
Central High . . . in the regular program.

She can listen to Mandarin, and is trying to learn some Cantonese. She is quick to point
out that she is NOT learning swear words in those languages.

Being a member of a minority language group, Cela is conscious of the heavy
Chinese population and the declining "white" student population. She has gravitated to a
small group of Filipino girls and uses Filipino to socialize with them. Cela has some
friends from other different cultures too. She sees two major social groups at school
which are the Cantonese and Mandarin speaking students. She feels that these students
have more choice of friends due to the large numbers, and these major groups are also
sub-divided into smaller groups. The minority groups of Japanese, Filipino, Koreans, and
"halfers" (referring to racially mixed students) will congregate with their own kind and
"stick together no matter what". Cela questions whether she is racist because:

in the Philippines, the Chinese and Filipinos don't mix much. Now I see
myself as Filipino even though I'm Chinese. I grew up in the Philippines.
I don't see myself as Chinese because I act Filipino. Sometimes race is
not as important as social class is . . . The truth about why I didn't learn
Chinese is because my parents are racist — Filipinos are below us. Now I
just want to learn as many languages as possible.

In her critical reflection, Cela comes to understand her preference to be identified as
Filipino rather than Chinese, in part due to her upbringing and experiences. She
questions whether her perceptions are racist and looks towards becoming multilingual as
a way to connect to other ethnic groups and break down racist stereotypes.

My social life is better because of the Friendship Club.
Cela expresses much gratitude to me for sponsoring the Friendship Club Leaders because she has made new friends and goes out to socialize more. The new experiences like ice skating have opened up a larger variety of entertainment and social opportunities that she may not have access to on her own. The structure of this service club gave her a legitimate reason to approach others and develop new friends. Like Anne, Cela learned that getting involved with others provides rich rewards in terms of social and educational opportunities.

_Stephen - Linguistic Human Rights_

Stephen is a fairly quiet student in Social Psychology 11 where he sits near the front of the class and tends to keep to himself unless assigned group work dictates otherwise. To my knowledge, he is not on any sports team or club. He speaks English with an accent. Stephen describes his language heritage as follows:

Well, I born in Hong Kong so I basically mastered Cantonese and then I came in here. I used to ...watch English television in Hong Kong so. Well, when I came here I could listen to them, and I could read the books, but I can't write and I can't speak. So basically after 5 years, just like right now — not too good but not too bad. Then in grade 10, I took Mandarin 10 ... Up until now, well, I must say my Mandarin is not good. I can almost understand Mandarin and that's it.

Stephen does not mind the linguistically diverse landscape of Central High as he can manouevre adequately in the three major speech communities of English, Cantonese and Mandarin.
Stephen’s thought on linguistic human rights is tempered by the need for a common language or way to communicate within the school and classroom. Do human rights include language?

Despite his budding notion of linguistic human rights, Stephen yields to the demands of his teachers to speak English in the classroom. He suspects that his teachers who are not able to communicate in any dialect of Chinese want to monitor the students for appropriate behaviour such as no swearing. Despite not knowing the language, he feels that the teacher should be able to tell from the student’s body language and tone of voice if swearing has occurred. He supports the teachers’ right to require students to speak English in class or face the consequences of being verbally reprimanded or having marks deducted. He elaborates further:

That’s right if we were in an English community, we should speak English, right? If we are talking to each other, then we could use other languages. But here, if we are talking to someone else who doesn’t know the language, then we should use the language they understand. It doesn’t have to be English even in English community, if you know French and you’re talking to French people, then you can use French, right?

Stephen feels that if students are talking in a language other than English in class, then they are not listening to the lesson. Although this seems to contradict his previous statement, I secretly am happy with his answer as he is using what the class learned about communication and applying it to a different situation. There is some
teacher satisfaction when the students demonstrate transfer of knowledge to a real life situation. Like Anne, Stephen prefers working in small rather than large groups especially if all the group members speak a common language which he calls the "united language". He feels that if the class consisted of members from different speech communities without having high concentrations of any one group, this would provide more opportunity for the use of English in class.

**Vader - Tension Affects Language Choice**

Vader is a popular Grade 11 honour roll student who is very reliable and capable. In his grade 12 year, I would come to know him better as a member of Central High’s dragon boat team which I sponsor. He is involved in many school activities and intramural sports and he speaks English without an accent. Vader’s first language is a village dialect of Cantonese known as Pun - yee. His mother and father come from different villages in southern China and are fluent in their village dialects and the urban Cantonese of Hong Kong. Vader learned English when he was about three or four by reading a set of Dr. Seuss books his father gave to him. His parents started him reading very early and spoke to him in both Cantonese and English at first. Although his parents were bilingual in Cantonese and English, they spoke to Vader in Cantonese only after a while because they felt that he would learn English when he started school. Vader also has high school French which he tested out in France during a school trip. He tried to
speak French as much as he could:

Like if I was speaking to locals or to merchants or whatever. It’s amazing how much French you can catch—listening, learning, and going to different cultures. Yeah, now I can catch French a little better but I don’t think that I can speak any better but I can understand a little better.

His experience as a child entering school with only a limited amount of English and his experience in France have sensitized him to what it feels like to learn a new language, and yet he is unsure of what is appropriate for Central High in regards to speaking languages other than English. Perhaps his English language experiences have shown him what it feels to be fluent in English in Canada:

I think it’s alright as long as they’re doing it because they need to speak the language - their language, in order to understand what’s going on around them like, but if they already know how to speak English and they’re not using it and they’re just speaking Chinese or Cantonese for their own pleasure or something - I don’t know then I think they should try to avoid using their native language... ’cause there are people at our school that don’t understand our language. I think it’s more of a politeness thing. You know everyone in Canada is expected to speak English and because they came to Canada they should speak English. It’s more a politeness / rudeness thing rather than a must do it — not do it sort of.

He believes that students have the right to speak their heritage language at school under certain conditions such as for clarification of instructions or what was taught, or socializing outside of the classroom. It is not acceptable for Vader to hear other languages being used in the classroom for socializing or hiding something from others. The use of Chinese in the school is fueled in part by “the idioms - like there are some things that you can’t express in English”. However, “paranoid” feelings can develop
if people, especially monolinguals feel that those using another language are keeping
secrets or telling jokes about them and as Vader describes in the following excerpt:

... it's just that sense that they are saying something rude but
most of the time they aren't. ... Well, I guess depending on what
they're saying, it can be disruptive like if they're making fun of the
teacher in another language than it's really disruptive 'cause I
guess over half the classroom probably would understand what
they're saying and they would all be laughing at the teacher and
the teacher probably would not understand. ... if it's being used for
learning, then it's completely perfectly fine. Uhm but sometimes,
like I said, the teachers also feel just paranoid about it because
they don't know whether the language is being used for learning or
for making fun of the teacher.

How could this lack of trust be overcome in the classroom when language other than

English is spoken? Vader thought that perhaps a variation of the procedures being

implemented in the Legislature on using languages other English might work:

maybe telling the teacher before that they are going to speak to
that person in that language or like saying to the teacher that you
have to explain this to him. I think that teachers could tolerate that
- right? I'm pretty sure that they want that to happen -right? They
want kids to explain stuff to each other that they don't understand.
But if they just go ahead and speak their native tongue without
informing the teacher about what's happening, then the teacher
would get a little paranoid and start wondering what they're saying -
what they're talking about.

Vader would like to see people who are not fluent in English to make a more
concerted effort in practicing English rather than "just laying back into their big
comfortable pillow of their native tongue". The feelings of comfort do not motivate
people to change, and most people would sooner avoid the feeling of tension in learning
a new language. What these people do not consider, are the long term benefits of being in
another language and the feeling of accomplishment that goes with it at the end. Feelings
of uncomfortableness are created in Social Psychology class when the students are randomly put into groups for certain activities, and Vader brings his past experiences to connect with how students would feel:

I guess when you do go into other groups you're not with your buddies anymore, like you could be - depending on the luck of the draw, but yeah generally you wouldn't be with your buddies anymore, and I guess you lose that sense of translators all around you . . . if I wasn't able to speak English that properly, and I was put in a group of people who mainly spoke English, then I [would] feel like I almost like I did in France.

As our dialogue draws to a close, Vader comments: Chinese people do speak loud. It's just a -- I guess this would be a stereotype? Yeah, it is. Another lesson learnt well!

**Michael - Alienation by Language**

Michael is also a very responsible grade 11 student who does his best. He is a good student but usually just misses the honour roll because of his heavy involvement in school affairs from sports and service to performing arts. He has just been elected to student council for the following school year. He is a friend to Vader and will join him on Central High's dragon boat in upcoming school year.

I'm fluent in Cantonese and English, and Cantonese is from Chinese school, and from talking at home, and English is from -- just regular school. My first language - I'm quite sure it was both. [My parents are bilingual.]

Michael see language diversity at Central High starting to become a problem because:
Mandarin and Cantonese [are] dominating the school and that's the first language they used instead of English and that makes it kinda of hard for the rest of us who aren't as fluent in those languages as they are. Socially, it can get hard but - I know a little bit of Mandarin too so I can understand them but to everyone else - if you don't speak Chinese then you're kinda, out of it. You don't know what's going on - because you don't understand what they're talking about.

Language is seen as a way to exclude students who do not share the same language. It creates feelings of isolation and frustration among students who do not share in the languages of the major speech communities at Central High. Having some knowledge of the language apparently gives one a more secure feeling than those that do not.

Michael observes minimum usage of other languages in the classroom unless the lessons are completed and there is some time to spare before the bell goes. Usually the lessons at the grade 11 level take up most of the class, leaving little opportunity to chatter in any language. He does see the use of languages other than English more in outside of class situations, and any tension that arise is usually felt more by the teachers and non-Chinese speaking students because:

because it just ah -- it's hard to stand around, and listen to other people speak another language when you don't understand. It's actually kinda of rude in a way in a sense if you don't - you don't know what's happening and you feel left out and you don't know what they're talking about so . . .

If people are feeling alienated and insulted by this type of "rudeness" then why do Chinese speaking students continue to speak Chinese in the presence of those who do not understand? Michael does not think that the Chinese speaking students are doing to exclude others from their conversation but that they do it "naturally" like English
speakers would when they enter a conversation. This is compounded by what Michael describes about Chinese speaking students being:

very, very shy about using their English because they're not very confident in it and that's why they always go back to Mandarin or Cantonese or their Chinese language because English is I guess very hard for them because they're still learning and it's still a problem for them. So you always fall back on the stuff that you're good at.

Michael speaks more English than Cantonese at school. I observe him speaking English in class and at school. He only speaks Cantonese if he is required to explain something to someone who does not understand English. Michael was taking Mandarin at Central High and then he dropped the course because:

It was very competitive because everyone taking that class was either coming from Hong Kong or Taiwan or something so - their Chinese background is so large - their vocabulary and stuff. And it's just really hard to compete when the teacher - in second year Mandarin, asks you to write a 500 character essay and stuff like - you just don't learn that much [vocabulary] in school. It's really dependent on your prior skills that you learn, and it was just too hard 'cause I was born here too. So, it makes it that much harder.

Now Michael takes a Mandarin course outside of Central High which he finds easier. It focuses more on conversation rather than written Mandarin. He finds written Mandarin difficult because of all the characters that must be committed to memory. There is no phonetics to rely on in Mandarin. I asked him if he ever got help from the Chinese speaking students in his Mandarin class and he replied:

Well, it's actually kinda of weird because people who are very fluent in it are very quiet in English. So you don't talk to them as much because they're just in their shell, and they just do their work. You don't get that much help from them. . . . And it was like - they were talking so fast that you wouldn't [understand it].
I wondered if what Michael was describing to me, was what ESL learner feel like in regular English classes where native English speakers are presence in greater numbers. The effect of this large influx of Asian immigrants has affected Canadian born Chinese and others to shy away from the Asian modern language courses offered at Central High. I sense that the Canadian born students feel that the Asian born students have a head start in their vocabulary and written Chinese. This is seen as somewhat unfair and discourages Canadian born students from learning the Asian language at school.

Michael does equate his experiences in Mandarin with what it may be like for students learning English.

It's just like me learning Chinese. It's kinda of - you don't like it but you still have to do it. That's kinda of the same thing that they have to go through. Like English might not be fun for them, but they have to learn it - it's just a fact of life.

If language students do not take the initiative to learn their new language with regular practice and use, and make that commitment, then it will be extremely difficult for them to learn enough of the language to become fluent in. Similar to some of the previous interviews, 'trying harder' or 'more' echoes the need for language students to hold some responsibilities for their own learning. Just as learners have responsibilities, so do those who have mastered the language. Their responsibility is to encourage and help others to gain fluency. It is a team effort.

Michael does not notice other students making fun of students who have accents or difficulties in speaking English and he speculates:
'cause a lot of people here have been through it. Lots of people have accents and they've lost it, and so it's not really a big deal anymore because we're all peers and we accept the fact that they're all trying to learn the language.

However, he does notice that teachers are in rather an awkward position when students use languages other than English in the class. He wonders how the teachers can control their classes when they do not know what is going on. For instance, when students are laughing but teacher did not know what they’re laughing about because the student said it in Chinese. He does not see the use of random groups very helpful in the classroom, because the students who are still learning English, are too shy to interact because they want to avoid being embarrassed by their "poor" English. Michael thought that if these students were able to learn the languages at an earlier age, it would be easier to learn them fluently compared to when they are in their adolescence or adulthood. When in groups, he tries to help English language learners by doing some translations, but he feels caught in the middle between students who need the translation and those who do not. Michael suggested that perhaps more balance is needed in linguistically diverse classrooms like:

have the people who are fluent in English to kinda of like buddy system with the people who are trying to learn because you really have to practice a lot and I mean people who are fluent could be their example or whatever they think. They can listen to other people speak English and take it in.

Michael was not aware that he was suggesting that English speakers and English learners need to make a connection for change to take place. If all the English language learners ‘clump’ together, they will not have the opportunity to practice their English. Michael also noted that alphabetical seating plans usually do not work as:
in some classes they do it alphabetically and all the Chans will be with the Chans and the Lees will be with the Lees and so on. It doesn’t really work because they’ll still be beside each other because they’re pretty similar last names and such that you just have to put up a seating plan and you know . . . isolate them!

It is interesting to note that Michael would later see isolation as a hindrance to language acquisition when he describes his experiences in French:

French you just speak in class and you do French work - paper work, I guess, homework at home. That's all you do. You really can't learn the language like that. You kinda of have to speak it and no one here speaks fluent French. It's kinda of hard, so (clears throat). You don't have the opportunity to speak French with anyone.

It sounds like Michael is looking for a buddy to practice French with — to connect with and to learn with. There are echoes of a collaborative relationship here -- working together, learning together. Yes, there really is strength in uniting, for divided we fall!

The narratives of these students resonate in other students who traveled along similar paths in the landscape of linguistic diversity. These students are aware that the language they use will paint their identity for others — whether it fits or not. The last chapter will reconstitute meaning from the voices heard on linguistic diversity.
Many voices collaborated to inquire about linguistic diversity throughout this action research project. As dictated by the cycles of action research, each cycle of research advances from the revisions suggested by the outcomes and voices of the previous cycle. Throughout this inquiry, my questions about linguistic diversity focused on the following three areas:

1. Students' ways of being in a diverse language community.
2. My practice as a teacher in a linguistically diverse classroom.
3. Ways in which a linguistically diverse classroom might be affirming for all.

The first cycle confirmed my perception of the tension surrounding linguistic diversity, and highlighted the use of dialogues or narratives as a way of building connections among this linguistically diverse student population. The second cycle exposed the need for new ESL students to interact with students who are fluent in English. The value of this type of interaction comes from witnessing student role models with English fluency and former ESL students functioning capably in mainstream classes. During the first two cycles, I focused my attention on the development of curriculum and learning activities to address my research problem. The third cycle offered me the opportunity to examine my pedagogical practice through the observations of Darren
Lund. I also began to look more closely at how the students constructed identities of themselves and other students through their spoken language(s).

**Students’ Ways of Being in a Linguistically Diverse Community**

Language plays a complex role in shaping students’ ways of being in a linguistically diverse community. It significantly affects their self-concepts and their perception of others, and whether opportunities can be created for positive social interaction. This section highlights three strong themes I extracted from their voices.

**“Becoming” through Language Choice and Competency.**

The ability to manipulate and use language can be to one’s advantage or to one’s peril. When students express themselves in a way that brings shared meaning to their listeners, then their needs can be met, they are better understood, and others can share in their dreams and goals. The level of fluency can shape how competent and intelligent others see the speaker. Students who are fluent in English reported being bored or feeling sorry for ESL students during their painful delivery of oral reports in a slow and halting manner. Students who are not fluent in English generally delivered their oral reports in very quiet voices. They hope to hide their linguistic shortcomings from their audience, but the effect of linguistic fluency is not limited to ESL students. Ethnic students who are not fluent in their heritage language are afraid to speak the few words or phrases that they do possess for fear of ridicule. Fluency in a language affects how students see themselves. Language competency and fluency give students more confidence in
themselves and access to a wider social network among their peers.

Head (1997) states that "peer relationships contribute to the social construction of identity" (p.31). At Central High, many students see their social groups being constructed by their ability to speak a certain language fluently. If the students’ peer relationships are determined by language use, then the students’ identities are also shaped by language. Heritage language maintenance by the majority of the students in this inquiry reflects the importance that language contributes to their ethnic and cultural identities. This may indicate how strong parental influence is in transmitting their cultural heritage to their children through language. Wong Fillmore (1991) documented the effect of primary home language loss while acquiring a second language such as English on language minority students. The loss of the primary home language was most profound when it was the only language spoken by the parents of the language minority student.

Parents cannot pass on their cultural heritage of values, beliefs, understandings or wisdom when they are unable to communicate with their children. Wong Fillmore attributes the loss of the primary home language when linguistic or ethnic diversity is not especially valued. Mandy’s story about how her parents "forced" her to maintain her Cantonese demonstrates the importance that parents play in passing on ethnic and cultural heritage. For students like Lisa, whose heritage language skills were stymied by the drive to learn English for educational purposes, the effect of inadequate heritage language skills can disenfranchise students from their heritage. Although Lisa feels somewhat distanced from her Chinese heritage, she is fortunate that her parents are fluent in English, and are not disenfranchised with their daughter. Wong Fillmore (1991) would extrapolate that
there are stronger bonds between parents and children when they have a common
language of communication. Wong Fillmore (1991) claims that although American
society takes pride in its diverse multicultural origins, "Americans are not comfortable
with either kind of diversity in [their] society" (p. 341).

Language choice can serve as an ethnic marker for many students, especially those
who are multilingual. Students show which culture they value and feel kinship to through
their language preference. Membership or nonmembership to certain social groups “can
impact on the personal sense of identity possessed by individuals” (Head, 1997, p. 35).
Cela, whose ethnicity is both Filipino and Chinese, states that she identifies with her
Filipino heritage strongly. She feels more connected to her Filipino heritage because she
is fluent in Tagalog and the majority of her childhood experiences were Filipino and not
Chinese. Ben Rafael (1994) states that researchers in this field believe that the role of
language is still essential to the ethnic experience, and indicates ethnic solidarity.

**Language - A Tool for Belonging or Isolation.**

As stated earlier, language plays a significant role in social stratification. Ben
Rafael (1994) notes that Saville - Troike views bilingual settings as having a dominant
and a subordinate group. At Central High, the students believe English to be the
dominant language as it is the language that serves school wide communication. English
is used to evaluate their knowledge in most subject areas except in modern languages, and
to access post secondary education, and to better employment opportunities. Students
quickly learn that a full command of English is needed in order to be fully integrated in
the culture of the school, “because their teachers and other students are not going to learn
their language” (Wong Fillmore, 1991, p. 342). There has been little evidence of native English-speaking teachers and students making a serious effort to learn one of the Chinese dialects used by the students of Central High.

Due to the high concentrations of Chinese speaking students at Central High, there are times when Chinese challenges English's position of dominance, particularly in the social settings of the students. At lunch time or in the hallways, native English-speaking students are surrounded by Chinese speaking students who do not include these English speakers in their conversations. Now the native English-speaking students feel isolated. They also feel threatened when students use a Chinese language which they do not understand. Are they talking about me or making fun of me? Am I missing out on something that I should or want to know? The same could be said for ESL students who feel that their accent in English draws jeers and mockery. The universal feeling of isolation resulting from the use of different languages are associated with different races and cultures. As a result, the students feel the undertones of racial tension among their speech communities. It should be noted that there are some ethnic and cultural tensions among the diverse Chinese speech communities of Cantonese, Mandarin and Taiwanese.

Language can be used in creative and forceful ways, particularly in how we label ourselves and others. For ethnic Chinese students who are not fluent in any dialect of Chinese, their position has also made them the target for mockery with the label of "banana" -- yellow on the outside and white on the inside. They have a Canadian accent on their limited Chinese. Their accent-less English usually assures them membership in an English-speaking social group of peers. As for the growing number of racially mixed
students in the school known as “halfers”, their diverse identities make for a more complex road to belong in a social group. Since I did not have a consenting student of this background in this inquiry, I cannot speak about where they see themselves belonging, and how others see them. This area is in need of more research.

There are challenges for those students who seek to belong to another or additional speech community. Few students belong to more than one speech community because they must be multilingual and must be willing to take the risk to seek out membership with another group. According to some students, it is difficult to belong to more than one speech community, as the first speech community may feel slighted by the so-called “defection”. If the transition to the new speech community is not successful, then the student may be without a speech community to belong to. It has been observed that ethnic minority students will seek each other out to form a group to belong to as alluded to in Cela’s story of her Filipino friends. However, there are exceptions as illustrated with Anne, who deliberately worked at connecting with English speakers outside her Mandarin speech community. She is motivated by her goal to learn English well and to have new experiences at school. Anne has an accent when she speaks English, but her willingness to participate has helped her to be invited in by new speech communities.

**Searching for Linguistic Etiquette and Rights in Diversity.**

Many students have expressed their displeasure over the use of languages other than English in the classroom. There are mixed reviews as to how prevalent this practice is in the school. Students indicate that this practice is also dependent on teacher
expectations and the linguistic composition of the students in the class. Many students see the use of different languages in class as distracting and interfering with their concentration on their assigned class work. In the classroom dialogues, the students were searching for behaviours and expectations that would be convenient to implement and would be fair and just in a linguistically diverse environment.

The students focused on identifying etiquette for a linguistically diverse setting. They realized that which language you choose to use is as important as what you choose to say. This was clearly illustrated in the classroom conversations on the legislature incident involving Kwan and Nebbeling. The legislature incident resulted in drawing up specific conditions which languages other than English could be used. Students sought to clarify what would be fair and just linguistic practice in a linguistically diverse school community.

Over the three cycles of this action research, students expressed concerns about swearing in different languages in the classroom. The use of swear words in languages other than English has raised some resentment among native English speaking and English as an additional language students, and to some extent the teaching staff. Since a monolingual teacher cannot monitor swearing in another language, then English speaking students feel that it is not fair or just when a student escapes punishment for swearing in another language. Even though they feel it is unfair, the students are not willing to “rat” on their peers for other social reasons.

Although the issue of swearing was not resolved by the students in classroom dialogues, the students were able to come to a consensus about the use of another
language to clarify instructions or concepts to a student who cannot understand it in English. Students generally saw the use of other languages as necessary to facilitate learning in certain situations. They felt that their teachers accepted this too. However, there needs to be more discussion on how students and teachers see this student receiving help in another language. It was implied by the students that cheating could occur when using a language other than English. How would a student be viewed if frequent help was needed in another language? Would this affect how the teacher graded the student? How would the time spent helping that students affect the learning and achievement of the student translator?

Throughout this action research project, students always asked about the acceptable conditions for using their heritage or ethnic language at school. The school made it clear when English was to be used, but failed to state when students could use other languages at school. As in cycle one with the language policy and in cycle three’s dialogue with Stephen, the question of linguistic human rights was raised. Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) defines linguistic human rights as "the right to learn the mother tongue, orally and in writing, including at least basic education through the medium of the mother tongue, and to use it in many official contexts . . . [as well as] the right to learn at least one of the official languages in the country of residence" (p. 625). Skutnabb-Kangas believes that being at least bilingual will generally allow minorities access to fundamental human rights. Skutnabb-Kangas expresses concern over the lack of opportunities that children have to hear and read in their native language, and many opportunities to do the same in the majority language. Unfortunately, Skutnabb-Kangas does not consider the
reverse situation where there are high concentrations of students with the same minority language who have easy access to hear and read in their mother tongue within their local community and media, but fewer opportunities in the majority language (e.g. Vancouver's Chinese speaking secondary students who are learning English). There is the underlying assumption that the so-called "language minority" students are poor, powerless and need to be protected, but this is not always the case. English has worldwide status, but in some communities, there may be languages other than English that are seen to be equal or more powerful than English within that community.

Sridhar (1994) endorses Skutnabb-Kangas' notion of linguistic human rights. She supports this with the UNESCO declaration of 1957 -- every child has the right to be educated in their mother tongue. With linguistic human rights entrenched in the United Nations’ declaration of children’s rights, how do schools acknowledge this right? More effort and research in this area is required. Sridhar acknowledges that there are many practical issues that make the implementation of this right difficult. She recognizes that language maintenance is not solely an issue of English speaking nations. It is also an issue in countries that may not have English as its only official language. According to language maintenance research, the extinction of minority languages occurs when communities come under the economic or political influence of a more dominant language. In these situations, "people choose to switch to a language that is considered more powerful and prestigious and that will help them with upward mobility" (Sridhar, 1994, p. 630). On the other hand, Sridhar acknowledges that research reveals language maintenance of newer immigrant groups in Europe and the United States is possible.
Again there is the underlying assumption that most immigrants are economically disadvantaged and have limited proficiency in English. Lately, this is not true in Vancouver where there has been a high concentration of economically advantaged Asian immigrants with limited proficiency in English. Their economic power has enabled them to establish a community with services and products to support the maintenance of their Chinese language.

The words we choose to use to describe an event or an item lay the foundation for how others see it. Do students see linguistic diversity as a problem or a challenge? The attitude that results from this choice can motivate one to either improve linguistically diverse relationships or discourage any notion to do so. The label of “language issue” conveyed linguistic diversity to be problematic in cycle one. Once labeled “language issue”, the label persistently stalked linguistic diversity. This now raises the question of what could be problematic with the label “linguistic diversity”.

**Pedagogical Practice in Linguistic Diversity**

I have found that teaching in diversity can be supported by having some infrastructures to guide my practice and change. A philosophical framework such a global perspective and a compatible process such as action research can help initiate meaningful change in praxis in the school setting. Smith (1996) points out that “teachers do challenge oppressive ideologies, contemplate the ways they have shaped their teaching and learning, and speculate on alternatives” (p. 147) in her research of collaborative
action research in home economics global education.

**A Global Perspective Renewing Curriculum.**

Being invited to participate in the British Columbia Global Education Leadership Program sponsored by the Canadian Home Economics Association was instrumental in providing me a solid philosophical base to revisit the curriculum, and to critically reflect on its value to the students and myself. By remodeling the lessons with a global perspective, the traditional or established content and way of teaching are challenged. A global perspective transformed what I taught, and activated my subversiveness to challenge the established. "The content of the curriculum is the individual in the process of becoming that which he or she has not yet been but that which he or she is capable of becoming" (Slattery, 1995, p. 222-223). I have moved from social inertness to social activism. As my experiences grow, I become more confident in inviting and tackling issues of social justice in and out of the classroom.

The Media White Out activity grew out my concerns about the language policy from cycle one. The assumption that the status quo is right seduces people to accept it without question. English is the language of dominance and it is assumed to be the key to students' successes. Echoes of the colonial voice are present. Canada claims to be a bilingual country with French and English as its official languages, but the majority of Canadians are not fully bilingual. English is still the dominant language. This Canadian linguistic reality is reflected in our education system. Although French has official language status, it is in a subordinate position. Therefore, other languages with no official status have little if any chance of being perceived and treated with equitable
consideration.

What we failed to realize, was the fact that the world is changing to a global society where a common language is not, and may not be the reality. We failed to ask the question - how do we prepare the students for a linguistically diverse society? When I realized this, I became aware of the need to educate the students for living in diversity - linguistically, culturally, and otherwise. In a conversation with Gale in April 1995, I realized that "what [teachers] did not do can have a very profound effect" (Smith, 1995, p. 149) on the education of students. Our education system basically prepares students for a homogenous world, and does little to prepare them for a heterogeneous world. Two years later, a study done by Zhang, Ollila and Harvey (1998) also identify that "dealing with diversity is a key issue in the present school system" (p. 182). Daniels (1993) argues "in favour of a principle which asserts that school systems ought, within appropriate and justifiable limits, to tolerate, accept and respect, search for and promote diversity" (p. 65). In what ways can we live in diversity in a respectful, caring and manageable way? In what ways can teachers educate students to live in diversity in a respectful and caring manner? These questions have become my current focus of inquiry.

A global perspective brought the urgency to teach the importance of interdependencies and connectedness to students. It stresses ethical decision making, and leads students to consider what effects their decisions have not only on themselves, but on others. It brings relevance to the curriculum without undermining it. It challenges their perspective of how they see they and others see the world. By examining how one constructs his/her image of the world, students will understand how world systems impact
on how we interact with each other. Students will become more aware of the part that
they play in this global process, and how their actions can contribute to the well-being for
all on this earth. A curriculum with a global perspective can empower learners for the
complex and challenging future that they face.

**Action Research.**

The process of action research has contributed to my *becoming* as a teacher and a
researcher. It promotes critical reflection on educational issues, pedagogical practices and
personal perceptions of linguistic diversity. This process led to increased understanding
of the nature of students' way of being and my pedagogical practices in a linguistically
diverse school environment. The tension acknowledged through critical reflection with
colleagues, "critical friends" and journalizing, invited planned change in praxis. This
change in praxis was guided by systematic inquiry and collaborative reflection for
improvement in praxis. Improving praxis on an individual basis is not considered action
research until these insights and knowledge are made public. Thus the insights and
knowledge can contribute to the theory of education and would be accessible to other
teachers.

Zeichner (1993) states that personal renewal and social reconstruction can be
achieved through action research. The process of action research has contributed to my
"subversiveness" by encouraging me to question established educational practices and to
seek fair and equitable ways to improve current practices. The combination of action
research and global education with its similar aims have reinforced my struggle for social
justice in a linguistically diverse school environment. Although a democratic socially just
linguistically diverse school climate has not been fully achieved in this research yet, it is the cyclic nature of action research that will encourage me to continue this inquiry. I accept the fact that it is an ongoing process of “becoming” rather than of “arrival”.

**Collaboration.**

It is very comfortable to continue with lessons and unit plans that are “tried and true” but if teachers are to prepare their students for the future, change and risk must be taken. The collaborative nature of the working group gave me the support that I needed to engage in the risk of change, and to persevere with my commitment to change. It was not any change, but a change with a purpose that would serve students in their daily lives — how to live in linguistic diversity. Collaborating with university professors, graduate students and students in the classes that I taught heightened my desire to learn more about my pedagogical practices and to dream about the possibilities of having students valuing and acting with socially just consciousness.

The atmosphere of collaboration is one of care, concern and connection of which Roland Martin (1987) promotes for educational reform. Oliner and Oliner (1995) state that “real caring needs to be rooted in both personal attachments to one’s group and inclusion of others outside them” (p. 6). From my personal experience, connecting with others who share similar concerns and goals, and who care about others such as their students, colleagues and community provided a tremendous pedagogical and personal growth experience. It built my confidence as a teacher and teacher/researcher, and allowed for enriching opportunities to reflect with others upon classroom practices, and research — mine, theirs and others. It stimulated my desire to try new ideas and to share
what I have learned with other teachers. Action research reinforces collaboration by inviting opportunities to continue the collaborative relationships from one cycle to the next.

*Never doubt that a small group of concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*
-Margaret Mead

**Creating Opportunities for Interacting.**

From my lived experience in the classroom and the testimonies of the students, small groups which are formed from randomly chosen students, can help students use English as their common language. The students admit that they prefer to choose their own groups, but they can see the value in working with students whom they do not know or know very little about (Cohen, 1993). By providing opportunities for interaction with a variety of students in class, the students can form a connection and foster that connection toward a better understanding of others who are not like them. Head (1997) states that “group activities provide a forum for developing social skills and understanding of others” (p.31). It may provide students opportunities for redefining themselves and others which could lead to the erosion of stereotypes. Meaningful connections do not happen unless a sense of trust and respect are established. The first unit of the Social Psychology about team building and group dynamics are believed to play a critical role in helping to establish the foundation of trust and respect in the class.

Faltis (1993) offers a model that included seating arrangements and other strategies to increase student interaction in the classroom. The silence or shyness of many students who are not fluent in English yet can be invited to participate in different ways
(Firching Cardoza, 1994). A variety of oral and written venues can be offered in eliciting responses from students of diverse linguistic background. The implementation of teaching strategies which promote more student interaction in a respectful way is the responsibility of the teacher, but students must be aware of their responsibilities as a member of this community of learners. The responsibility does not lie solely with the teacher.

The responsibility of the students for their learning is supported by Ogbu (1992) in his criticism of multicultural education which places a heavy emphasis on teacher responsibility. If the students are absolved from their responsibilities as learners, then they become marginalized and disempowered by their lack of linguistic fluency and knowledge. I feel the tension of searching for the balance between allowing students to use their heritage language to further their learning, and enforcing English only to what I think would empower them in an English speaking society. In what ways can schools, teachers and students honour students' heritage languages and cultures and promote their English language independence? In what ways can schools, teachers and students promote healthy ethnic identities in students who have lost or underdeveloped their heritage language skills? These questions are in need of further investigation.

There is power in engaging students in ethical questions such as how might construct a linguistically diverse classroom be affirming to all. Although the language topic in class gave way to other curricular topics, some students continued to explore and support change towards this ideal as exemplified by the student from cycle one who volunteered to share her experiences with the students of cycle two. Ethical questions have also engaged me to inquire about linguistic diversity for at least three years.
A Linguistically Diverse Classroom Affirming to All

This inquiry does not intend to problem solve or look for solutions. It attempts to gain “a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). This account of what I perceive towards becoming a linguistically diverse classroom is not shared as a solution. It is part of my experience in search of a linguistically diverse classroom affirming to all. The sharing of these collaborative experiences in linguistic diversity provides the reader of this text the opportunity to “make connections between images, events, and settings that are presented by the author” (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993, p. 390). It seeks to strengthen the understanding of what it means to learn and teach in a linguistic diversity, and one teacher’s ongoing search to achieve a linguistically diverse classroom affirming for all.

Dialoguing in Public.

The Chinese have a saying that would translate into “many-mouthed bird”. This is used by the Chinese to describe a person who disturbs the peace and does not know how to hold their tongue. Many-mouthed birds speak up when they are supposed to be quiet. “There may be nothing wrong with what you say; it may be all true. The point is, you are being indiscreet. (Lee and Wong-chu, 1991, p. 7-8)

What is meant by indiscreet? According to The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, second edition, indiscreet means to be imprudent, injudicious, untactful or inconsiderate. I feel that many teachers and students are too careful and too prudent when they do not talk about the tension in a multilingual school setting. Fears of being labelled a racist or being accused of being too sensitive have silenced teachers and
students about this tension. Being silent about our feelings of tension may be considered polite and prudent but it causes feelings of isolation and fear. This is not prudent or careful. By breaking the so-called "polite" silence, we can face the reality and work towards an understanding of our own feelings and others' feelings about linguistic diversity. This brought about a feeling of connectedness in Social Psychology classes about linguistic diversity.

By engaging in dialogues, we can create a new space where there is more comfort in a diverse linguistic classroom community for both teachers and students. Bigler states "if we are to address the issues that divide Americans along ethnic lines and move toward a more equitable and just society, creating greater opportunities for dialogue and public forums for the telling of American stories will be essential" (1996, p. 200). It is essential to have students' voices testify their lived experiences in linguistic diversity in a safe and public forum. To understand others, is to build empathy which leads to caring about others — the connectedness we need in a global community. Slattery (1995) stresses the importance of intimacy in understanding knowledge:

the knower cannot be separated from the known and meaning cannot be separated from the context that gives rise to the meaningful experience. Educators must reenvision their relationships with students and with each other and begin to find ways to affirm and validate every voice in the school community. The dominant power position of teachers and administrators must be replaced by empowerment models. These models are not simply site-based management, authentic assessment, or cooperative learning groups. Rather, the very concept of self in relation must evolve to a new realm of consciousness. This can be accomplished on all levels of schooling as teachers and students create empathetic, caring, holistic, and liberating practices. (p. 264).
**The Obligation of Witnessing Testimony.**

At the beginning of Chapter V, the origin of the word – *voice* was traced to an old Icelandic word for *testify* and to an Indo European source for *witness*. By engaging in public dialogue, students and teachers become witnesses to the testimonies of those who share their stories, thoughts and feelings. Simon and Eppert (1997) point out that there is an “ethical obligation in witnessing testimony” (p.175). The main purpose of testimony is to share the significance of previous events and experiences, and are therefore “representations either by those who have lived through such events or by those who have been told or shown such lived realities, either directly or indirectly” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 176). In the classroom, testimony is used as method of instruction which “attempt[s] to transmit information about the past and to keep specific events before one’s eyes, thereby foregrounding the events’ significance for current and future generations” (p. 176).

Although, Simon and Eppert are referring to historical trauma, I see the narratives about personal experiences in linguistic diversity as testimony. Giving testimony is like performing to share “one’s remembrance of past events” (p. 176) in order to make such an impact as to cause the receiver to act. Simon and Eppert (1997) use Brinkley and Youra’s concept of those who receive the testimony of the witness, and in turn become witnesses themselves. Then the reactions of those who witness the testimony of the original witness become what others observe and become witness to. This basically reflects the interdependencies that occurred during the students’ dialogues about linguistic diversity. Those who witnessed these narratives either chose to or felt
compelled to be "obligated" to respond. Due to the personal nature of testimony, the witnesses are moved to acknowledge, remember and show that the testimony has been of consequence (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 178). This connection or obligation can serve as motivation to reinforce or change behaviour and/or attitudes that honour the testimony of the witness. Witnessing the testimony builds a bond and empathy toward the person who is testifying. The students would offer reassurance to the witness' self-esteem, or reiterate the witness' emotions or rights. In other cases, the students would condemn rude behaviour or violations of personal rights. By witnessing the reactions of the witnesses to this testimony, they learn caring norms and develop their obligation to care for others. Their obligation as witnesses to testimony opens an connection to the witness and the opportunity to include others into their community.

**Building a Sense of Community.**

Reflecting back on this inquiry, I see community and communications as the key in creating a linguistically diverse classroom that would be affirming to all. Communication and community share the first three letters — *com* meaning together. Communication is from the Latin root *communícātiōnem* which means to make common to many, share, impart. The root of the last part of communications comes from *moinicos* which means carrying an obligation. Community is from the Latin root *commūnitātem* meaning fellowship, and its ending *ity* means conditions or quality of being. One possible way to a linguistically diverse classroom that is affirming to all is to come 'together' to form a 'fellowship' and to 'share' our lived experiences to improve our 'quality of being'. It is everyone's 'obligation' to communicate and connect with each
other to form a sense of community within diversity.

**Epilogue**

Two years have passed since the end of cycle three. Although this story ended there, I am still continuing my inquiry into diversity with the classes I teach. I continue to teach Social Psychology. I am now wondering what knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are needed so that students may learn to live in diversity that is affirming to all. The phrase “Nothing is final” which I said during a collaborative meeting of home economics global education action researchers under Gale’s supervision in March 1995 still echoes today. It is not final because what Smith (1996) calls “[my] obligation is not to a project to be completed but to justice and goodness that is at the heart of developing a global perspective” (p. 172). So I continue to “explore dialogue as conversational inquiry as a way to theorize practice/practice theorizing” (Smith, 1996, p. 172). This is my pedagogical and personal “becoming” which is shared with the students who are also becoming in their own ways.

This inquiry has shown me the need to find “what is left out” of curriculum is as important as what is taught in the curriculum. The need to share these insights in a more public way in order to work towards social justice and democracy have redefined my pedagogical boundaries from the classroom to the district. I have become more involved with a district wide committee of youth who are advising the school district on race relations and multiculturalism in their schools. I attend their meetings, monitor their
projects and give guidance and support. I have also become a sponsor for Central High’s City Wide Youth Initiative Projects which are aimed at empowering youth with leadership skills to work on improving their school and communities. Making diversity public is a way to share, and invite others to collaborate in building a sense of community within diversity. It is part of a continuous process of “becoming” a vibrant and healthy whole community. I hope to create lived experiences that will create new echoes without the feelings of isolation and fear that many students and I have experienced within linguistic diversity. These new echoes of caring and community will be the legacy that we struggle to create for all the students yet to come.
Bibliography


Boomer, Garth (1987). Addressing the problems of elsewhereness. In Goswami, Dixie, & Stillman, Peter (Eds.), *Reclaiming the classroom, teacher research as an agency for change* (pp. 5 - 13). Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton Cook.


CREATING COMMUNITY & REDUCING PREJUDICES

Possible Definition of Common Terms

1. **BIAS**
   A *positive or negative feeling*, consciously or unconsciously held toward a group.

2. **STEREOTYPE**
   A *fixed image* attributing certain characteristics or habits to any group. It exaggerates the uniformity within a group and its distraction from other groups.

3. **PREJUDICE**
   Literally it means a pre-judgement. A *learned attitude or belief* about a person or group based on a judgement made *prior* to actual experience and without knowing anything about them personally.

4. **DISCRIMINATION**
   *Differential or unequal treatment* of a person or persons on the basis of prejudicial attitudes and beliefs. Discrimination may occur on the basis of race, nationality, gender, religion, marital or family status, physical or mental development, age, sexual orientation, and so on, rather than on individual merit.

5. **RACISM**
   Discrimination on the basis of racial/national/ethnic origin or colour.

   *Institutional Racism* - the policies and practices entrenched in established institutions which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups.

6. **EQUITY**
   Is about justice, rights and fairness
   Challenges the notion that all people arrive at an opportunity “as equals”

7. **EQUALITY**
   Is about sameness, treating people the same
   Treating people “the same” may yield unequal outcomes
APPENDIX II

Social Psychology 11

NAME

ANALYZING DIVERSITY ISSUE IN THE PRINT MEDIA

TITLE OF ARTICLE _____________________________

SOURCE _____________________________ PAGE _____ DATE ________

AUTHOR(S) _____________________________

1. Identify the issue.

2. List the important facts that you found in the article that you read for this assignment.

3. Identify the different sides of the issue that you found in the article and who held these views.

4a. What is your viewpoint/opinion on this issue?

b. Support your viewpoint/opinion with facts, explanations, rationale, etc.

5. What additional information would you like to have in order to make the best & fair judgement/decision on this issue?
APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE SHEET

The following questions are examples of semi-structured interview questions which will be asked of individual student volunteers. Other interview questions will relate to observations and events that arise during the course of the interview with the individual student.

Sample Interview Questions

1. Briefly describe your language background (e.g. how and when language(s) were acquired and level of fluency).

2. What do you think about the linguistic diversity in our school?

3. How do you think linguistic diversity affects the learning environment in a classroom?

4. In general, do you feel that teachers are addressing the needs of linguistic diversity in the classroom?

5. How would you describe the ideal situation in a linguistically diverse classroom?
## APPENDIX IV

### GENDER AND ETHNICITY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 11 STUDENTS IN CYCLE THREE

#### GENDER:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CLASS A</th>
<th>CLASS B</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### ETHNICITY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CLASS A</th>
<th>CLASS B</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino/Chinese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese/Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Mixed*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. Heritage language refers to the language of their family’s ethnic/national background.
*This student’s family background is situated in the Caribbean, is not Asian and was not identified.
### APPENDIX V

First Languages of Social Psychology 11 Students in Cycle Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST LANGUAGE</th>
<th>CLASS A</th>
<th>CLASS B</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese/English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin/English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi/English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. First language refers to the first language that the student was fluent in.
APPENDIX VI

Heritage Languages of Social Psychology 11 Students
in Cycle Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HERITAGE LANGUAGE</th>
<th>CLASS A</th>
<th>CLASS B</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fukiense</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujartsi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghianese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog/Chinese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not identified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>